

Examination Tips from the Officers of the Board of Examiners

General

- **The pass mark is set each year according to the content of each paper.**
There is no set quota for how many candidates pass or fail.
- **We recommend you form study groups to help revise and prepare for the exam.**
Helping your colleagues will also help you pass the exam!
- **Look at past papers, available for the last 3 years on the FPM website* as a guide to the type and format of questions asked.**
- **Read the question carefully and answer it!**
 - Marks will not be awarded for information that does not address the question (even if the information is factually correct).
 - As an example of the above point, in the 2015 SAQ paper there were 2 questions where candidates commonly did not answer the question asked and consequently scored poorly. Please see the Board of Examiners Winter Newsletter 2015 (on the FPM website*) for more information.
- **In the questions you may see the following terms:**
 - “List”, “Give” or “State” meaning give a few words or a short sentence for each item - the “what”.
 - “Describe” meaning give a few sentences for each, addressing key features - the “what, where, why, when & how”.
 - “Define” meaning explain what the terms mean or the concept in no more than a few sentences.
 - “Compare” meaning give a few words or a short sentence giving the similarities and differences of one thing versus another. You can give a table for clarity.
 - “Comment” meaning give your opinion. This is a common term we use in the Critical Appraisal Paper, where we want your opinion (critique on the paper). Often there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers but you should be able to support your opinion with reasoned discussion and/or evidence.
- **For both the SAQ and CAP papers, we advise candidates to write in bullet point format and give a few words or a short sentence for each bullet. Writing a lot of words will not score more and will waste your valuable time.**
 - Focus on quality not quantity.
 - Write as clearly as possible.
 - Be guided by the number of marks available for a question. Do not write a page for an answer worth 1 mark.

- If asked [for example] to give a list of 8 features, and you give more than 8, we will mark all your responses, although you cannot score more than the maximum marks available.
- If asked for a number of points, avoid repeating the same information in a slightly different way as it will only score once.
- If asked for advantages and disadvantages, do not give the same information both as an advantage and the converse as a disadvantage, as you will only score once!

Short Answer Question (SAQ) Paper

- **Make sure you plan your time sufficiently.**
 - You have 2½ hours to answer 10 questions, that is ~15 minutes per question.
 - You can answer the SAQs in any order you like.
 - You must score >0 on at least 8 questions, so make sure you make an attempt at all 10 questions.

Critical Appraisal Paper (CAP)

- **No detailed therapy area knowledge is required to answer the questions.**

We are looking for general principles and will not require you to have in depth knowledge of the disease area the article relates to.
- **We suggest you do a timed practice on reviewing a paper and answering questions.**
- **In the CAP, the critique can be positive points about the paper, not always negative ones.**

So don't automatically look for deficiencies, look for what's good about it as well.
- **Remember, when asked to comment, the "so-what".**

Don't just give the facts, give the implications too.
- **You need to be able to write in lay-language when the question asks for it - that is language suitable for a non-medical/scientific person to understand.**
- **For further information on the DPM exam and the CAP paper,** you can refer to a presentation made at the FPM Education Day slides on these topics from June 2014 and 2015 available on the FPM website *.

And finally GOOD LUCK from the Board of Examiners

* FPM website = <https://www.fpm.org.uk/trainingexams/exams/dippharmmed>