

Functional Skills

Maths

Level 2 Maths - **09866**

OCR Report to Centres 2014-2015

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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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For the greater part of this year Functional Maths has only been available on an On-Demand basis (OD) for both Paper Based Tests (PBTs) and Computer Based Tests (CBTs). Centres appear quite comfortable with these arrangements and there were few instances of centres selecting the incorrect, for them, test format (CBT or PBT).

There has been a noticeable increase in the extent to which candidates make use of the available formatting facilities available within the CBT input windows e.g. emboldened or underlines subheadings and use of superscripts for powers.

OCR Support and Resources:

Findings:

The materials and information provided on the OCR website continue to have a positive impact on both PBTs and CBTs. Candidates (and centres too) are aware of what is expected from a mathematically functional candidate. This is evidenced by the almost total absence of single sentence responses such as “Adam is right”, without any numerical evidence to support the statement.

Assessment Summary:

Findings:

As intimated above 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, requiring (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 attempt the more functional parts of some tasks. There was no definitive evidence, in either test format, that pressure of time was a significant factor in inhibiting candidates’ attainment.

There was no indication that literacy demands were a barrier to candidates’ achievement. Presentation of written and numerical work was usually at least satisfactory. Different (non-standard UK) European number conventions were sometimes observed.

In common with last year’s CBTs some candidates quite clearly work out answers on paper but only keyed-in what they consider relevant. Some candidates almost certainly lost marks as a result of this - credit can only be awarded on evidence presented on the screen. Nevertheless, fuller working has become more evident. Even the more involved and fuller explanations did not appear to curtail candidates’ ability to answer all the question parts.

Again, as has been the case for several years, the greatest source of avoidable lost credit was candidates’ failure to provide clear evidence of “checking and evaluation” of their work. In the worst possible case failure to “check and evaluate” could lose 10% of the total available credit. In many cases, indication of genuine and relevant checking was missing – the word “checked” beside an answer gained no credit and reverse calculations only gained partial credit. Reflection on calculation results or methods employed was extremely rare. Candidates should use the context of the task to reflect, question and check the validity of working that gives a cup of tea costing £25 or gas bills of £100 000.

Candidates need to be aware that work written on the pages of the Resource Sheets 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
- using simple word equations
(although multi-step equations involving brackets were found challenging)
- using negative numbers in context

Areas of weakness included:

- failure to discriminate between area and volume, some candidates continue to make errors such as multiplying four or even more dimensions together to find an area or volume
- converting between different metric units
- failing to give units to an answer (particularly money)
- lack of confidence when estimating common measures such as an average person's weight, volume of a tea cup, pace length etc.
Candidates are not specifically asked to make these estimates, they must decide to use them in the process of interpreting the problem
- In a small, but significant number of cases involving rates, particularly value for money, candidates performed the divisions in the wrong order – consideration of the resulting answer might have reduced this.

As a general piece of advice candidates should read the question at least twice before beginning – this can and does pay dividends. There is some evidence that a number of candidates “put pen to paper” too soon and before they mentally plan their response.

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