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Principal Examiner Feedback

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Functional Skills Mathematics Level 1 (FSM01)

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Functional Skills Mathematics Level 1

Introduction

Most candidates found the paper accessible and attempted all of the questions. The majority of marks on Functional Skills paper are for showing a correct process. Candidates should be encouraged to show how they arrive at an answer.

Showing logical steps, especially when a calculator is used, is so important for communicating the way a problem is solved. Many candidates demonstrated poor presentation skills when setting out their calculations and often did not make their answer clear. In addition some candidates do not write numbers clearly making it difficult to determine whether they have actually arrived at an acceptable answer. When communication is poor with a mass of figures given in no particular order it is difficult to credit students for demonstrating the correct process.

Candidates should be encouraged to read through questions carefully and identify key information. They should also re-read the question after answering it to ensure that they have provided the answer required. For example, when a decision was needed this was occasionally omitted.

Report on Individual Questions

SECTION A: Garden

Most candidates successfully engaged with this section despite the unfamiliarity of some of the tasks.

Question 1a

The majority of candidates understood the question and were able to draw two 3×2 rectangles on the diagram. The constraint that was most often overlooked was the need for the vegetable plots to be at least 6 m from the house.

Question 1b

This wasn't as well done as it should have been showing that candidates don't, on the whole, have a very good understanding of the concept of area. Some candidates clearly did try to count the remaining number of squares but other, incorrect, methods of solution were seen.

Question 1c

This part was answered correctly by the majority of candidates although some were unable to give their answer in a correct form. Answers such as 80.50 or £80.5 were penalised. Candidates do need to ensure that they include units with their answers where necessary and give two decimal places where appropriate for money answers. A minority of candidates did arrive at the correct answer but then went onto do some further calculation and so were not awarded the final mark.

Question 2a
This part was generally very well done although a small minority of candidates misread the table and gave vegetables that could not be planted in March as their answer. This underlines the need for candidates to read questions carefully, including keys on diagrams.

Question 2b
The majority of candidates answered the question well by explaining that there would be room for 12 seeds in 4 bags or demonstrating, possibly with the aid of a diagram, that 10 seeds would need 3 full bags and 1 bag with just one seed.

Question 2c
This question was found to be the most demanding on the paper. There was a mark available for using consistent units but, even so, many candidates failed to score on this question. Those candidates who evaluated 200 ÷ 30 or used a build-up method or used a diagrammatic representation were usually successful. A common error was to ignore the inconsistent units and calculate 30 ÷ 2 or 2 ÷ 300. Also 4 was seen as an answer with candidates treating the 2 metre strip as two separate metres - stating 2 seeds in 1 metre and then doubling

Question 3
The vast majority of candidates who attempted this question achieved at least partial credit. A common error in this question was just to work out the price for the 'Buy 3 get 1 free' offer and ignore the other two offers. Candidates using this approach could score a maximum of two marks. Some candidates did state by using the 4th bag free gave exactly 100 litres and suggested this was the best buy – not reading the question 'pay as little as possible'. The vast majority of candidates who arrived at 3 comparable totals did make the correct decision or made no decision. A very small minority of candidates did find the correct prices using the three different sized bags but then failed to pick out the lowest price correctly – believing that 9.8 is a smaller number than 9.28 generally caused this type of error.

Section B: Quiz

Question 4a
There was some confusion as to how to find the mean with a significant number of candidates using the median instead. Those candidates who did attempt to find the mean often used their calculators incorrectly and failed to find the sum before dividing by six. A minority of candidates, having found the correct mean, then failed to give a decision.

Question 4b
This question was well attempted with the majority of candidates choosing to draw a bar graph. Many students lost a mark for omitting to label the vertical scale. Candidates who used a scale of two 2mm squares to 1 unit on the *y* axis sometimes plotted points such as 280 incorrectly. Candidates who chose to label the vertical scale in years did not generally answer the question very well.

Question 5a
This question was generally well answered by candidates. Some candidates left out spaces for the name of the team members and so scored only 2 out of the 3 available marks. The majority of candidates did provide a workable data collection sheet.

Question 5b
The majority of candidates recognised the need to divide 90 by 8. However, a significant number of candidates worked out 90 × 8 and so gave their answer as 720 packs of bread rolls. This was an instance where reading through the question after finding an answer may well have helped candidates to spot their mistake. Some candidates left their answer as 11.25 and so failed to gain the final mark.

Question 5c
Some candidates failed to read the sentence 'She buys 6 prizes costing £5 each.' carefully enough. The most common error was to subtract 5 or subtract 6÷5 rather than 6×5 along with 600 from the budget. There was clear evidence of some careless arithmetic with the correct sum of 900 – 630 evaluated as 370 as well as 6 × 5 evaluated as 25 or 35.

Question 6
The most common error was for candidates to find the total of right answers and the total of wrong answers and then to subtract these without multiplying by 5 and 2 respectively. Some candidates did not show all their working and therefore it was not possible to award marks when the answer was incorrect.

Section C: Rome

Question 7a
The majority of candidates were able to give the correct two times. Some candidates did appear to misread the question and just give the cheapest flights or flights to and from Gatwick rather than Heathrow.

Question 7b
The majority of candidates who attempted this question gained partial credit with a significant number gaining full credit. Those who found the wrong flights in (a) were still able to gain full marks providing that they showed all their working. A minority of candidates failed to give a final decision. Other errors included not finding the correct total due to arithmetic errors – a mixture of addition and subtraction was often seen.

Question 8
This question was generally well done with many candidates scoring full marks. There was a lot of information given but, even so, the majority of candidates read this carefully and gave all the required features in their answers. Typical errors included not giving the finishing times of the tours or having one finish time incorrect, not giving the days of the tours and having two tours in the same slot.

Question 9a

Responses to this question were very variable. There were some candidates who worked out 14 + 10 ÷ 2 rather than (14 + 10) ÷ 2 but these candidates were still generally able to score 2 out of the 3 marks. A common error was to evaluate 14.10 ÷ 2.2. A small minority of candidates showed the calculation but not their answer. Where decisions need to be made it is vital that candidates do show the results of any calculation on which their decision will be based.

Question 9b

The majority of candidates understood the process that they had to carry out but there were many mistakes seen in the working out of the programme durations. The most common error was to give durations of 1 hour 10 minutes instead of 50 minutes for Mad Men and Casualty.

Adding times together still causes difficulty.

Pass mark for FSM01

Maximum mark	48
Pass mark	28
UMS	6

Note: Grade boundaries vary from year to year and from subject to subject, depending on the demands of the questions.

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