



FSMQ

Foundations of Advanced Mathematics (MEI)

INTERMEDIATE FSMQ 6989

Report on the Unit

June 2010

6989/R/10

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This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

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CONTENTS

Foundations of Advanced Mathematics FSMQ (6989)

REPORT ON THE UNIT

Unit	Page
Foundations of Advanced Mathematics – 6989	1

Foundations of Advanced Mathematics – 6989

There were nearly 1700 entries for this session, easily the largest number in a session, which is most encouraging. The mean mark was 25, slightly up on last year. The minimum mark, scored by one candidate, was 6; 6 candidates scored full marks with a further 19 scoring 39.

In all questions, every response was chosen and in all but 4 questions at least one candidate did not respond.

In 9 questions the correct response was chosen by more than 80% of candidates.

On this paper there were only 2 questions where the wrong response was chosen more than the right response.

Q12 (Average and spread)

Almost equal numbers of candidates chose each response and the greatest number by a small margin decided that the median of 4 was incorrect.

Q39 (Vectors)

36% of candidates decided that, since Gemma can paddle in still water at 5 m s^{-1} the assertion that she actually travels faster than this must be wrong. Given that the speed of the water helps her, this is in fact correct. If she heads into the current the angles of the vector triangle will be different from the triangle drawn when she heads across the current. It is therefore the assertion that the angles will be the same that is incorrect.

In a further 7 questions the correct response was chosen by a minority of candidates.

Q7 (coordinate geometry of lines)

The response that a line passes through a given point which was incorrect should have been relatively easy to check. The next most popular response was that two lines met at a given point which was true.

Q10 (Cosine rule and the area of a triangle)

One side was given correctly from the cosine rule and the area of the triangle was stated correctly. However, only 28% decided that both were correct, with equal numbers choosing the other three responses.

Q18 (Probability)

The spread of responses across the 4 were roughly equal. Yet the three correct responses were all derived from multiplying probabilities of independent events, while the correct response added three probabilities.

Q20 (Mensuration)

The incorrect answer (and therefore the correct response!) was the first where the masses of similar cylinders were divided to give a ratio. But this is the ratio of volumes and we need to take the cube root to find the ratio of heights. Although this was not asked for, the fact that the ratio was given without this being done makes it incorrect. A significant minority decided that the cost per gram was incorrect, although it was not.

Report on the Unit taken in June 2010

Q27 (Algebraic fractions)

The specification gives this process as a topic in which the denominators are integers. A question is asked nearly every time. Yet nearly 40% of candidates gave an answer with 2 in the denominator (as a result of subtracting the denominators) rather than 15 (as a result of multiplying them).

Q32 (Speed-time graph)

Only 40% gave the right response here. This said that the car was stationary after 5 seconds while the graph indicates that the speed was 20 ms^{-1} and that the acceleration is zero. A sizeable minority said that the acceleration at 1 second was not as stated. This was either because they did not know how to determine the acceleration or because no account was taken of the scales when finding the gradient of the tangent at $t = 1$.

Q37 (Solution of simultaneous equations graphically)

25% of candidates decided that “there is no solution” to simultaneous equations represented by parallel lines was incorrect.

As in previous sessions I offer a summary of questions and topics with the approximate percentage of candidates giving the correct responses. As noted in previous reports, the giving of the correct response may not be because the candidate understands the question and can discern the errors being made in the distracting responses. Attempts are made not to offer distractors in such a way that the correct response is clearly different to the rest, but our perception of typical errors might result in that happening.

	Question	Topic
91 – 100%	2 24	Arithmetic – positive and negative numbers Algebra – expressing a formula in words algebraically
81 – 90%	3 4 5 14 15 17 25	Arithmetic – calculation in standard form Arithmetic – ratio Arithmetic – approximations Algebra – solution of linear equations Arithmetic – fractions Algebra – factorisation of cubic Algebra – sequences
71 – 80%	11 19 22 26 28 35	Arithmetic – percentages Arithmetic – accumulation of errors Arithmetic – index form Algebra – rearrangement of formulae Statistics – grouping of data Algebra – substitution into a formula
61-70%	6 13 16 21 23 34 36 38 40	Algebra – substitution Algebra – solution of a quadratic equation Algebra – quadratic equations Statistics – appropriate diagrams Vectors – algebraic notation Arithmetic – mensuration Algebra – construction of formula Trigonometry – right-angled triangles Statistics – cumulative frequency

Report on the Unit taken in June 2010

51 – 60%	1 8 9 29 30 31 33	Arithmetic Algebra – inequalities Graphs – cubic curve Trigonometry and algebra Graphs – conversion graph Probability – mutually exclusive events Trigonometry – 3-D shape
41 – 50%	7 18 20 37	Graphs – equations of lines Probability – independent events Arithmetic – mensuration Graphs
31 – 40%	27 32	Algebra – adding fractions Graphs – speed-time graph
21 – 30%	10 12	Trigonometry – cosine rule and area of triangle Statistics – averages and spread
11 – 20%	39	Vectors – adding vectors graphically

Answers

1	D	21	B
2	C	22	D
3	C	23	B
4	A	24	A
5	B	25	C
6	B	26	D
7	C	27	D
8	C	28	C
9	D	29	C
10	A	30	B
11	D	31	D
12	D	32	D
13	C	33	C
14	A	34	B
15	B	35	B
16	B	36	D
17	B	37	D
18	A	38	C
19	D	39	C
20	A	40	B

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