
FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH LEVEL 1

8720/S/W/R

Report on the Examination

8720

June 2022

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Please note that this report covers Functional Skills English for Level 1 (8720)**8720/S - Speaking****Introduction**

A large number of centres entered 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. It is important to note here that teachers need to ask questions because they know the criteria and what the student needs to do to attain them.

Each submission gives an insight into what is engaging students at any one time. This is especially the case with the very large June entry. A year ago it was all things covid, this year covid was barely a topic to mention. Easily the most popular topic for students to talk about was the war in Ukraine and it was pleasing to note that students were well informed and had researched key aspects of their ideas. They showed genuine sympathy for the plight of those caught up in the conflict and were led by some very good English teaching into thinking about how their own lives could be impacted by economic and social consequences of the conflict.

Problems remain in five key areas, as has been noted in previous reports. 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 they can use a script but at the same time engage with their audience. Too often it seemed that students were being put in front of a camera without preparation and then given their one and only chance to perform.

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 achieved.

The third problem is that many centres do not submit evidence by the required deadline. Students should only be entered for this examination if there is already evidence that they have passed. It is not acceptable to start thinking about the required evidence after entries have been submitted.

The fourth problem is that many centres seem to think that Functional Skills English is a default qualification for those unable, for various reasons, to sit GCSE. This is not necessarily the case, especially with Spoken English: whereas at GCSE Spoken English is an endorsement and so an add-on, at Functional Skills it is a requirement. Quite a number of centres opt for Functional Skills and then do not complete some of the key requirements of the Spoken English unit. This causes great difficulties.

The fifth problem is the failure to label each file on the USB with the centre number, student number, student name. Centres who use their own systems, or merely put initials of students, make it very hard for the verifier to match the file with the online entry.

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. Centres must not use their own passwords which are then unavailable to the verifier and so require further chasing.

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. 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 discussions 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 Candidate Record Form (CRF).

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

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 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, its number, 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 have again worked very hard to provide verifiers with all that is needed and their efforts are much appreciated.

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

Centre Declaration Sheet 2022 - https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/admin/crf_pdf/AQA-CDS-22.PDF

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

8720/W – Writing

Overview

This is the tenth 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 it would appear that the trend is now more positive in terms of entries and this summer series confirmed this.

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 who are seriously stretched. 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 been 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, though 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 39% gained a mark of 18 or more, and improvement over the previous series. These figures are very encouraging, particularly at the top end where performance matched the stronger figures for January 22. 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 email Jenny Callar-Braithewaite, a representative of a local college, to notify her that it would not be possible to attend an arranged interview for college entry. Although the date and time of the interview was included in the stimulus material, the question was phrased in an open way to allow a range of reasons for non-attendance. The stimulus material provided additional information that could also be incorporated into the answer. At standardising, it became apparent that some students had sent emails to apologise for non-attendance on a date that had already passed. This was not penalised as it was accepted as a valid response as long as the student provided a clear response to the task.

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 to 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. The nature of this question allowed for perfectly valid answers that were close to, or just above, the lower word limit. Some of these answers fulfilled the requirements of the question to a very high standard. Excessively long answers were self-penalising as they lost focus and clarity while very short answers, below 50 words or so, were unlikely to achieve marks above the bottom level (1-2 marks).

Generally, most students saw the task very clearly. They needed to introduce the issue, apologise, provide reasons for non attendance and put into place some process to re-schedule the interview. Very few students missed the task entirely (but see above) and it was clear that most had been well prepared for a clearly transactional piece of writing.

Better answers nearly always led with a statement of apology or regret, often expressed in quite formal, but perfectly appropriate ways. In one or two cases students were fulsome in the apology without damaging the main thrust of the email. Stronger answers provided a clear reason for non-attendance at the interview and in most cases these were very credible. Many students put forward overwhelming family circumstance, such as a family bereavement or doctor's appointment. In most cases the date and time of the prioritised event was provided, which enabled further credibility for the email. Students asked for the interview to be re-scheduled (using that term) and requested a response that would allow the interview to be set up and confirmed. Many good answers put forward the view that the writer did not wish to miss the opportunity to go to college, often using persuasive language to reinforce their position

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 'apologise for not being able to attend the interview on...' or 'grateful if you could re-schedule...' were found in excellent answers. Sentences were varied and sometimes complex, again adding to the impact of the response. The use of declarative sentences, outlining the reasons for non-attendance, for example, were very effectively deployed in many cases.

Many weaker answers tended to miss out on one or more of the elements to enable the functionality of the email. Sometimes valid reasons for attendance were omitted, in other cases, the reason for non-attendance undermined the apology, such as 'I'm going to the cinema on that day'.

The very weakest answers, at the bottom level were almost invariably too short, with students unable to provide much beyond reference to the college and/or the interview. Answers in the

bottom band were often incoherent with vocabulary alone, without clear sentences and grammatical structure, providing the only basis for the reader to grasp meaning. Some students were clearly trying to assemble an answer by borrowing heavily from the stimulus material in a 'cut and paste' approach. However, achievement at this level is limited to a minority, and in this series approximately 14% of students failed to gain more than 2 marks for composition. This indicates that some students may be better suited to the Entry Level Certificate (Step Up To English).

