
FUNCTIONAL SKILLS ENGLISH LEVEL 1

8720/R/S/W

Report on the Examination

8720

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8720/R

The final series of 2022 focused on the subject of veganism. Source A was a leaflet containing general information about veganism and advice on how to switch to a vegan diet, if desired. Source B presented a conversation with a young vegan, mainly focusing on some common misinterpretations about a vegan diet and Source C was a recipe for vegan brownies. The vast majority of responses indicated a high level of interest and engagement with the topic and only occasional diversions caused by own knowledge.

Qs 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 two marks, Q1 was most successful at just over 40% with Q4 and Q15 at just under 35%. Unfortunately, over 1/5 of students scored zero on these questions.

Q16, the test of fact and opinion, also in tick-box style, was largely well-answered with full-mark rates close to 60% and approximately 18% failing to achieve any marks. A significant number were deceived into assuming that “*The brownies are easy to make*” must be a fact since it was stated in the recipe.

For all the tick box questions, the instruction is “*put a tick (✓)*”. Unfortunately, too many 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. Previous reports have commented on the increase in numbers of students ticking only one box or leaving one box blank, thus immediately denying themselves any marks or limiting to a maximum of one mark and this tendency appears to be growing. Please remind students that all four boxes must be correctly ticked to achieve two marks and only two correct boxes will result in zero, **therefore they must attempt every box**.

Qs 2, 5 and 13 are the dictionary questions. These demonstrated success rates between 75% and 83%, almost perfectly in line with the summer series. This shows encouraging progress in students’ capabilities but there is considerable way to go until all entrants can provide such evidence. Only Q13 had a not-attempted rate just 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, which was very pleasing to see.

Q3: Happily, almost 80% of students were able to determine the correct answer to the picture question in this series.

Qs 7.1 and 7.2 asked for a positive and negative thing about being a vegan. Both were reasonably well done with accuracy of just over 70% on Q7.2 and Q7.1 slightly less successful at below 65%. A considerable number of students failed to secure the mark in 7.1 owing to lack of specificity in citing of statistics. The source informed us that *“Every vegan saves the lives of 30 animals per year”*. Those responses which claimed that veganism **itself** saved the lives of 30 animals per year had clearly not understood this statistic nor the wide scope of its benefit to animals. It was also important to cite saving *“the life”* of the animal, rather than diluting the answer with reference to treating animals better.

Whilst we attempt to give Level 1 students the benefit of the doubt in regard 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.

Q9: The punctuation question in this series produced a very disappointing result. Students were asked to identify the effect of the exclamation mark at the end of the interviewer’s statement: *“Vegans can look quite pale and thin!”*. Fewer than 20% of entrants recognised that the interviewer was making fun of vegans. The vast majority of incorrect answers stated that the interviewer did not believe what the vegan was saying, or was angry with Bradley (the vegan interviewee). Neither of these suppositions could be substantiated by reference to the atmosphere of the overall piece: checking for the tone of a source could be useful guidance for future series.

Q10 which asks for two similarities between Source A and B saw some improvement with over 45% achieving two marks and only just over 10% gaining no marks. There is still some evidence of students offering generic answers which are not necessarily based on the two texts in front of them. Whilst *“both sources contain a picture”* generally gains a mark, students should be advised that the safest way is to say at least one thing about the overall subject matter, since the sources are chosen to be thematically linked. Certainly, guessing that both sources may contain a title, image, sub-headings etc is an unnecessary risk. The sources will always be linked thematically so students can say *“Both sources are about...vegans / veganism / vegan diets”*. They can then identify a specific point relating to the content of the sources eg *“Both sources refer to Vitamin B12”*.

Q11 Unfortunately, performance on the other half of the comparison question – identify two differences - has been disappointing again, despite the new layout. Fewer than 5% achieved the full two marks and under 40% gained 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. Straightforward comparisons could have been made between the text-type and purpose: *“Source A is a leaflet while source B is an interview. Source A is telling people how to become vegan but the person in Source B is already a vegan.”* There are often pleasing and encouraging glimpses of perceptive comments on the sources but sadly lacking in the ability to draw a valid comparison between the two. It might be useful to advise students that the starting point needs to be to think about the similarity and then try to identify differences which arise from the similarity (which they have, hopefully, already identified in Q10). For example, *“Both sources are about vegan diets but Source A instructs people how to switch to a*

vegan diet, while Source B talks about why the diet should not be seen as boring. This should steer students away from simply making a comment about each source independently.

