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**Edexcel Functional Skills Qualification in
Mathematics at Level 1**

Principal Examiner Feedback

PMAT1 SET 6

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Introduction

The sixth live test paper for the reformed qualification covered a broad range of topics from the new specification. Some concepts were more familiar than others. A number of questions now appear without a context and are referred to as underpinning but the majority of problem solving questions are still set in functional contexts.

Centres are encouraged to allow plenty of classroom time for learners to practise work on problem solving and ways to approach multistep problems so that they can extract what is required from the information given to answer the question asked. Learners should always be encouraged to show organised working. This is essential for the questions that require it, as marks cannot be given where no working is seen. Similarly, learners are often able to begin to work with percentages (of money) in familiar contexts and multistep problems, but many do not show a process to allow them to gain marks if they make an arithmetic error. Learners should be encouraged to show exactly how they work out steps in percentage calculations to avoid losing marks.

From this paper, areas to work on are:

- Checks: Where learners are required to show a check of their working care must be taken to show that process and the answer in the answer box. Overall, many checks are still left blank, and learners should work on their understanding of how to show a check that confirms that they have given a reasonable and meaningful answer. (NCQ03, CQ10)
- Selecting the correct calculation: Learners at this level find choosing the correct process for perimeter, area or volume challenging and should be encouraged to practise each skill and its applications extensively. They should be given the opportunity to develop strategies to ensure they calculate the correct figure. (NCQ04, CQ03, CQ07)
- Recognising and understanding powers: Learners at this level often confuse squaring a number with multiplying that number by 2 (NCQ3a)

The paper showed that learners are well prepared in the following areas:

- Calculating the mean of a set of data: It was pleasing to note that learners can calculate the mean of a set of data and combine this with other skills such as working with money. Many learners attempted CQ06 and scored at least 3 out of the 6 marks available for this question.
- Using simple formula expressed in words: It is pleasing to see almost all learners confidently approaching this familiar style formula given in words and only a few made errors in calculation or omitted the decision with the answer and so did not pick up the last mark. (CQ08)
- Calculating the range of a set of data: Learners were generally able to pick up the majority of the marks for this question. (CQ10)

Some learners did not appear to have access to the full range of equipment required by the assessment, for example, rulers, and centres should try to remind learners to have the mathematical equipment listed on the front of the paper so that they can access all of the questions that they may be set.

Section A (Non – Calculator)

Question 1

This question required learners to work with a simple percentage and proportion. These processes could be done in either order. It was pleasing to see that most learners were able to engage with the proportion element and gain the first mark. As is often the case at this level some incorrect percentage statements were seen that were unable to gain marks without showing a correct process. Some learners divide by the percentage required (e.g. where 5% is required they divide the figure by 5), this is possibly because of a misconception from dividing by 10 to find 10% and centres could potentially check for this in preparation for the exam.

Question 2

Three single mark underpinning questions where only the correct answer scored a mark.

- (a) Write 0.3 as a fraction, incorrect answers included $\frac{1}{3}$ and $\frac{0}{3}$
- (b) This multiplication of 1.6 by 1000 was challenging for some learners. 1.600 was often seen. Learners should practice working with place value often.
- (c) Rounding 19.075 to 1 decimal place was often answered incorrectly. At this level learners should be building upon the decimals seen and used at Entry Level to allow them to use and calculate with numbers with a greater number of decimal places.

Question 3

- (a) Another underpinning question here, this time testing the order of precedence of operations. While most learners were able to correctly work with the brackets first, many calculated 4×2 for 4^2 or added 4 and then tried to square their figure.
- (b) The first check on the paper was not often carried out and a repeat of an original calculation is not seen as check and when seen will not be awarded any marks.

Question 4

Compound and combined areas, such as this question, were introduced with the new specification at this level. As mentioned above, learners often confuse perimeter and area and should be encouraged to develop strategies to decide on the correct one to use for the demand. Many learners were able to gain a mark for finding a missing length even if they went on to use an incorrect process.

