



FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH LEVEL 1

8720/S/W/R

Report on the Examination

8720
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Please note that this report covers Functional Skills English for Level 1 (8720)

8720/S - Speaking

Introduction

A number of centres took the opportunity to enter this round of submissions. For some centres it was straightforward to verify their work. They had assimilated the standard by looking at the AQA standardising materials and they had completed the necessary record forms accurately.

The best submissions came from centres where students had chosen their own topic to present, and where their teachers asked them searching questions to allow them to show their skills.

One topic which was especially well done this time round was when students talked about issues of mental health in young people. Students tended to be quite general in their comments, but with sympathetic and thoughtful questions from the teachers, these presentations were an excellent advertisement for this sort of work.

Problems remain though in two key areas. The first is that too many students read their presentation, without any attempt to engage with their audience. If this is the case then teachers should take the opportunity to teach aspects of presenting, showing students how you can use a script but at the same time engage with your audience. Too often it seemed that students were being put in front of a camera without sufficient preparation.

The second problem area is the completion of paperwork for the submission. A centre declaration sheet (CDS) must be sent with the submission. Each student in the sample must have a centre record form (CRF), and for each student all criteria must be indicated to have been fulfilled.

Please note that video submissions on DVD can no longer be accepted. A USB must be used. If a password is required then it must be the AQA supplied password for the sitting. The password for March is MKt_6312.

The nature of the component

The spoken component is an integral part of the Functional Skills package called English. Along with Reading and Writing it is a required element, and the subject as a whole cannot be passed without it. As part of the component there are two activities that must be completed. These involve giving a presentation and taking part in a discussion. These are separate assessments. If both tasks are not completed and if no evidence is provided, a pass cannot be awarded to the student.

For a presentation there must be a video recording, plus a completion of the presentation part of the record form. For a discussion there must be a completion of the discussion part of the record form.

Each of the activities has a sub set of skills that must be delivered for a pass. These are listed on the record form, and all of them must be achieved. This is called a mastery model of assessment, so even one cross in the 'no' column means that the student has not passed and should be entered at a later date. For example, if a student is not asked any questions after their presentation, or does not answer them, then they cannot be awarded a pass.

In advance of submission of entry and grades

1. During the Functional English course students should regularly take part in presentations with questions and in discussions. The questions should, at least in part, be from teachers/adults and should be designed to ensure that students can reach the required criteria. There is guidance in section 5 of the specification.

2. When preparing for/practising presentations, students must be discouraged from reading verbatim notes or PowerPoints. Students should be speaking on a suitable topic of their own choice.

3. Teachers should collect evidence which will be a video recording of a presentation for each student in the sample to be submitted and notes on the discussions to be entered on the AQA Student Record Form (CRF)

If there are reasons that make it impossible to conduct visual recordings then exemptions must be sought from AQA well in advance of the submission deadline.

The Student Record form should be completed at the time of the activity. This will indicate to the teacher whether the student has fulfilled all criteria, and is ready to be entered, or whether the student needs further opportunities and needs to be entered at a later date.

4. When students are entered the centre must already have collected the evidence that will allow them to give the student a Pass. This means they must have fulfilled **all** the criteria for both presenting and discussing. To ensure that you are familiar with the required standards (which for 8725 are obviously higher than for 8720) please watch the AQA standardisation videos, which are available via the AQA website. Please **do not** enter students if you do not have the required evidence to do so.

5. To summarise: *The procedure is collect the evidence, complete the paperwork, check that all standards have been met by looking at criteria and watching standardisation videos, enter the student, wait to forward the evidence to the verifier.*

A check list of what is required once you are asked to submit your evidence for verification.

- Check that you are submitting the required sample size, that each student's presentation is on a separate clearly labelled file on a USB and that 8720 are separated from 8725.
- Check that the files play on windows media player, on a computer. Check that visuals can be seen and that sound can be heard.
- Do not compress files and crucially do not encrypt with passwords known only to you. AQA does not require encryption. If you do, then please use the official password supplied by AQA.
- Check that you have completed and forwarded a Centre Declaration Sheet and a CRF form for each student in the sample. Double check that every student you have entered as Pass is shown to have fulfilled all the criteria on the CRFs.
- Have all materials ready for verification by the deadline.

- When notified of your verifier the sample should be posted to the verifier using first class post (fully paid) and without the need for a signature. It is helpful if the centre submits a short piece of correspondence to the verifier, making it clear what centre is sending the materials and which specification is being entered. Do not use Special/Signed for Delivery.

