



Examiners' Report

May 2017

Pearson Edexcel Functional Skills
Mathematics Level 1 (FSM01)

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General comments

This Level 1 paper covered themes of trains, garden birds and a bakery.

Calculations relating to money and interpreting given data were often successfully answered. Learners need to demonstrate their ability to convert between different units in the same metric measurement system.

It is pleasing to note that more learners appear to be using a calculator and showing each stage of their working. This should be encouraged at all times.

Centres should do all they can to encourage learners to show a reverse calculation as a check for their calculations. It is disappointing that many learners omit showing checks of their working altogether.

Centres should also encourage learners to ensure they have given a decision where one is required by the question. The final mark often requires a decision as well as the number calculated.

Section A

Q1a A straightforward money calculation successfully attempted by most learners. Most learners was able to calculate the sum required accurately and subtract their total from the money available with minor errors in accuracy, but lost 1 mark for not making a decision.

Q1b This question was a two-step calculation, adding a list of costs and checking change. Again, a decision was required for the final mark but most learners did this question well.

Q1c Finding a simple percentage of a large number is a skill required at Level 1. Some learners struggled with the size of the numbers involved and missed zeros. Unclear methods meant some learners did not gain marks for process. '90% of 4732000' is not sufficient for a process mark without the actual calculations. A check was required here but was often omitted.

Q2 This question required learners to compare two train routes to find the quickest way to get to Stoke. Working with journey times is a very functional activity. Some learners still struggle to add times accurately particularly when the time is over an hour or the answer crosses into the next hour. It was pleasing that many learners were able to find at least one correct arrival time and most attempted both. However, those that only showed one journey could not score all the marks available. Learners should be encouraged to show figures to compare where there are alternatives.

Q3a Here learners were required to draw a graph or chart to represent a set of data given in a table. This was generally well done with linear scales shown and accurate plotting seen. Some learners are still not giving either a title or a label for the units on the Y axis losing a valuable mark. A few learners numbered the spaces rather than the lines making plotting difficult.

Q3b Learners were then asked to comment on the figures in the table. Most learners could give a simple statement interpreting the figures given. Some just repeated the figures from the table and did not score a mark for this.

Section B

Q4a This question required learners to mark a point given two constraints (150mm from the bottom and equal distances from the left edge and the right edge). It was dependent on the learner having and using a ruler accurately. Most learners were able to score at least one of the marks. Some learners misinterpreted the constraints and found the centre of the rectangle and made their mark there instead of 150mm up. Care should be taken to read the constraints carefully.

Q4b It was pleasing that most learners answered this correctly. They were required to interpret and label lengths on a diagram. Those who did not score either wrote the correct measurements the wrong way around or gave the actual measurements on the page instead of the labels given. Care should be taken to read the question carefully.

Q4c It was disappointing that many learners chose not to engage with this question at all. The question required learners to extract information from a table in an unfamiliar context. Those that did attempt it used all of the numbers given instead of only the ones required. Different units were given in the question and a mark was awarded for converting to the same units to use through their calculations. Learners should be encouraged to show all such conversions when they are used. The question itself was a functional one about the use of materials. Highlighting the information required in order to answer the question fully can be a great help to learners in the exam.

Q5a This question required learners to interpret large numbers given in words and then subtract one from the other. It was pleasing to note that most learners were able to carry out both of these tasks. Occasionally accuracy errors were made.

Q5b This question required learners to substitute given numbers into a formula (given in words) to find a percentage. A common error was reversing the numbers before carrying out the division – learners should read and follow the given steps to gain full marks.

Q5c Learners were asked to calculate the mean of a set of numbers presented in a table and then show a check of their workings. This check was shown more often than the other two in the paper. Some learners still show the range or median when asked for a mean but most are able to calculate the correct figure. Learners should be reminded to show their workings clearly for each step.

Section C

Q6a The bakery section started with a problem working with proportion and metric units for a recipe. Many learners were able to engage with the proportional aspects of the problem but were unable to correctly convert between grams and kilograms. Correct units were required for the final mark. Learners need to practise unit conversions and know where they are required. The check that was asked for here was often omitted. Learners can show a check of any part of their calculations.

Q6b Learners approached this perimeter question using a variety of methods with many gaining process marks. Common errors included; only finding one perimeter length but not a comparable figure, accuracy errors in arithmetic and finding the area of the cake instead of the perimeter. At Level 1 learners should be aware of the difference between the area and the perimeter and when to use each one. They should use the calculator at all times if only to confirm their written method.

Q7a At level 1 and beyond data collection sheets should be efficient. This means data can be collected by ticking or tallying. Therefore, two-way tables should be demonstrated to the learners so that they can construct one for any two given variables. Learners would benefit from giving headings (eg flavour and/or icing colour) for the variables for the final marks.

Q7b Learners were asked to give the likelihood of picking a particular flavour from 30 cupcakes, 15 each of two flavours. Many learners gave a probability as a percentage or fraction and scored the mark. This is particularly pleasing as expressing probability numerically is a level 2 skill and learners should be commended for demonstrating it. As a likelihood, the word 'likely' is not correct although it was often seen. Many learners gave their answer as 50/50 which is not creditworthy.

Q8 The final question was a price comparison of two different pay monthly offers to buy an oven. It was attempted by almost all candidates. The majority of learners were able to find the total for monthly payments and combine it with the delivery charge and, for one offer, a deposit. Learners who calculated both total figures identified the cheaper option correctly. Some learners did not work with the number of monthly payments and were unable to score 4 of the 5 marks available.

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