



Examiners' Comments – Feedback to Candidates

October 2024

This feedback gives general points to support candidates preparing for each section of the exam in the future. Comments are intended to provide helpful guidance rather than be prescriptive.

Feedback is based on comments received from all the examiners who marked the October 2024 sitting, and therefore covers all papers and questions. Comments from the Chair of Examiners are also included. These indicate general points to support candidates preparing for the exam in future sittings.

All questions included in the October exam were marked according to pre-agreed mark schemes.

Candidates should be aware that mark schemes will always be used with discretion by examiners, so that answers that do not fully fit the model answer or mark schemes are judged in terms of their relevance and overall fit with the question asked.

Candidates are encouraged to review the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) on the Faculty website (particularly the section that deals with preparing for the DFPH examination) and pay particular attention to the examination syllabus.

Summary statistics for the October 2024 sitting are also published on the [FPH website](#)

Paper I

Q1 & Q2: Generally good performance across this section, with the vast majority of candidates passing both questions, and some excellent responses. High performing candidates were able to describe in theoretical definitions as well showing an awareness of real-world challenges. Ability to interpret numerical tables was also strong. Candidates who performed more weakly didn't correctly identify methods or key findings and therefore were unable to accurately describe any implication, strengths and weaknesses. Use of framework to structure answers is helpful, but it is not enough to simply list the headings in a framework without providing an example or explanation of why that is important.

Q3 & Q4: Candidates performed unevenly. Those who performed well had structured answers and used a framework. Candidates who did not perform well were unable to demonstrate accurate knowledge of the disease epidemiology and risk factors asked about. It is also important not to use judgemental language when describing inclusion health issues. In multipart questions, candidates are advised to read the whole question through before starting to see the logical flow and how subsections relate to each other. This will avoid putting content in sections where it is not going to gain credit or duplicating effort.

Q5 & Q6: Most candidates made reasonable attempts at the questions. Structuring answers with generic frameworks and showing an awareness of how these applied in context was a feature of good answers. Poorer answers lacked sufficient rationale or explanation for their point and failed to demonstrate the application of knowledge and public health principles to the context given in the introduction to the question. Poor answers also showed lack of sufficient explanation or where the explanation just repeated what was asked for. Candidates should be aware that using generic frameworks can help structure your answers and generate range of points, but to gain credit it is necessary to demonstrate that you have applied this to the context provided in the question. Just listing generic features (feasible or measurable) is also insufficient.

Q7 & Q8: Some parts of these questions were well answered. Good candidates provided comprehensive, well thought out responses consistent with the required level of specialist understanding on the concept. It is important to read the whole question carefully. Answer the question that is asked, thinking about any particular context given in the question.

Q9 & Q10: There was generally a mixed performance on these questions. Good candidates gave a full explanation of the approaches selected and used those examples that are relevant to practice. Candidates that performed poorly didn't give relevant approaches and in some cases the examples given were not relevant to the topic requested but more generally to wider public health practice. Furthermore, where a question asks for a specific number of examples, candidates should only include that number. Additional answers cannot gain credit. As these questions fall at the end of the exam, it is important to ensure that enough time is left to complete the question and expand on the question rather than simply repeating it in a different way.

Paper IIA

Overall candidates found the question relatively straight forward. Candidates were able to apply their learning to produce a reasonable answer that allowed them to gain marks. The length of answers varied. Candidates who performed well often made good use of bullets rather than long form to maximise word count. Some better performing candidates were able to explain the impact of the strengths and limitations, and able to provide an accurate interpretation of the data. Better responses were also aware of detail of the question e.g. described when asked to or matched the amount of information required to the number of marks available.

Poorly performing candidates often wrote a lot about the paper which was not required or requested in the question or provided repetitive or contradictory information.

Candidates are advised to read the question carefully and consider what the question is asking rather than writing what you know on a certain topic. Also use headings and bullets to save time and make it easier for the examiner to identify marks.

Paper IIB

Performance on Paper IIB was generally of a good standard. It is very important to understand the key statistical concepts and calculations that are likely to be required. Furthermore, when undertaking calculations, it is really important to show your workings.