



Functional Skills Principal Assessor Report

Principal Assessor	David Norden
Subject	Functional Mathematics
Level	Level 1 and Level 2
Date	March 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 little change in candidate performance since the publication of the last report and centres are 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 and areas where greater attention to detail would ensure that higher marks could be obtained with little additional knowledge.

At Level 2, a number of candidates are opting not to attempt a number of questions which significantly reduces their opportunities to gain sufficient marks to pass the assessment. This 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. This lack of preparation is further emphasised by the poor results obtained during the first sitting of a new paper and Centres are reminded that they should ensure that candidates have the knowledge required for the whole qualification and should not be specifically prepared for an individual assessment version.

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
- 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.

Areas in which marks are often lost and, as a result, candidates do not achieve are:

- Ensuring that calculations are shown in full, as marks are often not awarded solely for the final answer
- Where the question specifies a degree of rounding then this should 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
- 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
- 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

Further support materials for Maths level 1 and 2 have been published on SQA's website at <https://www.sqa.org.uk/sqa/64681.4251.html>. These provide full past assessments with supporting commentary and are designed to be used by both tutors and students. Accompanying marking schemes are also provided. There are also sample assessments available for both level 1 and 2 and it is recommended that candidates attempt these before undertaking their assessment.