Conclusion

The very best talks are those where students talk about often unusual and very challenging experiences, which are then teased out for their implications by subtle and sensitive questioning.

Many teachers had again worked very hard to work within covid-related constraints and their efforts are much appreciated.

[AQA | Notes and guidance: non exam assessment \(NEA\)](#)

Centre Declaration Sheet 2022 - [Centre declaration sheet 2022 \(aqa.org.uk\)](#)

[Functional Skills English Specification for first teaching in 2019 \(aqa.org.uk\)](#)

8720/W- Writing

Overview

This is the eighth series under the reformed Functional Skills in English specification, Level 1 Writing (8720W). Although there is still some disruption to education due to the Coronavirus pandemic and numbers are below the norm for this series, it would appear that the trend is now more positive in terms of entries.

The 2011 standards have now been superseded by ‘scope of study’ descriptors which apply to Writing Composition and Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar (SPG). These can now be found on page 9 of the AQA Specification <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/specifications/AQA-8720-8725-SP-2019.PDF>.

At Level 1 learners are required to produce straightforward texts such as narratives, instructions, explanations and reports of varying lengths. Each writing task will require learners to address one of the above categories although it is important to note that narratives and explanations can be embedded within different formats such as emails, blogs, letters, reviews etc

The reformed qualification is intended to maintain very high standards and a pass at this level will be a strong indicator of ability in writing Standard English. It is consistent in its standard as a test of basic English writing skills and will be the foundation for secure progression. With the current demands of GCSE English, many schools and colleges are considering alternative routes for students. This qualification would also serve as a suitable alternative and an excellent progression route from The Entry Level Certificate (Step Up to English). It is important that schools and colleges enable students to have a realistic chance of acquiring valuable qualifications by mapping abilities against available qualifications. In this way, the reformed Functional English will provide important opportunities for both centres and students.

To ensure continuity under the reformed specification the writing papers have retained two questions. Each contains stimulus material leading into a task which is supported by bullet points, enabling students to use some of the information in the question. There is an element of problem solving and functional thinking in completing each task. A significant innovation is that there are word limits established for Question 1, which will have an impact on the achievement of students and this is looked at in more detail below. The time allocated for the paper is now 1 hour with an advisory 20 minutes for the 1st question. The total mark available for the paper has increased to 27, with 9 marks for Question 1 (6 for composition, 3 for SPaG) and 18 marks for Question 2 (9 for composition, 9 for SPaG). An important point to note is that SPaG comprises 44% of total marks, an increase of 4% over the previous specification, reflecting its importance at this level. Mark schemes for both questions are now skill based and will remain unchanged for the lifetime of the specification and can be found at: <https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/english/AQA-87202-SMS.PDF>.

At this level, centres now very rarely enter students who have little or no chance of getting inside the middle level of Mark Scheme descriptors. In this series, through the entry was modest, students seemed generally confident and able to meet the requirements of the questions with approximately 90% of students gaining a mark of 10 or more while over 45% gained a mark of 18 or more. These figures are very encouraging, particularly at the top end where performance was an improvement on November 2021. In the circumstances, students achieving a mark of 18 are well suited to the demands of Level 2 and should be encouraged to progress. Students whose marks fall below a total of 18 need a little more in the way of skill development before they

progress on to Level 2. Close examination of the centre's mark profile would be very useful in establishing appropriate progression routes for students.

Question 1

This question asked students to contribute suggestions and instructions for a day out to a social media platform. The stimulus material provided representation of a chat between a number of friends and students were expected to continue the chat. There were a couple of hints at activities that might have been suitable, but students were free to choose any activity. At standardising, it became apparent that some students had interpreted the task as continuation of the chat, with several inputs and whilst this was not the intended outcome, it was accepted as a valid response as long as the student provided an activity with instructions.

Students were asked to write between 80 and 120 words. It is important to understand that the length of answers is clearly addressed in the mark scheme and that marginal infringements of this aspect of the question would not deny a student access the highest band provided the standard of writing composition justified it. As the time advised for this question is only 20 minutes, students who spent too long and wrote too much may have been doubly disadvantaged. Overall, although it is not possible to provide definitive figures, most students met the requirements of word length for this question. Unusually, this series provided a number of answers that were significantly longer than the upper word limit. Such answers were often self-penalising as clarity and specificity were lost in an abundance of writing. It was also the case that very short answers, below 50 words or so, were unlikely to achieve marks above the bottom level (1-2 marks).

