

GCSE Examiners' Report

Mathematics – Numeracy

GCSE

Summer 2025

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Introduction

Our Principal examiners' report provides valuable feedback on the recent assessment series. It has been written by our Principal Examiners and Principal Moderators after the completion of marking and moderation, and details how candidates have performed in each unit.

This report opens with a summary of candidates' performance, including the assessment objectives/skills/topics/themes being tested, and highlights the characteristics of successful performance and where performance could be improved. It then looks in detail at each unit, pinpointing aspects that proved challenging to some candidates and suggesting some reasons as to why that might be.¹

The information found in this report provides valuable insight for practitioners to support their teaching and learning activity. We would also encourage practitioners to share this document – in its entirety or in part – with their learners to help with exam preparation, to understand how to avoid pitfalls and to add to their revision toolbox.

Further support

Document	Description	Link
Professional Learning / CPD	WJEC offers an extensive programme of online and face-to-face Professional Learning events. Access interactive feedback, review example candidate responses, gain practical ideas for the classroom and put questions to our dedicated team by registering for one of our events here.	https://www.wjec.co.uk/home/professional-learning/
Past papers	Access the bank of past papers for this qualification, including the most recent assessments. Please note that we do not make past papers available on the public website until 12 months after the examination.	Portal by WJEC or on the WJEC subject page
Grade boundary information	<p>Grade boundaries are the minimum number of marks needed to achieve each grade.</p> <p>For unitised specifications grade boundaries are expressed on a Uniform Mark Scale (UMS). UMS grade boundaries remain the same every year as the range of UMS mark percentages allocated to a particular grade does not change. UMS grade boundaries are published at overall subject and unit level.</p> <p>For linear specifications, a single grade is awarded for the subject, rather than for each unit that contributes towards the overall grade. Grade boundaries are published on results day.</p>	For unitised specifications click here: Results, Grade Boundaries and PRS (wjec.co.uk)

¹ Please note that where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

Exam Results Analysis	WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC Portal. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.	Portal by WJEC
Classroom Resources	Access our extensive range of FREE classroom resources, including blended learning materials, exam walk-throughs and knowledge organisers to support teaching and learning.	https://resources.wjec.co.uk/
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Executive Summary

The examination papers in GCSE Mathematics – Numeracy were generally of a similar standard to previous series. However, parts of papers across the three tiers were slightly more demanding. As always, some questions were more challenging than in previous years, while others were less so. On average, candidates performed slightly better on Unit 1 than on Unit 2 at all tiers.

It was noticeable across all tiers, particularly on the non-calculator papers, that many candidates lacked the expected standard of core arithmetic skills. Weak arithmetic led to a loss of marks across several questions, not because of the mathematical concept being tested but due to basic calculation errors. At the foundation and intermediate tiers, common mistakes included multiplying decimals, multiplying three numbers, and two-digit by two-digit multiplication. Even at higher tier, long multiplication errors were also seen. A weak grasp of fractions, percentages and decimals was common across all tiers and units, especially calculating one quantity as a fraction or percentage of another. Persistent areas for improvement, as in previous years, included bearings, pie charts, and perimeter, area and volume. Other topic-specific issues are covered in the individual reports.

It was encouraging to see that questions involving money were generally well attempted. Candidates often worked accurately and demonstrated sound understanding, particularly in identifying best value.

At foundation tier, in addition to money-related questions, candidates showed stronger understanding of interpreting bar charts and drawing scale diagrams. However, many struggled to extract key information or to formulate appropriate methods. These challenges, combined with frequent arithmetic errors, led to poor performance on many questions.

At intermediate tier, candidates showed good understanding when interpreting a frequency diagram and a population data table. However, interpretation of cumulative frequency diagrams and box-and-whisker diagrams was weaker. Forming strategies to tackle some problems was also an issue at this tier. For example, in question 13b of Unit 2, many did not recognise that Pythagoras' Theorem was needed and mistakenly calculated the area of the trapezium instead.

