

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

August 2015

Level 1:

Most learners showed proficiency calculating fraction amounts and percentage amounts, including subsequent subtraction or addition of their values, if required. However, some errors were caused by incorrect equivalencies being used. As commented on previously, further exploration of proportions, displayed in fraction or percentage form, will be of benefit to many learners.

Ratio simplification and ratio use remain as development areas for a number of learners, although some improvement was noted. Common errors that affected responses included: values not simplified to their lowest forms, the arrangement of values not in order, ratio displayed incorrectly (for example, in fraction form), or ratio ineffectively used to predict requested values.

Similarly, probability was often indicated as an area requiring further practice. Further exploration of vocabulary may be useful for learners preparing for final assessment: 'likelihood', 'chance', 'simplest form' and 'lowest form'. It will also be beneficial to discuss expectations of a 'comparison': learners often calculate values accurately but don't comment on increase/decrease, larger/smaller, or cheaper/more expensive ('difference' is often not an acceptable comparison).

The methods for mean average and range appeared established with a large proportion of learners. However, there were instances of learners confusing mean with range, indicating that further exploration may be beneficial in supporting establishment. Additionally, there continued to be instances where the method for range was displayed without a final value.

Most learners successfully converted between g:kg, cm:m and m:km, although learners should be encouraged to always label final answers with appropriate units (for on-line assessments, displaying area as 'm sq' or 'm²' are both acceptable). More straightforward area and perimeter tasks were generally completed accurately although more stretching tasks, requiring area, perimeter or use of length/width, were completed with less accuracy and displayed less establishment. Although there were some good examples of learners working with proportions, using division and multiplication, continued practice with problem solving, within Measure, Shape and Space will be useful for a large proportion of learners.

Level 2:

Generally, there was establishment shown when converting within metric measure. However, converting between systems indicated that further practice would be beneficial to some learners. Often, whether to apply division or multiplication to convert indicated insufficient establishment.

Generally, use of time indicated proficiency. Similarly, more straightforward tasks involving money were generally proficiently answered, although more stretching tasks, working with pence values or converting between pence and pounds, indicated that further exploration would be beneficial.

As mentioned in the previous marking window report, some learners appeared unprepared to use given formulae. Increased familiarity, through practice and exploration, will be beneficial to learners preparing for final assessment.

Tasks with averages were generally completed proficiently. However, many learners would benefit from increased accuracy when identifying which values, items or categories have been requested in range tasks. Further exploration of how range is used and what range can signify, or represent, will be valuable for many learners. This will also, hopefully, support learners when identifying which range has been requested.

Graph production was generally proficient, although it was indicated that re-visiting pie chart production, including calculation of angles, may be useful for many learners. Labelling of graphs was generally proficient, although learners may benefit from being reminded that only labelling with units (for example, £ or pounds) is insufficient, and that scale intervals need to be consistent.

Many learners demonstrated establishment with probability and ratio. However, there were still some occasions when it was indicated that differentiating between ratio and probability (and their expression/display) may be challenging for some learners. Converting proportions to lowest fraction form, to percentages or to decimals was often completed accurately. Percentage values were mostly calculated correctly, although it was evident that for many learners percentage increase/decrease is not similarly established.

Problem solving and comparing within measure and proportion remain development areas for many learners. Further practice working with lengths and widths, volume (including internal volume), comparing using the same form and proportional problem solving will be beneficial to many learners. Incorporating formulae use or converting between systems within practice tasks, may add further stretch that will be beneficial.

Labelling of final responses with units (whether time, money or measure units) and display of final answers (to the requested level of accuracy) should be reiterated to learners preparing for assessment. Learners should also be prepared to comment on findings, when asked to 'compare'.

Generic Overview:

Learners should be encouraged to display and label their calculations throughout tasks. Learners should always display their final responses with units (for on-line assessments, displaying area as 'm sq' or 'm²' are both acceptable). Money should be displayed to 2 decimal places, unless otherwise requested.

Using checks to ensure accuracy when identifying information, as well as interim calculations and final calculations, should be encouraged. Learners should check their accuracy throughout calculations, and display checks when requested.

In their final assessments, learners should expect to demonstrate a range of skills, at the level of assessment they're preparing for. Use of sample papers, or similar individual tasks, may provide learners an opportunity to practise their skills. Accuracy, labelling and rounding could be incorporated within this practice.

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Date: August 2015