Generally, most students contributed something to the chat in terms of a suggested activity. There was a huge range of activity put forward: from the more obvious ones involving a trip to the park whilst more adventurous ones involved walks, visits to the beach or countryside, and trips in busy town centres. There were very few irrelevant answers but some adopted a simple or narrow response by with a basic naming and listing approach.

Stronger answers provided a clear activity that enabled students to present it as something of value and interest to the rest of the group. The key discriminator, though, was not the activity itself but the way in which students met the requirement to provide some instructions in relation to the activity. The writing of instructions are one of the four types of questions that can be set for Functional Skills English Writing and students who saw the need to produce this type of writing were rewarded.

A number of good answers were clear about their chosen activity and provided solid reasons for their interest and enjoyment. It was clear to the panel of examiners that an element of enthusiasm in presenting the chosen activity would underpin a good answer. Students chose their activity and provided clear focus on it. Where an activity such as visiting a bowling alley was selected the student provided instructions on how this could be arranged in terms of the amount of money required, the time of initial rendezvous and what other things the friends would need to bring along for what was seen by one student as 'the perfect idea'. Others, writing about a visit to an amusement park, for instance, provided instructions on bringing home-prepared food and drink in order to save money to spend on rides. These better answers did not struggle in any way with providing information for this task and in a number of cases there was clearly a battle to provide an answer that met the word limits. In those answers that went marginally over the word limit, there was no penalty but one or two answers that were in the top band could not attain the maximum mark because they had gone disproportionately over the limit.

It is often the case that the language found in the better answers was able to reflect the content more effectively than that in weaker answers. The use of specific vocabulary such as 'savour and enjoy lunch' or 'conclude the day' were found in excellent answers. Sentences were varied and sometimes complex, again adding to the impact of the response.

Many weaker answers tended to name their chosen activity and describe it without providing the instructions needed to fully meet the needs of purpose and audience. Although the word limits are modest, some planning is called for to enable sufficient information to be provided. It is important that students understand that a key feature of the new type of Question 1 is how closely focused the answer is on the task.

The very weakest answers, at the bottom level were almost invariably too short, with students unable to provide much beyond referencing a task with a few details to support the choice. Answers in the bottom band lacked clear sentences and grammatical structure. Vocabulary often provided the only basis for the reader to grasp meaning. However, achievement at this level is limited to a minority, and in this series approximately 12% of students failed to gain more than 2 marks for composition. This was in line with the November performance perhaps as a result of a number of students who offered no answer at all.

Before leaving Question 1, it is important to remember that it carries a maximum of only 9 marks (including SPaG) and it is recommended that students spend no more than 20 minutes answering it. Students who spend too long on this question are putting themselves at a serious disadvantage because they are losing time on Question 2 which is worth twice as many marks. Also, it is extremely unlikely that the maximum mark for Question 1 would deliver a pass for the student, but this is not true for Question 2.

Question 2

This question was a clear transactional task linked to the world of work and one that most students were well prepared for. Students were asked to write an email to sally.jobs@brambycomm.co.uk, providing an application for the opportunity to work as a volunteer with Bramby Community World. The stimulus material for the question was a newspaper advertisement, inviting potential volunteers to provide some information about themselves and about the kinds of activity they would be interested in undertaking. A number of suggestions were contained within the advertisement but the wording clearly indicated that any activity could be considered. It should be pointed out that students were not rewarded specifically for what they chose to apply for, but for the effectiveness of the writing. This was very familiar territory for functional skills students and they would have come across similar questions in previous papers.

The best answers, clearly in the top level for composition (7-9 marks) showed an understanding of the different aspects of the task as they were delineated in the bullet points: firstly to provide some information about the writer, secondly to explain what area of work they were interested in and thirdly to explain why they wanted to work for Bramby Community World. Students in the top band were very clear about the transactional nature of the task and provided clear information about the applicant. This often indicated the work background and experience, but many excellent answers showed students using their life experience as a valuable asset in putting forward their case. The choice of activities was, as expected very wide although a majority stuck to the ones that were provided in the advertisement. Childcare was a very popular choice and the reasons put forward in explanation were often positive and altruistic. Many showed an interest in art or the need to develop skills in a hobby area such as computer gaming. The majority of answers in the top band

provided strong reasons for why the student wanted to work with Bramby Community World and this was often a discriminator between the top and middle bands. Approximately 29% of students were able to reach this standard, which is a significant improvement on the November series.

