12 (a) State what is meant by *radioactive decay*.

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.....[2]

(b) An unstable nuclide P has decay constant λ_P and decays to form a nuclide D.
This nuclide D is unstable and decays with decay constant λ_D to form a stable nuclide S. The decay chain is illustrated in Fig. 12.1.

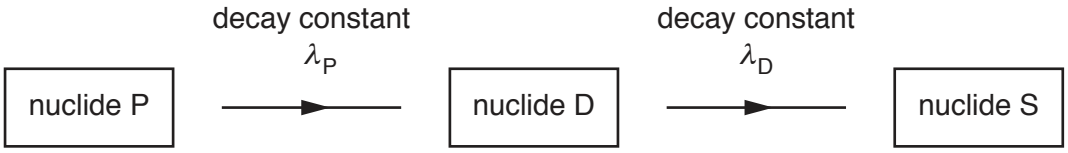

Fig. 12.1

The symbols P, D and S are not the nuclide symbols.

Initially, a radioactive sample contains only nuclide P.

The variation with time *t* of the number of nuclei of each of the three nuclides in the sample is shown in Fig. 12.2.

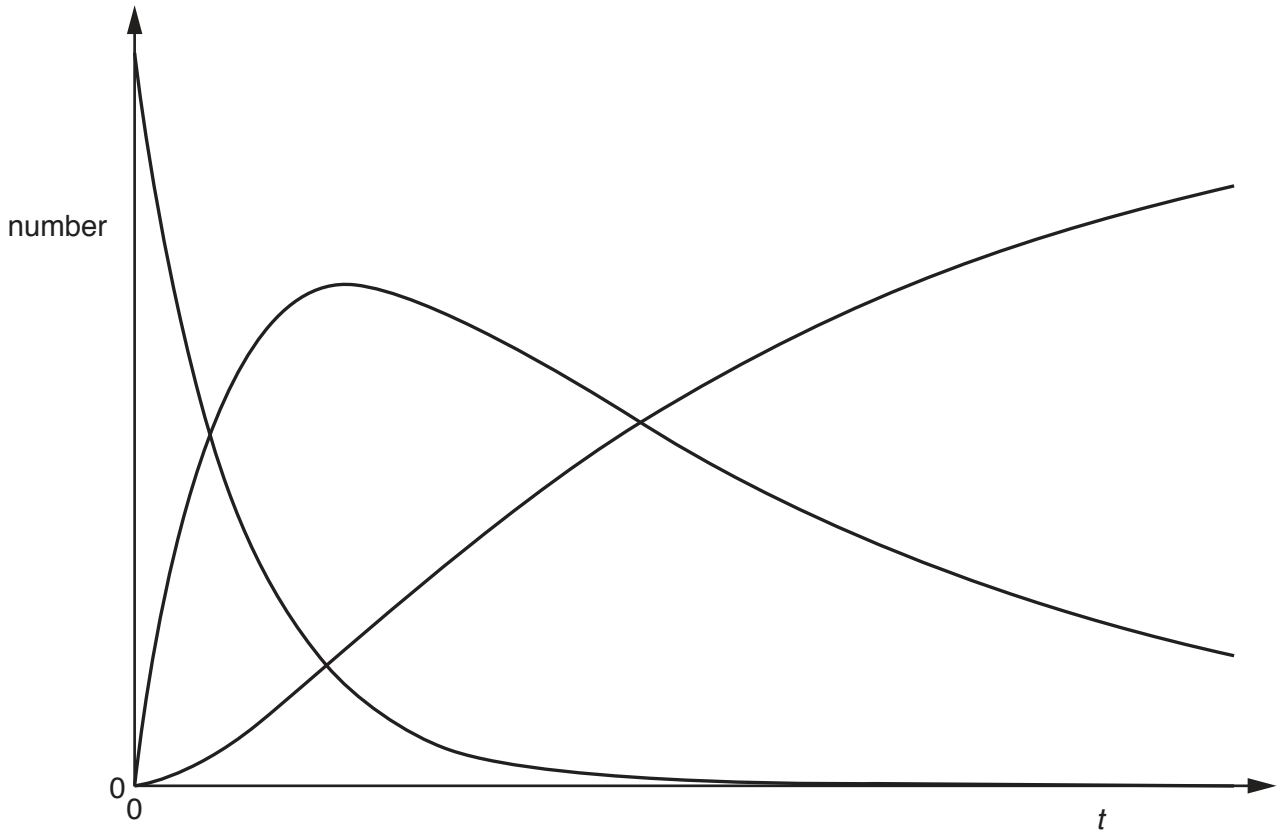

Fig. 12.2

(i) On Fig. 12.2, use the symbols P, D and S to identify the curve for each of the three nuclides. [2]

(ii) The half-life of nuclide P is 60.0 minutes.

Calculate the decay constant λ_P, in s^{-1}, of this nuclide.

λ_P = ...s^{-1} [2]

(c) In the decay chain shown in Fig. 12.1, λ_P is approximately equal to $5\lambda_D$.

The decay chain of a different nuclide E is illustrated in Fig. 12.3.

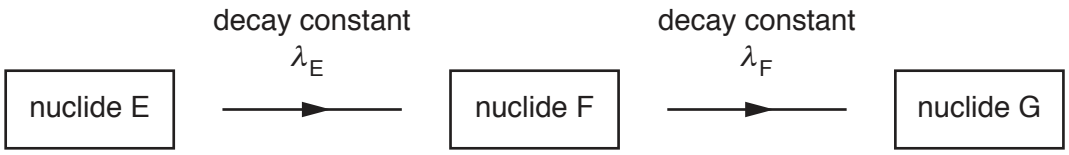

Fig. 12.3

The decay constant λ_F of nuclide F is very much larger than the decay constant λ_E of nuclide E.

By reference to the half-life of nuclide F, explain why the number of nuclei of nuclide F in the sample is always small.

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.....[2]

[Total: 8]

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