



# Functional Skills Principal Assessor Report

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Subject	Functional Mathematics
Level	Level 1 and Level 2
Date	June 2014

This report provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers/lecturers in their preparation of candidates for future assessments. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding.

# Comments on candidate performance

## General comments

There appears to have been a slight improvement in candidate performance since the publication of the last report and centres are again encouraged to ensure that these reports, especially where areas for future candidate development are highlighted, are passed to all staff involved in the delivery of Functional maths.

Candidates continue to perform well at Level 1, although there are some areas where knowledge is sometimes lacking.

At Level 2, a number of candidates are opting not to attempt questions which significantly reduces their opportunities to gain sufficient marks to pass the assessment. This, coupled with some extremely low marks, suggests that they may have been entered for assessment at an inappropriate level and/or without sufficient preparation covering all of the skills standards, coverage and range.

## Areas in which candidates performed well

Candidates continued to generally perform well, at both Level 1 and Level 2, in questions relating to or involving:

- Money
- Graphs and charts
- Statistical measures (average and range)

## Areas which candidates found demanding

Candidates continue to experience problems in areas relating to or involving:

- Calculations involving time where there was a tendency to confuse minutes and decimals.
- Demonstrating the checking of calculations; simply repeating the original calculation(s) will not be acceptable but use of reverse calculations, estimation etc would achieve the marks.
- Multi-stage problems where candidates did not always follow the problem logically and draw appropriate final conclusions.
- Specifically answering the question posed; many candidates carry out appropriate calculations and then fail to draw the conclusion required in the question or fail to carry out rounding to the level of accuracy specified.
- Calculations involving probability (Level 2); acceptable responses can be in words, as a fraction (in its simplest form) as a percentage or as a decimal.
- The calculation and use of scales and/or proportions (Level 2).

## Advice to centres for preparation of future candidates

As questions will not necessarily refer to contexts with which the candidate is familiar, it is important to remember that it is the transferrable skills of the candidate which are being tested and candidates should be prepared for this by undertaking sample assessments before undertaking the formal assessment, as well as ensuring that their knowledge encompasses all of the skills standards, coverage and range.

Areas where candidates could be better prepared and in which marks are often lost:

- Ensuring that calculations are shown in full, as a high proportion of the marks are awarded for undertaking the processes rather than the final answer.
- Where the question specifies a degree of rounding then this must be followed; where this is not specified then any, reasonable and functional, rounding will be accepted as long as it is accurate.
- Ensuring that appropriate, and functional, units are used in answers - a significant number of candidates are failing to achieve sufficient marks to pass a paper solely as a result of failing to show the unit of the answer.
- Where an explanation or justification of an answer is needed, ensuring that this includes reference to the calculations carried out.
- In problems requiring calculations in order to draw a conclusion, there is a tendency to carry out the calculations but then fail to reach the conclusion requested in the question. Candidates should be encouraged to adopt a good examination technique, in terms of reading the wording of questions carefully, and ensuring they have answered the question fully.
- Reviewing the answer in the context of the number of marks available as a question worth, say, 5 marks is unlikely to require a single line or one word answer.
- Candidates should be advised of the importance of time management, and the need to attempt all questions. Centres are strongly encouraged to utilise the practice assessments available on the SQA website on a formative basis, prior to candidates undertaking the final summative examination. Sample assessments also allow for learners to become familiar with the SQA online system and assessment formats.