

Functional Skills

Maths

Level 1 09865

Level 2 09866

OCR Report to centres

November 2010 – August 2011

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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.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

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OCR Report to Centres

Functional Skills Mathematics Levels 1 & 2

General guidance for centres

Although the notes that follow contain guidance to improve candidates' performance, it should be noted that OCR has seen a steady improvement in the work of candidates and that some centres are preparing candidates who are clearly functional and whose papers are a pleasure to mark.

Candidates are required to attempt all tasks. They should practise using the information contained in a Resource Booklet as this is always needed to answer a task. However, they should never write any answers or working out in the Resource Booklet, only in the Answer Booklet.

Candidates should spend time reading each question and check that they understand what is being asked before starting their answer.

Candidates who demonstrate high levels of functionality are expected to respond to questions that require them to make and explain decisions.

In such questions:

- A significant number of marks (3 or more) are available.
- Calculations and data should be used to support reasoning.
- Meaningful comments with the solution often provide evidence for the award of marks.

Candidates should have access to a calculator in the assessment and be aware that its use is expected. They should, however, show stages in their working and annotate these workings. One way candidates annotate is to use short sub-headings that clarify the purpose of the calculations.

Statements such as "justify your answer", "explain how you decide" or "state any assumption you might make" are part of the question and must be responded to.

Candidates are expected to:

- Provide working that supports an answer.
- Write short statements that draw upon these workings and that support a decision.
- State any assumptions they have made. An example of an assumption could be that, for the purpose of an estimate, there are four weeks in every month.

Credit can only be given for clear written evidence, rather than simply a correct answer. A lack of working may result in loss of credit for the correct method or process as an examiner cannot credit what is not seen.

Candidates should read through their answers.

- One reason for doing this is that they may detect errors and correct them. Doing and showing evidence of this will enable them to score marks under the checking criteria.
- They should ask themselves – "Is this a reasonable answer?". If it seems unreasonable or unrealistic they should state this even if they are not sure how to rectify the error.

Candidates are advised to use a ruler and pencil for questions that require drawing.

Specific guidance related to identified criteria/component

Candidates have 2 marks available in each task for checking their work. These marks are awarded for using any checking procedure at an appropriate point in the task. Such procedures could be:

- working out a calculation by an alternative means,
- approximating the figures or
- using a reverse calculation.

Statements such as “I checked all the working out” will not receive credit unless supported by additional evidence of the check used. Some candidates score 1 mark for completing three correct calculations in each task but very few show an explicit check for working in a task to score 2 marks.

As part of teaching and learning programs, centres should recognise the processes within the skill standards that Functional Skills Mathematics is testing and be aware that a large proportion of the credit is awarded for method or process. Learners need to practise these skills in the classroom and have opportunities to:

- Solve problems that are not familiar to them.
- Decide upon a course of action when solving a problem.
- Extract evidence from a source or sources.
- Decide what evidence is necessary to the solution of the task.
- Present calculations to an audience and draw conclusions based upon these.
- Discuss and amend solutions.

Candidates find tasks that are “spatial” difficult and often confuse or omit units for length and area. They often confuse area and perimeter and frequently perform worse on these tasks compared with numerical ones.

Many candidates show a misunderstanding of averages and range. They can sometimes perform mechanical processes, though not always for the correct average, but are often unable to interpret their results.

Candidates should be careful that correct units, or time periods, are being used and that these are consistent throughout a calculation. Candidates often perform money calculations without units and then assume the answer is in £ if a decimal point is involved.

Administrative Issues

Candidates' scripts should be sent to the examiner in the order that their names appear on Interchange together with an attendance register. This could be a printout from Interchange. The number of scripts should be written on the front of the package. This should be done on the day that all the assessments have been taken.

Centres should ensure that only candidates entered at one level are put into a single envelope.

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