Section B (Calculator)

Question 1

This question required learners to calculate with times given in different formats (fractions and decimals) to compare to 10 hours. The process of adding the times was well attempted but the conversion of the three given times to the same formats was more challenging. For instance, some learners converted $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour to 3 hours and 40 minutes or 75 minutes (which was occasionally converted to 1 hour and 15 minutes). 5.5 hours was commonly converted to 5 hours and 50 minutes.

Question 2

Learners needed to measure the angles in a pie chart, interpret the angle for 'fish' and had to show their workings here. Some correct answers were seen without any working and because this was a 'You **must** show your working' question, these could not gain marks. Overall, this was often challenging for learners, not least because many did not appear to have access to a protractor. Centres should encourage learners to practise interpreting (and drawing) a range of tables, charts and diagrams to represent discrete data.

Question 3

Learners were asked to calculate the number of fence panels required to go around a field given its length and width and a gap for a gate. Whilst some learners were able to calculate this correctly some simply added two or three of the lengths given (without factoring in their opposite sides) and others worked out the area of the field which scored no marks. The width of the gate was given in cm whilst the other measurements given were in metres so a conversion was required but this was not always carried out by learners. Many learners were able to realise that they needed to divide their perimeter (or part thereof) by the width of each fence panel.

Question 4

Most learners can produce a bar chart using the suggested linear scale on the y-axis and accurately plot the data, but a significant number of learners do not label the axes and are unable to gain full marks. Centres should continue to stress the importance of these labels or an appropriate and clear title – where the labels are implied by the title. Sensible use of the available space on the grid should also be encouraged to enable accuracy in plotting.

Question 5

To answer this question learners had a few ways through the problem, and it was essential that they show working. Most learners were able to engage with the task by beginning with finding the number of electric cars that were sold and often going on to multiply that by 6 to compare with 720. Others divided 720 by their 120 to compare with 6. A few did not write down a decision to answer the question 'Was he correct?'

Question 6

This multistep problem, set in a barber shop, required learners to work out the mean number of haircuts each day the previous week and then go on to use this figure, with the current price of each haircut to work out the income after a percentage price increase. The processes could be carried out in several ways leaving learners with plenty of choice. It is pleasing to see that almost all learners can calculate a mean

from a set of numbers. Most learners engaged with the price at some point and commonly the errors seen were related to calculating the percentage increase.

Question 7

An underpinning volume question testing process, accuracy and units. The shape was a square based cuboid with dimensions given in cm. As previously mentioned, the most common error was selecting an incorrect calculation for volume, with many learners adding the side lengths (including, on occasion, 4 lots of 17 and 8 lots of 8) although if the correct units were seen (cm^3) a mark could still be gained.

Question 8

It is pleasing to see almost all learners confidently approaching this familiar style formula given in words and only a few made errors in calculation or omitted the decision with the answer and so failed to pick up the last mark.

Question 9

This question asked learners to interpret a scale diagram and draw a rectangular and a square space upon it. Most learners were able to do this accurately for at least one of the shapes and could follow the constraints. Some learners did not appear to have used a ruler.

Question 10

- (a) This underpinning question required learners to find the range of a set of data which included a mixture of positive and negative numbers. Some learners found this challenging and ignored the signs, others were unable to calculate accurately with subtracting the negative number after they had correctly selected the highest and lowest values. Learners may find the use of number lines helpful for these kinds of questions.
- (b) This check was shown a little more often than the first check on the paper but was still often a repeat calculation.

Question 11

This question required learners to work with a budget and find a discounted price using fractions and find the number of packs needed. Many learners were able to work out the number of packs needed but struggled with finding a fraction of an amount of money. 0.20 was often seen subtracted to give the discounted price when it should have been $\frac{1}{5}$ of the original price. Many blank responses were seen (possibly because it was the last question on the paper). Centres should encourage learners to pace themselves timewise and attempt all questions on the paper as they do not generally increase with difficulty and every mark gained counts!

Pass mark for FS Level 1 Maths set 6

Maximum mark	56
Pass mark	32

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