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

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

- 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.
- 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 a vegan shop window / clothes in a vegan shop; Source B has a cartoon-type picture of people talking”*.

Q17: In the summer series, this task required students to identify the equipment someone would need to start keeping fish as pets and almost half the entrants gained full marks. It was therefore very surprising to see a similar question in the November series producing relatively disappointing results with fewer than 35% securing full marks and almost 19% scoring zero, including 6% who failed to attempt the question.

The question asked for a list of equipment someone would need to bake the brownies in the recipe which constituted Source C. The task was set in the context of a relative who has never cooked before and is unsure if they have all the kitchen tools they need. The reference to “kitchen tools” plus the availability of a dictionary in the examination, should have combined to make clear what was meant by “equipment” in this task. It was therefore extremely surprising to see a significant number of responses containing a bullet-point list of the ingredients simply copied from the source.

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 above, it is pleasing to report that the mean mark this series was slightly above that in the summer and was achieved by just over 60% of entrants. This indicates that performance is relatively stable and if improvements could be achieved by focusing on the areas identified here, more students could achieve similar success.

After the disruption of the past two years, this series thankfully felt like a more normal experience on the examination marking side; I hope it was so for the teachers and students who worked so hard to prepare for the examination. Congratulations to those students who successfully demonstrated the results of their effort and learning and to their indefatigable teachers, all of whom should now be relaxing at the end of an exhausting year, possibly looking forward making some vegan brownies for Christmas.

8720/S**Introduction**

A relatively small number of centres took the opportunity to enter this round of submissions. For most centres it was straightforward to verify their work.

Many centres used the newly designed Candidate Record Form (CRF) date 2022/3. This has been amended in the following ways:

- It no longer requires a student signature
- In the section on Presentation teachers are required to give the title of the student's presentation and then add some comments on their assessment of it
- The Discussion section is more clearly set out

This new form worked well and made it clear to teachers that students need to fulfil all the criteria from 3.1 to 3.8 to be awarded a pass.

Continued improvement was seen in the range of topic students covered, and in the improved quality of questions, especially from teachers.

Problems do still remain though in three 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 must question the students at length and in depth for all criteria to be fulfilled.

The second problem area is the failure to complete a centre declaration sheet (CDS) which must be sent with the submission.

The third area involves the labelling of files on the submitted USBs. Some centres used their own labelling system which was unhelpful. Please follow the AQA guidance on naming audio visual files. At the very least your verifier needs to see the candidate number and the student's surname.

Please note that submissions on CD/DVD can no longer be accepted.

Below are key aspects of the specification which have appeared in previous reports and are reproduced here as key facts for teachers and exam officers who may be new to the specification or need reminders.

Please note, in particular, that it is not possible to seek an exemption from filming *after* you have already given the student a pass. The exemption must be sought before submitting a grade and the CRF must provide detailed description of the student's presentation.

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. Failure to do both of these, and equally importantly failure to *evidence* these, means the student cannot pass.

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 must fail, or probably more appropriately 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.

What follows below is a reminder of the systematic steps that need to be followed.

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 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 and before any grades are submitted.

The Candidate 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.

Only those teachers who have followed the standardising procedures should be awarding passes.

Please **do not** enter students if you do not have the required evidence to do so. The negotiations that are required with centres to support belatedly what they awarded earlier can be very time-consuming and can lead to many withdrawals of students at the last minute.

5. To summarise: *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.

6. 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.
7. Check that the files play on windows media player, on a computer. Check that visuals can be seen and that sound can be heard.
8. 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.
9. Check that you have completed and forwarded a CDS 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.
10. Have all materials ready for verification by the deadline.
11. 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.

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 worked very hard with their students and their efforts are much appreciated.

[AQA | Non-exam assessment \(NEA\) | Standardisation | Teacher online standardisation \(T-OLS\)](#)

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

[Centre Declaration sheet 2023](#)

[Candidate Record Form 2023](#)

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

8720/W

Overview

This is the eleventh 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 November 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 almost 90% of students gaining a mark of 10 or more while over approximately 50% gained a mark of 18 or more, a clear improvement over the previous series in terms of the higher performers. These figures are very encouraging. 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 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 their local council with information and explanation about an area that needs improvement. The question clearly fell into the category of 'explanation' although other modes of writing would be involved. At standardising, it became apparent that there was a vast range of material that was perfectly acceptable and there were very few answers that could have under-achieved purely on the subject content per se.

