

Functional Skills

Maths

Level 1 Maths - **09865**

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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1. The qualifications and standards

- **Structure and content**

Administration/Documentation:

This year saw 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 have been offered on an On-Demand (OD) basis. The transition appears to have been undertaken smoothly although some centres have posted scripts to examiners by first class post and not by a trackable method.

Overall, centres have taken all these changes in their stride and administration appeared to be functioning well. However, some centres entered individual candidates for a reference rather than putting a number of candidates under the same reference. This led to unnecessary administration.

It would be very helpful if centres carefully check that the scripts are sent to the correct examiner. A number of scripts have been incorrectly addressed and have had to be redirected.

Most centres returned unused Paper Based Tests with their used scripts and included form A507/1311, completed and signed.

A few centres used photocopied scripts. This practice is forbidden. Some centres disadvantaged candidates by poor photocopying, missing pages or using single sides. Some centres do not take care with their candidates' work when removing Resource Sheets and these candidates' scripts often arrived in pieces.

OCR Support and Resources:

OCR has provided a range of support materials that are available on the website. Amongst these are past papers and mark schemes for candidates to practise upon. There is also guidance regarding the Coverage and Range required and other resources, including interactive material, for delivery of Functional Skills to Learners.

Assessment Summary:

Most candidates appeared well prepared for the assessments although a small numbers of candidates had few strategies to approach the tasks.

Candidates are expected to use a calculator in the assessment. Many made good use of a calculator but the small number that did not sometimes found it difficult to demonstrate problem solving skills. This was often due to poor numeracy.

Some, but by no means all, candidates supported answers with clear working and values and showed how decisions had been reached. Those who provided headings and organised calculations often gained high marks.

Most candidates lost from 3 to 6 marks in the assessment by not checking their work. Candidates can earn 1 mark per task by showing three, or more, clear and correct calculations. They can earn 2 marks per task by checking a calculation within the task either by repeating the calculation, by a meaningful reverse calculation or by estimation. Very few candidates did this. Some candidates wrote 'checked' beside a calculation. This does not count as a check and gained no credit.

Areas of weakness appeared to be:

Tasks involving spatial awareness.

Area

Conversion between units was sometimes done using incorrect factors.

Tasks involving fractional parts.

Tasks requiring an extended answer. Here candidates sometimes forgot the question they were attempting to answer.

Some candidates failed to show their working, which can lead to a loss of marks.

Areas of strength appeared to be:

Tasks involving money. However, some colloquialisms such as £12.40p were penalised once in a task and forms such as £1.7 (for £1.70) were also not given full credit. Candidates sometimes forgot to include units with their answer.

Tasks involving simple statistics, although candidates sometimes confused mean (average) and range and some found it difficult to interpret these measures.

Candidates using CBT sometimes failed to include calculations in their working. A small number were able to use the facilities of the platform to present their work well. Commonly, candidates could not use index form to present units. Initially, many missed parts of questions at the bottom of a screen although the number doing this is steadily reducing.

2. Developments

Candidates seeking to obtain qualifications for apprenticeships appear to be swelling the numbers entering for Functional Skills.

DfE requirements for all students to have a qualification in mathematics may bring more schools back to Functional Skills.

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