One of the key descriptors for the top level is: 'Sentence structures, including complex sentences, convey meaning clearly'. This is often a determinant of a good mark as detailed, developed content can be delivered only through such a range of sentences. Simple, single clause sentences do not carry the information and ideas in a way that enables full understanding. In this series, for those students who were able to reach this standard, the quality of the language identified their answers and reflected their content very effectively. Sentences such as 'I am ... and I would like to register my interest in applying for a volunteer role with Bramby Community World' and 'I have experience working with children and adults, helping me to navigate any situation' were not uncommon in the top band. Such students have been well-prepared.

Answers in middle level (marks 4-6) offered some relevant material, but there was evidence of a lack of depth and confidence in the answer. Many of the middle band answers adopted an often simplistic approach without exploration of the points they were making. In some answers students simply said they would like to work in a particular area because they had been interested in it. A sentence like 'I would like to take up an animal course as I have always loved animals since I was young,' requires more detail to make it convincing. The statement remained undeveloped and therefore weakened the response. It was also the case that at the bottom end of the middle band, students nearly always omitted to mention why they wanted to work at Bramby Community World.

The weakest answers, in the 1-3 level were often rather short and the students failed to provide significant explanation for their application. Often without information about the student, the answers also lacked coherence because of unclear sentences. Some answers were only two or three lines in length. In some cases, students who were struggling to understand the task attempted to assemble an answer from elements of the stimulus material. In this series, nearly 12% or so of students were at this level which was a slight improvement on the November performance. Nearly 5% of students did not attempt this question.

Students should be advised that this question carries 18 marks and should therefore be given enough time to gain as many of these marks as possible. There was clear evidence, in a large number of answers, that the students had not spent sufficient time on this answer in either planning or writing.

SPaG

Spelling: at the top level students used specialist language effectively. Words and phrases such as 'appetite for lunch', 'terrific film', 'advise you', 'grow in their skills and confidence', 'plethora', 'knowledge' were spelt correctly. When ascribing a level to spelling it is not simply the correctness of the spelling that matters but the range and ambition of the vocabulary. At the bottom level, 'few examples of conventional spelling' is a key descriptor in the mark scheme.

Punctuation: sentence demarcation is the most significant issue in punctuation and answers in the top level displayed accuracy throughout. Comma splicing and the omission of punctuation are the two key weaknesses in the production of good sentences that can be read comfortably. Occasionally, more complex punctuation is used but not always accurately. In the middle level, sentence punctuation is accurate when sentences are straightforward. At the bottom level, sentence punctuation is either inaccurate, barely present or not present at all. A growing issue is the omission of apostrophes with personal pronouns, as in 'Im' or 'im' (sic).

Grammar: At the bottom level a range of grammatical errors are found which makes reading very difficult. The main problems were:

- issues around tense;
- subject/verb agreement;
- the use of definite and indefinite articles;
- the use of conjunctions or coherence markers;
- lengthy sentences which lost the thread of meaning;

In middle and top levels the scale of grammatical inaccuracy varied considerably but the crucial indicator was the ability to follow what was written.

The final mark for spelling, punctuation and grammar takes into account achievement across the three elements.

In relation to performance, on Question 1, over 25% of answers were in the top level for SPaG while nearly 20% were in the bottom level, this latter figure being a significant drop on the November series.

On Question 2, nearly 30% were in the top level, an improvement on November with some 14% in the bottom level, also an improvement on November.

There is a clear improvement in SPaG performance between the two questions and this reflects the hard work centres have put in to encourage students to be careful with time management.

8720/R- Reading

The first series of 2022 presented students with a range of sources on the topic of fire. Source A was a newspaper report about the 2018 wildfire in Paradise, California; Source B an extract from a podcast discussing careers in the Fire Service and Source C a fire safety guide for tenants. These provided a mix of interesting information and vital knowledge for future homeowners and renters.

Questions 1, 4 and 15, tick box style, require close reading in order to identify which statements are true and which false. This series, Q4 was the most successful in terms of full marks at over 40% compared to just 15% on Q1 and Q15. By far the most common error on Q1 was in designating “*Paradise has had at least four fires in the past twenty years*” as False, simply because it was not presented in the exact style as the source, which referred to “*the past ten years*”. Deciding on the veracity of this statement required a little more thought than simply comparing the words. In Q15, mistakes arose in misinterpreting “*a smoke alarm on each floor of your home*” as referring to the precise location of the smoke alarm (on the floor).