At higher tier, many questions common with the intermediate tier, such as those on box-and-whisker diagrams and ratios, were answered well. Among higher tier-only content, the best performance was on calculating frequencies from a histogram. While basic money problems were answered well at all tiers, more complex money questions involving tax, interest and AER revealed a lack of understanding for many candidates.

Our digital resources website offers blended learning lessons and knowledge organisers, among other materials. Please ensure you are accessing the correct site with legacy resources (link [here](#)) and not the sister site for the new Made-for-Wales qualification.

MATHEMATICS - NUMERACY

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UNIT 1 FOUNDATION TIER

Overview of the Unit

Most candidates attempted all questions. Candidates were more successful with many of the earlier questions than with the later questions in the paper, as is expected. Basic number skills often hindered candidates.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Converting between fractions, decimals and percentages (Q1a)
- Working with time (Q1c)
- Finding a fraction of a quantity (Q6a)
- Interpreting pie charts (Q7)
- Expressing a quantity as a fraction of another quantity (Q9c)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Working with bar charts (Q2)
- Understanding best buys and value for money. (Q3ai)
- Naming 3D shapes (Q3aii)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Question 1

Part **(a)** was not answered as well as expected; with many candidates not comparing $\frac{3}{10}$ and 20% in the same format. Some candidates knew to answer 'yes' but could not give a mathematical reason as to why. In part **(c)**, many candidates added 31 and 19 to give a time difference of 50 minutes. Those that did show their subtraction in a column method usually gave an incorrect answer. The most successful strategy was when candidates added on the correct number of minutes to 17:31 to make it 18:00 and then added the 19 minutes. In part **(d)**, a common error was candidates using £5.50 for half of £10.50.

Question 2(c)

Many candidates were able to find the total length of the tiles on at least one side of the table but did not always go on to give the perimeter.

Question 4

Several candidates struggled to find the correct number of packs of bread rolls and sausages. Most candidates were able to work out the how much money was taken for selling the hotdogs and knew that the costs of the bread rolls and sausages needed to be subtracted from this. Basic number work did hinder some candidates.

Many candidates were able to use labels and/or set their workings out in a logically way.

Question 5

Many candidates did not have a correct strategy to find the answers in parts **(b)** and **(c)**, with many giving the answer to **(b)** as 1320 yards and the answer to part **(c)** as 7 furlongs.

Question 6

In part **(a)**, many calculation errors involving finding 15% were seen. For those that did find a correct value of 15%, many did not subtract this from £14 to find the new cost. Very few candidates demonstrated that they knew how to find a fraction of a quantity with many attempting to change $\frac{5}{8}$ into a percentage incorrectly.

Many candidates were able to gain the first 2 marks in part **(b)**, but very few could then find the cost of 1 litre of ice cream. Most candidates thought that they needed to divide the £12 by 2.

In part **(c)**, a few candidates knew that they needed to find the product of the length, width and height but working with decimal values often hindered them gaining full marks. Most candidates added the 3 measurements with a common incorrect answer of 5.3 cm seen.

Question 7

Although a few candidates did measure the angle correctly, most candidates did not have a strategy to calculate the number of people represented by this sector in the pie chart. Many thought that 480 people was the total number of people in the whole survey.

Question 8

Several candidates thought the survey was for them to answer or they stated that children don't read on holidays. Some candidates noticed that there were overlapping groups but many thought that the groups were too large. A common incorrect response to part **(b)** was that they should have asked the children on the way *into* the library.

Question 9

Many candidates struggled with reading the scale of the vertical axis (frequency) which meant that part **(b)** was not answered as well as expected.

Part **(c)** was not well answered in terms of understanding what was expected, with very few writing 20 as a fraction of their total.

In part **(e)**, many candidates stated that the modal would have been different as they were served 10 minutes faster and did not engage in the number of people who would be in the 20-30 group compared to the 30-40 group if 12 passengers had been served 10 minutes faster.

Question 10

Some candidates engaged with this question with a few gaining 1 mark. A common error was to not subtract the 20p cost of the jar to find the cost of the honey in the 500 ml jar. A few candidates did then use a suitable method to find the cost of 100 ml of honey but did not then go on to find 200 ml of honey. Many candidates forgot to include the 12p cost of the jar for the 200 ml of honey in their final answer.