Before leaving Question 1, it is important to remember that it carries a maximum of only 9 marks (including SPG) 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 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 report about a visit to Bramby Swimming Pool following a recent visit which had not been a happy experience. The task was felt to be something that students would find no difficulty in understanding and the stimulus material provided some information that might feed into the answer. Nearly all students were able to produce narrative writing of some sort ranging from the detailed and complex to the more factually mundane.

The best answers were those which provided detailed information within a clear structure, using effective language to present an interesting and engaging narrative. Students in the top band were able to undertake the task with clear confidence and safely began by providing some context for their visit. They would then begin to identify problem areas, often utilising the categories in the stimulus material. So for instance, many used the phrase 'Safe and clean' as a way into a presentation of exactly the opposite. Students wrote about dirty water, slippery surfaces and litter and personal waste left unattended. The depiction of the problem was presented in a clear, factual way but it was the use of further comments, developing the issue and expressing distaste, that distinguished the better answers. The report was not meant to simply itemise the problematic issues but also to suggest improvements as directed by the third bullet point. Many of the best answers provided mature and reasonable suggestions for improvement.

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 simply 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 'There were time when parents were leaving their children unattended in the pool' and 'I think it should be mandatory for lifeguards to wear identification,' 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 answers in this band tended to go through the points in the stimulus material and make a comment about each one, as if they were ticking these items off in a list. The meant that the answers lacked depth and appropriate comment despite the fact that they ostensibly covered a wide range of issues.

The weakest answers, in the 1-3 level were often rather short and the student did not provide significant information, detail or logical sequence to sustain a narrative that met the needs of the task. Where there was coherent narrative, the task of interpreting the challenging language was a

key indicator of the quality of the response. In this series, nearly 15% or so of students were at this level which was rather weaker than the previous two series. Only 3% or so of students did not attempt the 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.

SPG

Spelling: at the top level students used specialist language effectively. Words and phrases such as 'available', 'apologise', 're-schedule', 'the floor was a smooth slippery surface', 'impolite' 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) and the erroneous 'improve it's standards'. Another feature is the arbitrary use of upper case that may be linked to social media practices.

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

- issues around tense especially shifting between past and present
- omission of verbs in phrases which include the present participle, such as 'I visiting...'
- 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 18% of answers were in the top level for SPaG, which was in line with the March series, while only 19% were in the bottom level, this latter figure being a slight improvement on March.

On Question 2, less than 20% were in the top level, a drop since January with some 18% in the bottom level, which represents a 2% improvement on the March figures.

8720/R – Reading

In Summer 2022, Functional Skills students were presented with a range of sources on the theme of aquatic life. Source A was an advertisement encouraging a visit to Sea Life Centre and Source B an extract from a podcast about keeping a pet fish. Should listeners to Source B have been persuaded to embark on keeping pet fish, Source C would provide them with a set of instructions for getting started. There was a very pleasing level of engagement with all three sources and it was clear that many students had their own personal knowledge and experience of the subject: this may not always have been helpful.

Questions 1, 4 and 15, tick box style, ask students to identify which statements are true and which false, thereby testing close reading and comprehension. In terms of attaining the full 2 marks Q4 and Q15 were most successful with rates of well over 50%. Q15 also had the lowest percentage of students achieving no marks at just over 10%, although a considerable number of responses which identified “*fish need oxygen in their tank water*” as false. Question 1 was less successful with only 12% achieving full marks, largely owing to a misunderstanding of the metaphorical nature of the sentence “*Every visit is a chance to dive in and explore the Underwater 4-D Experience*”. Those who took this literally did not identify “*Visitors can go diving...*” as false. Over 40% thus did not secure any marks on Question 1.

Question 16, the test of fact and opinion, also in tick-box style, was largely well-answered with full-mark rates just below 45%. However, almost 30% did not score, mainly owing to erroneous identification of “*A goldfish bowl is a good way to start*” as Opinion.

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, which is simply wasting time. 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; all four boxes must be correctly ticked to achieve 2 marks and only two correct boxes will result in zero.

Questions 2, 5 and 13 are the dictionary questions. These demonstrated success rates between 71% and 82%, which is encouraging but could be improved if all entrants were able to use a dictionary successfully. 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. Only Q13 had a not-attempted rate above 1%, presumably owing to time pressures as the examination progressed.

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, in the cause of clarity, however, two letters presented in the form of “*A or C*” will result in loss of the mark. There was also evidence of some good practice in students clearly eliminating some of the possibilities and working through the options systematically.

Question 3 in this series tested punctuation. Students were asked to identify the reason for inclusion of an exclamation mark at the end of “*...you won't want to dip your hand in!*” Over 70% were able to successfully select “*To warn visitors that jellyfish sting*” as the correct answer. The

most common incorrect choice was *“To remind visitors that they are not allowed to touch any fish”*. Selection of this option indicated a lack of understanding of the nature of an interactive rockpool and it is possible that the source did not make the tactile nature of this feature sufficiently clear for those lacking personal experience.