Question 16, the test of fact and opinion, also in tick-box style, was very well-answered with full-mark rates of over 55%. The most visible error occurred when identifying “*Fire in their home may well be the thing people fear most*” as fact.

For all the tick box questions, the instruction is “*put a tick (✓)*”. A significant number of students choose to ignore this and utilise a variety of symbols, such as circles, dots, dashes, the letter V; diagonal lines which fill the entire box or a mixture of ticks and crosses according to whether they are selecting T or F. Some even write the full words in the chosen box. Whilst examiners are directed to award the mark if the symbol is in the correct box, this is a functional test, which includes the ability to follow instructions. It would also be worth making it absolutely clear that all four statements must be attempted. There appears to be an increase in the small number of students ticking only one box or leaving one box blank, thus immediately denying themselves any marks or limiting themselves to a maximum of one mark.

Questions 2, 5 and 13 are the dictionary questions. There were wide variations in the success rates this series with almost 80% gaining the mark for “*dwelling*” but failure rates of just over 30% for “*rural*” and 36% for “*rife*”. These indicate that a significant proportion of students chose not to use a dictionary and guessed at the answer or relied on own knowledge, or did not have access to one. As noted in previous reports, whilst the success rates are pleasing overall, if the advice to use a dictionary is being followed, one would expect almost 100% accuracy. The “not-attempted” rates were significantly reduced this series. Practice in developing dictionary skill could usefully form part of future lessons. It would also be worthwhile teaching students that alternative definitions sometimes appear and to look for the numerals which would indicate this. When students try to change an answer by overwriting, it can be difficult to discern which letter they wish to submit as their final answer. Please advise students not to overwrite, but clearly cross out and write the alternative next to the crossed out response. It is perfectly acceptable to write a second-attempt answer outside the box to ensure clarity. There was also evidence of some good practice in students clearly eliminating some of the possibilities and working through the options systematically.

Question 3 this series tested punctuation. Only a little over 20% correctly identified that the exclamation mark at the end of “*It looked like amber snowflakes falling from the sky!*” showed the speaker’s amazement at the idea of snow falling in a hot fire. Options B & C referred to the speaker’s “*amusement*” and “*fear*” respectively and were both more popular answers. Whilst the exclamation mark is frequently used to signify those emotions, they were not accurate in the context of the passage. Although the speaker (*firefighter, Ken Lowe*) did refer to “*panic*”, he was

not talking about his own feelings and the expression “*amber snowflakes*” is quite an unusual and positive image, more appropriate to amazement than the other emotions cited.

Questions 7.1 and 7.2 asked for a positive and negative thing about working as a firefighter. Over 60% of entrants were able to identify a positive aspect such as “*a decent pension*” or “*secure career*”. In Q7.2, over 80% found a negative aspect, the overwhelmingly popular one being “*the risk of injury or death*”. Students who missed out on the mark for a positive aspect either ignored the source text with comments such as “*They get to help people*” or “*the privilege of saving lives*”. Others felt a positive feature was “*the low chance of death*”! The main error in 7.2 was selecting “*It’s a demanding job*” as a negative, which was not an interpretation supported by the text.

Question 9 – the picture question – proved significantly more difficult than in previous papers. Just over 40% gained the mark for the correct answer: “*Firefighters deal with floods*”. Almost as many students selected “*Firefighters must wear a uniform*”, which cannot be the correct option since this was referred to in the source. This question is simply a matter of eliminating options on the basis of their inclusion in the written text, or because they are simply not credible, such as Option D: “*Firefighters like to have barbecues*”.

Questions 10 and 11 ask for two similarities and two differences respectively, between Source A and B. This is the second series utilising the new question wording and layout. It’s pleasing to see that the improvement in performance on **Q10** seen last series has been maintained with a 50% of students achieving full marks. However, 15% of students did not score any marks on this question, including just under 4% who did not attempt it. Students who rely on what appear to be pre-learned responses which are inevitably generic cannot achieve full marks as they are offering no evidence that their answer is based on the two texts in front of them. There is always a further risk that both sources will not contain a picture, title, subheading etc so the texts need to be studied to ensure that the response is accurate.

Question 11 has not experienced the same improvement with fewer than 10% of students achieving full marks. Half of them gained one mark and this was almost always as a result of identifying one valid difference but presenting it as two separate comments – one in each space. From the June 2022 series, it has been decided to remove the two separate spaces designated “Difference 1” and “Difference 2” and present the answer space as a number of lines with no division. It is hoped that, with careful teaching and guidance, this will remind students that two differences are required, which, in essence, requires four separate points. 35% of entrants gained no marks on this question, including over 4% unattempted, so there is clear scope for improvement here – see below for suggestions.