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UNIT 1 INTERMEDIATE TIER

Overview of the Unit

Most candidates attempted all questions. Candidates were more successful with many of the earlier questions than with the later questions in the paper, as is expected.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Using non calculator methods of multiplication, including 2 digits and decimals (Q2d,8)
- Expressing a quantity as a fraction or percentage of another quantity (Q8)
- Interpreting pie charts (Q3a)
- Understanding and interpreting income tax bands (Q9)
- Interpreting cumulative frequency diagrams and box-and-whisker diagrams (Q12,15)
- Working with volume where trapezium and triangle area knowledge is required (Q13,14)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Reading scales on graphs (Q1,4)
- Interpreting and solving problems involving money (Q2c,5)
- Interpreting a frequency diagram (Q4)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Questions 1 and 4

Many candidates were generally able to read the scales on the graphs.

In question 1, some arithmetic errors were made, particularly when considering measures beyond those given on the graph.

In question 4, many candidates knew how to interpret the questions in parts (a) and (b), by taking appropriate readings from the graph.

Question 5

Many candidates engaged well with this question. A common error was initially not to subtract the cost of the jar (20p) in order to find the cost of the honey in the 500 ml jar. However, candidates often continued with a suitable method to find the cost of 100 ml of honey and then 200 ml of honey. A number of candidates did not include the cost of the jar for the 200 ml of honey (12p) in their final answer. However, progress in understanding some of stages allowed many candidates to organise their work and communicate with working shown.

Questions 2(d) and 8

Many calculation errors involving multiplication were seen in these questions. A number of candidates used methods of splitting a calculation into a sum of two products, however, there were often errors seen. For example:

- 5×5.6 was sometimes written as $5 \times 5 + 5 \times 0.6$ with an incorrect answer of 25.30.
- 55×24 was sometimes incorrectly written as $50 \times 20 + 5 \times 4$.
- $4 \times 0.5 \times 0.8$ was sometimes incorrectly written as $4 \times 0.5 + 4 \times 0.8$.

Question 3

Although many candidates did measure the angle correctly, a number of candidates did not have a strategy to calculate the number of people represented by this sector in the pie chart.

Question 9

Many candidates did not understand the process required in calculating income tax. A common error was to calculate 10% or 20% of €20 000.

Questions 12 and 15

These questions were generally not well answered, with candidates demonstrating lack of knowledge of how the display represents data. For example, many candidates did not realise that the 'lower end' of the rectangle in a box-and-whisker diagram represents 25% of the plants, or that cumulative frequency can be thought of as a 'running total'.

Questions 13 and 14

Some candidates demonstrated insecure knowledge of area and volume. Notable errors were in using the area of a triangle as 'base \times height', rather than ' $\frac{1}{2}$ base \times height', or the area of a trapezium omitting the $\frac{1}{2}$ in the formula.

In question 14, a number of candidates also incorrectly stated that the area of the cross-section was $3 \times 4 \times 5$ or $3 + 4 + 5$.

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UNIT 1 HIGHER

Overview of the Unit

Most candidates attempted all questions. Quite a number of candidates found all 3 parts of the last question challenging.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Understanding of how to calculate percentage interest / increase (Q2,10aii)
- Understanding of income tax bands and how to use them (Q3)
- Multiplication of large numbers e.g. 1500×400 (Q7)
- Estimating the quartiles from a histogram (Q12biii)
- Simplifying algebraic terms and expressions (Q13c)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Performing calculations involving ratios (Q5)
- Basic analysis of box-and-whisker diagrams (Q6)
- Calculating frequencies from a histogram (Q12b)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Question 2

Most candidates were able to correctly calculate the amount that needed to be paid back. Many then though incorrectly calculated what this was as a percentage of the loan amount, rather than the percentage interest.

Question 3

Many candidates did not understand the process required in calculating income tax. A common error was to calculate 10% or 20% of €20 000. It was noticeable that several candidates also wanted to calculate the net pay which was unnecessary.

Question 5(b)

Many candidates reduced £660 by 20% showing a misunderstanding of the method required.