Questions 7.1 and 7.2 asked for a positive and negative thing about keeping a fish as a pet. Both were reasonably well done with 7.1 over 70% and 7.2 just below. Whilst we attempt to give Level 1 students the benefit of the doubt in regards to the way responses are expressed, students should be advised that only their first attempt will be acceptable. What is being assessed here is the ability to *“identify and understand the main points, ideas and details in texts”*. “Identify” means “select” and it cannot be right that some students are rewarded for copying several points into the space meant for one point and sometimes arriving at a right answer only by the second or third attempt. Furthermore, inclusion of a positive and a negative **in the same answer** is likely to invalidate the mark. Students should be advised to choose **one positive** and **one negative** only and put each of these into the relevant space.

Question 9. For the picture question this series fewer than 10% of entrants recognised the correct answer. The Scope of Study descriptor for this question is *“Infer from images meanings not explicit in the accompanying text”*. The question is worded to test this by advising students *“Source B contains text and two pictures. What extra information about keeping a pet fish does Picture 2 suggest?”* Answering this question then, should simply be a matter of eliminating options on the basis of their inclusion in the written text – if it is stated in the text, it cannot be the right answer. In this series, the vast majority who did not score chose *“It teaches children responsibility”* despite this being clearly stated in the final line of Source B.

Question 10 asks for two similarities between Source A and B and it appears that the new question wording is still bedding in. Q10 saw an improved performance with almost 40% achieving 2 marks and over 80% gaining some reward. This is to be welcomed but at the same time, indicates considerable room for improvement. 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. Whilst *“both sources contain a picture”* is a ubiquitous response which is generally correct, there is always a 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. Safe options will always be content-based, since the sources are chosen to be thematically linked. The second mark could be gained by simply identifying a particular aspect of the content – see below.

Question 11. This paper used the new layout for the first time where students have eight lines of undifferentiated space in which to present their two differences. Only 10% achieved the full two marks, although this does represent a slight improvement over the March series, and 45% on one mark. There is a virtually guaranteed mark for those who remember to check the front of the insert to see the correct definition of the text types and this could be the starting point for rigorous practice. At the simplest level, comparison of the content of the pictures (if there are two of them of course) would be fruitful, but checking for precise differences in content should also be encouraged. Popular answers this series included *“B just talks about fish but A has other creatures in as well”* and *“B wants you to have a fish in your own home but A wants you to go and look at their fish”* (the more cynical referring to the company’s desire to make money!). There are often pleasing and encouraging glimpses of perceptive comments on the sources but lacking in the ability to draw a valid comparison between the two.

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. Students should be advised to avoid unrelated pronouns. Responses need to be specific and accurate otherwise it can be difficult to see where marks can be awarded, for example: Source A is not *“about feeding animals”*. Responses can also suffer when the basis of the difference is not clear, such as *“One is about keeping a fish and the other is about a family trip”*.

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

- The sources will always be linked thematically so students can say *“Both sources are about.....fish”*. They can then identify a specific point relating to the content of the sources eg *“Both sources think fish and sea creatures are fascinating”*.
- 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 the type of generic comments which plagued Q8 responses in the legacy specification 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. It is very disappointing to see this. When identifying aspects of presentation, these must be linked to the source text, eg, *“Both sources use some blue font”*.
- Comments which are not comparing like with like are sometimes offered: *“Source A uses sub-headings and Source B is a podcast”*, for example.
- Finally, pictures. One of the sources will always contain a picture, in order to deliver the relevant scope of study descriptor assessment. 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: *“Source A has a picture of people looking at fish (in a tank) and Source B contains a picture of people cleaning out a fish tank”*.

Question 17 – this was a very straightforward task requiring students to list the names of the equipment someone would need to start keeping pet fish. Almost half of entrants gained the full 3 marks and only 9% did not achieve any marks, including 3% who did not attempt the task. It was very gratifying to end on such a positive note and clearly, asking for a list format at the end of the examination facilitated this performance. Although there was no penalty for not presenting responses in a precise list and no requirement for bullet points or numbering, it would be good advice for students to adopt a listing format to aid clarity.

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.

Despite the shortcomings noted in this report, overall performance has been largely maintained since March with a slightly higher mean mark of 15.7 reached by 60% of entrants.

This report necessarily focuses on areas which have been more problematic and require improvement; however, it has not gone unnoticed that this examination was once again undertaken in circumstances of difficulty and loss of learning. The summer series had the potential to be a fraught and difficult time given the resumption of the majority of examinations following the past two years of cancellation of most assessments. Although Functional Skills itself has continued largely as normal and without the necessity for modifications to curriculum or examination, the heightened tension around all other aspects of education this series is almost certain to have impacted negatively on some entrants. Therefore, the students who have worked so hard to demonstrate their skills in this examination deserve great credit as do their indefatigable teachers. It is hoped that they are now enjoying well-deserved holidays in warm, pleasant surroundings, maybe gazing at tropical fish or enjoying some other aspects of sea-life, but hopefully not encountering jellyfish at close quarters.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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