

Chief Examiner Report for Functional Skills Maths

NCFE Functional Skills Qualification in Mathematics at Level 1 – 501/2325/7

NCFE Functional Skills Qualification in Mathematics at Level 2 – 501/2324/5

January 2018

Level 1:

Learners have generally demonstrated an understanding of tasks involving number calculations with percentages and fractions although there does seem to be some concerns with calculations involving money where answers are not given to two decimal places.

Many learners often poorly undertake conversions of time from fractions of percentages to hours and minutes.

Metric conversion is an area that is often calculated incorrectly along with errors when calculating area and volume with learners frequently mixing these up.

Learners also frequently mix up mean and range, which leads to them losing marks.

Learners generally demonstrate a sound understanding of interpreting tables and charts and the recording of information on these.

Learners often do checking of results poorly and in several cases, this has made the difference for learners between a pass or not achieving. This is a common theme across both levels.

Rounding of answers and results to the correct level of accuracy as stated in the task is a skill that often appears to be undertaken poorly.

Omission of units, whether a measurement or £ symbol is commonly missed by learners, again resulting in marks not being awarded.

Some learners have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the skills required to complete the tasks and this has resulted in high marks being awarded, whilst at the other end some learners have clearly not been well prepared for the exams with very low scores being recorded.

Level 2:

Learners appear in several cases to have difficulties when completing tasks involving circles, especially when substituting numbers into formula involving area and circumference.

Expression of one quantity as a percentage of another is regularly completed poorly by learners and is an area that would benefit from further development and practice by learners.

Conversions between metric and imperial units is often seen as problematic for some learners and is an area that would benefit from further development by learners.

The use of time especially when converting from a decimal figure to actual hours and minutes is frequently seen as calculated incorrectly as well as calculations when adding up or subtracting time resulting in several marks being lost in some questions.

Ratio is another skill that appears problematic for some learners with examples of insufficient cancelling down or even decimals given in the final answers.

Some learners have also appeared to have some confusion when calculating mean, median and range with these often being muddled up.

Generic Overview:

Checking of answers is a common theme across both levels and learners need to be supported by tutors in developing their skills in the use of reverse calculations or alternative methods of checking such as estimation and rounding.

Tasks that involve Measure, Shape and Space are areas where learners would benefit in developing their skills further particularly when using perimeter and area of complex shapes.

Learners need to be encouraged to demonstrate how they can explain their answers, i.e. why was Option A chosen over Option B, as this is frequently missed by learners yet they may have achieved all marks for their correct calculations but lost the final mark/s.

Learners also need to be encouraged by tutors to attempt all tasks, marks can sometimes be awarded for identifying required information or methods used to obtain answers. In some cases, these marks can make the difference between achieving and not achieving for learners.

Common errors include the calculation of complex shapes with learners often not breaking the calculation into stages, i.e. breaking an L shape into two rectangles to calculate the individual areas before calculating the overall area.

Overcoming an area:

Tasks involving problems with time and hours appear regularly as problematic for learners.

For example: 4.50 hours is not 4 Hours and 50 minutes and calculations of this type are often seen calculated poorly.

Learners need to understand that .50 is half of an hour therefore it is half of 60 minutes, so 30 minutes, not 50 minutes.

Common errors include miscalculation of totals when dealing with hours and part hours.

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