Question 7

A number of candidates split the trapezium into a rectangle and a triangle, with several not using the correct formula for the area of a triangle. This was also seen in Question 8.

Question 10(a)

Many candidates thought that in **(a)(i)**, they needed to calculate 200×1.1 to find the number of red squirrels introduced into the woodland.

In **(a)(ii)** a lot of candidates did not realise that increasing 200 repeatedly by 10% twice was all that was required to find the number of squirrels after 2 years. Most tried to initially calculate 1.1^2 with a significant number making errors.

Question 11

A significant number of candidates were able to calculate the total mass of the mixture, but many gave it as their final answer meaning they thought this was the density that the question required.

Question 12

In part **(b)(iii)**, candidates struggled with this question. Many seemed to know that the lower quartile was in the second group but did not know how to find it appropriately.

In part **(b)(iv)**, very few correct answers that explained either that the estimate of the lower quartile assumes an equal distribution of ages within the group, or that the lower quartile could be anywhere in the second group.

Question 13

In part **(a)**, many candidates had difficulty in dealing with the hole in the shape effectively within their calculations. Some also did not double at the end to calculate the area of the entire front plate.

In part **(b)**, many candidates did not realise the need to use Pythagoras's theorem in this question. Some also thought they only needed to use it in 1 plane.

In part **(c)**, several candidates started by giving an equation that was either fully or nearly fully correct. However, most were unable to simplify the terms in order to solve their equation.

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UNIT 2 FOUNDATION TIER

Overview of the Unit

A few candidates attempted all questions. Candidates were more successful with many of the earlier questions than with the later questions in the paper, as is expected.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Finding 10% of a decimal value (Q2b)
- Calculating the range (Q3bii)
- Calculating the area of a compound shape (Q3ci)
- Working with recipes (Q6a)
- Using angle properties (Q9)
- Calculating percentage profit (Q10a)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Working accurately within money calculations (Q4a)
- Working with and drawing scale diagrams (Q3cii, 4b)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Question 1(a)

Most candidates engaged with this question and gained marks. A common error was to reverse the coordinates, and some included the letters 'x' and 'y' within their coordinate, for example (3x, 2y).

Question 2

In part (a), the majority of candidates engaged with this question, however, they did not check that the numbers they used were 4 single digits, all odd digits and were in descending order, regardless of whether they understood multiples or factors.

In part (b), some candidates did not engage with the £30 voucher being deducted from the cost of the 2 items; several added it or did not engage with it at all. It was noticeable that a few candidates could not work with finding 10% of a decimal value.

Question 3

In part **(b)(i)**, many candidates only added the selling price of each of the 3 types of houses. They did not engage with the number of each type of house and what the total costs would be. There were a large number of candidates that worked out the total cost of each of the different types of houses but did not find the overall total of all the houses.

In part **(b)(ii)**, it was surprising to see that a large number of candidates did not understand that the range needs to be the answer to the smallest value subtracted from the largest value.

In part **(c)(i)**, many candidates attempted to find the perimeter. With some finding the perimeter of each room and then adding those together. Where candidates did engage with area, many thought that the hall was 4×4 . Several candidates only attempted to calculate 24×22 with no further area subtracted from this.

Question 5

Bearings continue to be an area that needs improving. Many candidates measured the distance between Barmouth and Cardiff and some just gave the answer as 180° .

Question 6

In part **(a)**, some candidates correctly calculated $18 \div 4 = 4.5$ and multiplied each quantity by 4.5, although many candidates used either 4, 5 or 18 as their multipliers.

In part **(b)**, many candidates only wrote the values that they had calculated in (a) and did not attempt to simplify. Some candidates who did attempt the simplifying did not have values that were less than the given amounts.

Question 7

Many candidates engaged with this question, usually calculating the cost for the tents. When calculating the cost for the people, candidates often only multiplied 2 out of the $6 \times 4 \times 5$. Some candidates were able to find 22% of an appropriate amount correctly but this often included the cost of one tent for 5 nights meaning that they were rarely able to gain any of the last 3 marks. Most candidates who engaged with the percentage used 22% rather than 78%. There was more evidence of appropriate calculator methods although non-calculator methods using 10% and 1% were still seen.