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 identified an aspect or aspects of their local area that caused problems, annoyance or distress. 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 very specific feature of their locality. Few really good answers were able to focus, within the word count, on more than one feature. The specificity of the better answers enabled some detail in the accompanying explanation. For example, one student wrote about the need for free parking in the town centre to allow shoppers and visitors to feel comfortable and bring in life to the community. The point was reinforced by commenting on the fact that many cars were forced onto double yellow lines, inviting fines. The explanation was very well put and the answer was able to accrue full marks for content. Other strong answers in the top band were able to identify their problem and provide some development but failed to hit the top mark because the answer was rather general and vague. Many answers pointed to the lack of leisure facilities for younger people, with recommendations ranging from skate parks to youth clubs. The feeling amongst examiners was that students were aware of the need for local improvements and were able to voice their views accordingly.

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 'issues to local residents...' or 'explore the town...' were found in excellent answers. Sentences were varied and sometimes complex, again adding to the impact of the response. The use of declarative and explanatory sentences, clarifying the writer's views, were very effectively deployed in many cases.

Many weaker answers were rather simple in their choice of where improvement was needed, such as changing the colour of walls or addressing traffic problems. The reader could identify the selected issue but the writer was unable to provide explanation of what to do in any detail at all. Whilst there was clearly an attempt to respond to the task and some awareness of purpose and audience, the lack of development held such answers in the middle band.

The very weakest answers, in the bottom band were almost invariably too short, with students unable to provide much beyond reference to a problem. 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 11.5% of students failed to gain more than 2 marks for composition. This, however, was a slight worry, indicating that some students might 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 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 very general in scope with a view to tapping into the enthusiasm of the students. It was clearly a question in the 'narrative' category. Students were asked to write about something that they had 'really enjoyed'. The stimulus material provided confidence to students to write about virtually anything, although there were some hints in both the written copy and the graphics.

Nearly all students were able to produce narrative writing of some sort ranging from the detailed and complex to the more mundane.

The best answers were those which provided detailed information within 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 experience. A number of students used the phrase 'life to full' in their introduction often as the prelude to something that they had participated in rather than simply attended. They would then identify what they had selected for their story. A huge range of activities and events were presented to examiners: winter fairgrounds, mountaineering expeditions, music festivals (sometimes involving being called up on stage by a favourite rapper), family meals etc. One feature that stood out was the description of the network of family and friends that were knitted into the experience. This personal element provided valid content and added depth to the answers. Examiners felt that the best answers managed to provide effective structure and detail inside credible narratives.

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 'I am deeply afraid of heights. So going on the [giant Ferris] wheel was going to be a daunting task for me' and 'I can proudly say all we love to see is anyone [...] we don't care as long as you're having a good time' 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 and occasionally credibility in the answers. These answers also

tended to work through the factual elements of the narrative without providing a great deal of detail. There was often the sense to examiners of a series of events, quite often delivered through simple sentences such as 'It came to the day of skydiving. I was nervous but excited...' Dwelling on an aspect of the narrative for descriptive purposes or to explore feelings was not often present and the content descriptors of Band 2 (3-6 marks) were very appropriate for such answers.

The weakest answers, in the 1-3 level were often extremely brief and the student failed to provide significant information, detail or logical sequence to sustain a narrative that met the needs of the task. These answers also lacked a sense of commitment and ambition in the narrative, the main task being the identification of the chosen activity. Where there was coherent narrative, the task of interpreting the challenging language used by the student was a key indicator of the quality of the response. In this series, some 80% or so of students were above this level but this was still weaker than the previous two series. A worrying 5% or so of students failed to 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 'residents', 'recommendation', 'appreciate', 'using up valuable space', 'secondary' 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. The omission of punctuation and poorly placed punctuation as evidenced particularly in comma-splicing 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
- failure to use apostrophe in contracted forms
- 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 23% of answers were in the top level for SPaG, an increase of around 5% from the June series. Approximately 7% were in the bottom level, a significant improvement on June figure.

On Question 2, around 20% were in the top level, a slight increase from June, with some 13% in the bottom level, an approximately 4% improvement on the June figure.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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