Students need to comment on specific aspects of the texts, rather than making generic comments.

Differences must be ways in which the texts are different, which may well need to include recognition of a similarity rather than simply restating that they are different – see the penultimate point in the guidance which follows. Responses need to be specific and students should avoid unrelated pronouns which often make it difficult to see where marks can be awarded. For example: “*One is talking about a fire and the other is talking about dealing with fires*”. Responses can also suffer when the basis of the difference is not clear, such as “*Source A talks about a specific event and Source B is about working as a firefighter*”.

The following guidance, reproduced from previous reports, remains valid.

- The sources will always be linked thematically so students can say “*Both sources are about.....fire*”. They can then identify a specific point relating to the content of the sources eg “*Both sources included firefighters*”.

- Advise students to look at the front of the insert, which clearly identifies the text type and this is a completely acceptable way to secure a valid difference.
- Students need to be specific in the points they make so steering them away from generic comments would be advisable. Responses such as *“Both texts use paragraphs”* or *“Source A is a webpage and Source B / the other one isn’t”* will not be rewarded. The latter comment simply points out that the sources are different, which the question already indicates. Students need to say what the difference is.
- Some students appear to enter the examination with a pre-prepared response such as *“Both texts use sub-headings”*, which, if wrong, simply indicates that the student has not even looked at the sources in an attempt to identify a similarity or difference. When identifying aspects of presentation, these must be linked to the source text, ie, both texts contain *“pictures of fires”*.
- Comments which are not comparing like with like are sometimes offered: *“Source A uses sub-headings and Source B is a letter”*, for example.
- Finally, pictures. One of the sources will always contain a picture, in order to deliver the scope of study descriptor assessment for **Q3**. There is no guarantee that both sources will contain an image so the pre-planned response referred to above must be avoided. If both sources do contain an image, students will be able to gain a mark for identifying this in **Q10**. If only one source contains a picture, this will not form a valid route for a mark in **Q11**. However, if both sources contain an image, a mark can be gained in **Q11** by identifying a difference in the content of the pictures such as this precise observation: *“Source A contains a picture of a fire burning but Source B contains pictures of people trying to put out a fire”*.

Question 17 – This series gave students a different type of task and the majority rose to it splendidly. Students were required to formulate questions to ask of a prospective landlord about the fire safety in a proposed rental. This was based on the likelihood that many students will go on to become renters, or may already be so, and fire safety is an extremely important element of anyone’s home. It also rewarded those students who made a clear attempt at the set task and discouraged indiscriminate copying. Where students failed to gain marks, it was generally as a result of vagueness in the questions, such as *“Which type of material should I get for my furniture?”* or *“Is the cooker working properly?”* Where students gave accurate information with no attempt to present it as questions, responses were capped at one mark. Well over 40% achieved full marks on this question with a further 23% gaining 2 marks. Unfortunately 15% failed to score, half of these as a result of making no attempt.

It would be helpful to remind students that this is a functional test: reading the question and complying with its precise requirements are important elements of the assessment. This is the highest tariff question on the paper and it is clear that a number of students arrive here depleted in terms of time and/or energy and lack focus and motivation. There is no reason why Source C and its 10 marks of questions could not be attempted first, thus completing Q17 while still relatively fresh.

Overall this series was largely very pleasing. The mean mark of 15, achieved by over 60% of students, was just below that of the November series and exactly in line with January 2021. There was considerable success in the use of dictionaries and some careful reading seen across a range of questions. There were gratifying success rates in Questions 4, 7.2 and 16. Questions 6 and 12 both test understanding of textual purposes and these had positive outcomes ranging from 61 to

79%. Questions 8 and 14 test students' understanding of statements in context, both again displaying success rates in the high 70s. It is satisfying to see the maintenance in performance on Question 10 and particularly pleasing to witness the application and effort made in Question 17, where the task was unfamiliar and challenging, yet the majority of entrants were undeterred. This report necessarily focuses on areas which have been more problematic and require improvement; despite these, there is compelling evidence of better coaching and greater application. Given the ongoing tribulations and inevitable loss of learning of the current cohort of students, the standard in the majority of responses seen deserves recognition. Once again, congratulations must go to all who persevered with their lessons and examinations in these unrelentingly stressful and challenging circumstances. Very well done to the students who took this exam and to the teachers who continue to work ceaselessly on their behalf.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.