Question 8

Although many candidates engaged with this question, the most common error was to multiply 28350 by 2.

Question 9

Those candidates that gained marks in this question usually did so for angle a and angle c (on follow through). Some candidates thought that angle a and angle d were the same.

Question 10

In part **(a)**, many candidates calculated the profit accurately; however, most candidates did not use a correct method to calculate the percentage profit, with a common incorrect answer of 54%. A few candidates used reverse thinking, knowing that 10% of 600 is 60 and subtracted this from 600 to gain the 540, thus knowing that 540 was worth 90%.

In part **(b)**, most candidates either added 8 and 10 or multiplied those values and stated the height as 80.

Question 11(b) and 11(c)

Most candidates did not understand what the median meant, especially when faced with the data in a scatter diagram. It was rare to see the word 'positive' given as the word that best described the correlation. Some candidates gave a description, but it seemed that many did not understand the term correlation.

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UNIT 2 INTERMEDIATE TIER

Overview of the Unit

Many candidates attempted all questions. Candidates were more successful with many of the earlier questions than with the later questions in the paper, as is expected.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Calculating percentage profit (Q6a)
- Using multipliers in evaluating repeated percentage increases (Q9)
- Using totals from given data in proportion to estimate or calculate a mean (Q8,10)
- Calculating angles in order to complete a pie chart (Q12a)
- Identifying skills to solve a problem requiring use of Pythagoras' Theorem (Q13b)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Working accurately with money calculations (Q2)
- Using unitary methods (Q3a,4)
- Interpreting population data, including population density (Q12bii,12ci)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Question 2

Many candidates engaged with this question, calculating the cost for people and tents, however these were not always summed in the appropriate proportions. Calculations were generally accurate, including percentage when evaluated in one stage as '×0.22' or '×0.78'. Candidates using non calculator methods to evaluate percentage made errors more often than those using a calculator method. A number of candidates confused the discount with the discounted cost and vice versa.

Candidates did not always communicate their work well for the stages of their calculations, clear labelling may have helped prevent some errors.

Question 3(a) and 4

In question 3, many candidates correctly calculated $18 \div 4 = 4.5$ and correctly multiplied each quantity by 4.5, although a few candidates rounded 4.5 to 5 and gave quantities to serve 20 people not 18 people.

In question 4, many candidates correctly decided to divide to halve 28 350 and gave the correct response of 14 175 cm², however a few of these candidates spoilt their method by then halving again or showing further working, hence not showing a completely correct method.

Question 6

Many candidates calculated the profit accurately; however, a number of candidates did not use a correct method to calculate the percentage profit. Some candidates used reverse thinking, using trials to calculate the percentage profit, although not always accurately.

Question 9

A number of candidates incorrectly decided to use a 'simple percentage increase' in answering this question. Many candidates who did use a compounding method by evaluating the increased value each year for all 25 years in a list, often with errors and no working shown. A few candidates did use multipliers correctly. Some common errors in using multipliers included writing 1.60^{10} instead of 1.06^{10} , misusing 1.11% on the calculator and calculating $30\,000 \times 1.06^{10} + 30\,000 \times 1.11^{15}$.

Questions 8 and 10(a)(i), 10(b)(i)

These questions involved calculating an initial total.

In question 8, common errors included calculating the average speed for each part of the exercise then finding the average of these, dividing the total time in minutes by the total distance, often including errors in time notation. Also, of the candidates calculating the total distance by the total time, many did not express or use the time correctly in hours, with one and three-quarter hours incorrectly written as 1.45 hours or the time left as 105 minutes.

In question 10(a)(i), common errors included use of 1999 (from the difference of the number of steps for each group) as mid points, and division by 4 rather than 100 people.

In question 10(b)(i), common errors included $5802 \div 18 + 9830 \div 4 + 12200 \div 3$ and $(5802 + 9830 + 12200) \div 3$. Question 10(b) was not well answered.

