

## **Functional Skills**

### **Maths**

Level 2 Maths - **09866**

## **OCR Report to Centres 2013-2014**

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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## OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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### The qualifications and standards

- **Structure and content**

### Administration/Documentation:

#### Findings:

This year has seen major changes in the administration of Functional Maths. Firstly, the establishment of Computer Based Tests (CBT) in addition to the long standing Paper Based Tests (PBT). Secondly, both CBT and PBT are offered on an On-Demand (OD) basis. Overall, centres have taken all these changes in their stride. Over the last year there have only been three or four instances of centres selecting the incorrect, for them, test format (CBT or PBT) by mistake. OD appears to have raised the level of candidates' attainment in both test formats.

#### Paper Based Tests

By its very nature OD offers and requires an efficient and quick turnaround by all those involved in marking and overall monitoring of the latter. Errors in or incomplete documentation can have a negative impact on these processes. These may include

- omission of candidate numbers on their paper
- lack of an attendance list
- omission of form A507/1311 (very rarely)

On a more mundane level, the too vigorous removal of Resource Sheets sometimes resulted in the disintegration of a paper into individual sheets – a significant problem for a batch of loosely packed papers.

Although small in relative terms, the number of photocopied scripts submitted was noticeable. Centres do not, under normal circumstances, need to make any photocopies – indeed it is against the examination regulations.

Thankfully the very great majority of centres dispatched their scripts virtually “straight away”. However, making up batches from several days' worth of test papers did produce bunching in the system which may lead to delays.

#### Computer Based Tests

The administration of these, as judged by the endpoint of the process, has functioned very well. As might have been expected there was initially the “odd wrinkle”, such as timeouts due to late submission and multiple entries. Candidates did originally sometimes fail to scroll down the screen and thereby missed parts of questions. However these are all now “history”. The process is working well and judging by the on-screen evidence is received positively by candidates.

### OCR Support and Resources:

#### Findings:

The materials and information provided on the OCR website, including past papers and marking guidance, appear to be having a positive impact on both PBT and CBT. This is evidenced by the raising in attainment over the last few years. Candidates (and centres too) are noticeably more aware of what is expected from a mathematically functional candidate. This includes the almost total absence of single sentence responses such as “Yes it is cheaper”, without any supporting numerical evidence.

## Assessment Summary:

### Findings:

The great majority of candidates for both CBT and PBT were adequately prepared for the assessment. Candidates are now aware that tasks are set in the overall context of the real world, demanding (and rewarding) more than a correct number for an answer. Describing how an answer was arrived at, whilst not always correct or universal, appears to be increasing in both quality and frequency. There was, nevertheless, a very small minority who were unable to even attempt the more truly functional parts of some tasks. Some, for example, were unable to use the scenario of the task to perform a division in the correct order. However, set against this, the subjective impression gained is that the number of items not attempted has decreased.

There was no evidence that pressure of time was a significant factor in candidates' attainment. In contrast to previous years the final task was not invariably the least well attempted or the one that attracted the highest omission rate.

There was no tangible indication that literacy demands were a barrier to candidates' achievement. Presentation of written and numerical work was usually at least satisfactory. In the case of CBT some quite sophisticated formatting facilities were employed on occasion. Different (non-standard UK) European number conventions were sometimes observed. Examiners took particular care over these and in grey areas gave candidates the benefit of any doubt.

A problem which only affected CBT were candidates who had quite clearly worked out answers on paper and only transferred what they considered relevant to the screen. Obviously in such cases credit could only be given based on evidence from the screen. Some candidates almost certainly lost marks in this situation.

Probably the greatest source of almost avoidable lost credit was candidates' failure to provide clear evidence of "checking and evaluation" of their work. Indication of genuine/relevant checking was sparse. Almost random sprinklings of reverse calculations only gained partial credit. Any reflections on calculation results or methods employed were extremely rare. In the worst possible case, failure to "check and evaluate" could lose almost 10% of the available credit.

There is a slight lingering doubt that there might have been the odd instance of candidates writing credit worthy work on the pages of the Resource Sheets. Such work cannot be marked or taken into consideration.

Areas of strength included:

- working with simple percentages
- working with and calculating mean/median
- using tables and extracting information presented in various forms
- performing calculations involving time.

Areas of weakness included:

- unable to discriminate between area and volume
- calculating areas and volumes
- converting between different metric units
- failing to give units to an answer (units of measurement generally)
- inability to estimate common measures such as an average person's weight, volume of a tea cup etc.
- sometimes failing to respond to trigger instructions such as "Explain how you arrived at your answer/decision" or "Show your working clearly".

As a general piece of advice candidates should, as second nature, read the question at least twice before beginning, then plan their response – possibly mentally and finally look at each calculation or sub-calculation and ask, drawing on their life experiences, “Is this reasonable?”.

### **Developments**

Hopefully, after some recent uncertainty, FS Maths will have a future (and a large candidature) as a result of OFQUAL’s increased interest.

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