

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

June 2016

Level 1:

When learners have not achieved full marks at tasks this can often be attributed to areas requiring development. However, there are also instances that can be attributed to exam strategy. Examples often include the display of final answers, displays of calculations, appropriate checks, and acceptable comparisons or conclusions.

Development areas:

Development areas identified in this marking window, at Level 1, include probability, ratio use, equivalencies between fractions and percentages, and solving problems with metric measure.

Exam strategy:

Displays of final answers, commonly affected final responses for probability, ratio, measure (including area), money, and charts or graphs. Examples included probability expressed as a ratio, area without appropriate units, money without appropriate units or display (for example, to 2 decimal places), and graphs without titles. Learners preparing for on-line assessment may additionally benefit from advice on keyboard symbols, for example, $\frac{1}{3}$, 1:5, or 6 m² or 6 m sq, or £7.50

The displays of calculations or methods applied, in both paper based and on-line assessments, were mostly clear and sufficient. However, it's worth reminding learners that if full marks haven't been achieved at a task, there's often an opportunity to be awarded part marks, for example, for a correct calculation, identification of information, or application of a method.

Learners should be encouraged to check the accuracy of final responses throughout their assessments to reduce errors. This may also provide an opportunity to explore and reinforce appropriate checking methods.

When preparing for final assessment, learners may also benefit from advice on the expectations of comparisons (for example, 'bigger', 'smaller' or 'cheaper', 'more expensive') and conclusions (for example, making a choice and explaining the reason).

Level 2:

Similarly to assessments at Level 1, when learners have not achieved full marks at tasks this can often be attributed to areas requiring development. However, there are also examples that can be attributed to exam strategy. This often includes the display of final answers, displays of calculations, appropriate checks, and acceptable comparisons or conclusions.

Development areas:

Development areas identified in this marking window, at Level 2, include probability, pie charts, scale use, converting between systems, formulae use, proportions as percentages or fractions, and problem solving with measure.

Exam strategy:

Displays of final answers often affected final responses. Examples included probability expression, fractions or ratio not in simplest form, area without appropriate units, money without appropriate units or display (for example, to 2 decimal places), and ratio incorrectly ordered or expressed. Learners preparing for on-line assessment may also benefit from advice on keyboard symbols, for example, 1: 2 or 1 to 2, or 1/3 or 1 in 3. Additionally, final answers were often not in accordance with the task instructions, for example, to 1 decimal place or to the nearest whole number. It may be useful to incorporate practice with rounding and accuracy displays, so that rounding or requested displays don't affect accuracy of final answers. Exploration, or advice, with vocabulary to increase familiarity with requests (for example, to the nearest penny, or to 2 decimal places) may provide support for some learners.

The displays of calculations or methods applied, in both paper based and on-line assessments, were mostly clear and sufficient. However, it's worth reminding learners that if full marks haven't been achieved at a task, there's often an opportunity to be awarded part marks, for example, for a correct calculation, identification of information, or application of a method. An attempt at a task, rather than no response, is always advisable.

Responses to check requests were often not appropriate or not attempted by learners, indicating lack of familiarity. Support exploring reverse calculations, as well as alternative methods and checks using estimation would be beneficial for learners preparing for final assessment. A repeat of a calculation, or an explanation of the method, isn't acceptable.

Learners may also benefit from exploring the expectations of comparisons when preparing for final assessment (for example, 'bigger', 'smaller' or 'cheaper', 'more expensive') and conclusions (for example, making a choice and explaining the reason). Often, responses to requests for comparisons merely identified differences and often expectations are that these 'differences' are interpreted. Further practice in this area may improve learners' confidence and proficiency.

Generic Overview:

A common development area at both levels that learners may benefit from additional practice with is problem solving with measure. Skills need to be transferable so that learners can apply problem solving to new contexts and situations. Practice identifying widths in given shapes, converting to the same system of measure, and area or volume of composite shapes, are examples that may support exploration and ensure stretch.

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Date: June 2016