Question 12(a)

In this part of question 12, many candidates made up angles, that often had a total of 140° , such as 100° with 40° , or 90° with 50° . Few candidates had a method to calculate the angles required from the data given in the question. This part of question 12 was not well answered.

Question 13(b)

Many candidates incorrectly decided to calculate the area of the cross section of the chocolate bar assuming a height of 6 mm, rather than calculate the actual height. Of the candidates applying Pythagoras' Theorem, some used $\text{height}^2 + 8^2 = 7^2$, not considering that this could not be true as 7 mm is the hypotenuse, the longest side. Question 13(b) was not well answered.

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UNIT 2 HIGHER

Overview of the Unit

Many candidates attempted all questions. Candidates were more successful with many of the earlier questions than with the later questions in the paper, as is expected.

Key areas for improvement include the following:

- Understanding of how to calculate an average speed (Q2)
- Rearranging a formula (Q8a)
- Writing the upper and lower bounds of values given correct to significant figures (Q8b)
- Knowing that an AER is the percentage increase in the amount of money in a savings account over a year (Q10)

The following topic areas were generally well-understood or well-answered:

- Volume of a cylinder (Q1)
- Repeated percentage increase (Q3)
- Estimating the mean from a grouped frequency table (Q4ai)
- Using right-angled trigonometry (Q6)

Comments on individual questions/sections

When a question or part-question is not listed, there are no areas to highlight.

Question 2

This question was not answered well. Many candidates calculated the speed for each part on the way to their answer rather than calculate the total distance divided by the total time in hours. However, most candidates gained at least 1 of the 2 OCW marks.

Question 4

In part **(b)(i)**, many candidates found this question difficult. Several thought they needed to divide the mean number of steps in each group by the number of people.

Part **(b)(ii)** was not answered well. Many did not comment that there were far more people in group A.

Question 5(b)(ii)

Some did not convert their answer into tonnes correctly, either multiplying by 1000 or dividing by an incorrect power of 10.

Question 7

In part **(a)(i)**, many correct answers were seen, but several candidates calculated what 0.01 was as a percentage of 0.09.

In part **(a)(ii)**, some were only able to calculate how much saturated fat there was in the Luxury Dark bar but were unable to then use this to work out the percentage needed of the other bar.

In part **(b)**, many fully correct answers were seen. Those who thought that the length of the top side of the right-angled triangle was 8mm did not score any marks as their Pythagoras calculation did not make sense. Some also incorrectly thought they needed to use the formula for the area of the trapezium.

Question 8

Part **(a)** was not well answered well. Many did not know how to deal with the square root in order to isolate h . It was also disappointing to note that many collected $3^2 + 2 \times 9.8 \times h$ to give 28.6h.

Part **(b)** was also answered poorly. Many did not use bounds. Also, many used both upper bounds. For those who used bounds in the appropriate way, several did not use the correct upper and lower bounds of the values that were given correct to significant figures.

In part **(c)**, many candidates were able to calculate the distance the Earth travels around the Sun, although several did not use consistent units in their calculation by converting the number of days into seconds. The second step then required candidates to use the formula for the circumference of a circle although some incorrectly used the area formula.

Question 9

In part **(a)(ii)**, some candidates were only able to calculate the angle inside the triangle at Nice. Others worked out the angle inside the triangle at Valencia correctly but were unable to use this together with parallel line angles to find the bearing required.

In **(b)**, as usual, many used 6 incorrectly as the scale factor. Some approximated the value of cube root of 6 meaning they lost accuracy with their final answer.

In part **(c)**, many candidates said which numbers they wouldn't use in the sample, but did not state they would not use 000.

Question 10

This question was not well answered. Most tried to use the AER formula twice, with the monthly rates used as nominal annual rates.

Question 11

Many candidates engaged well with this question. Some incorrectly thought the triangle was isosceles, meaning the angle inside the end piece was 105 degrees and then used the formulas for the area and arc length of a sector using this angle.

Supporting you

Useful contacts and links

Our friendly subject team is on hand to support you between 8.30am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 02922 404251

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Qualification webpage: <https://www.wjec.co.uk/qualifications/mathematics-gcse/>

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