



Board of Examiners Newsletter Winter 2021

Dear Examiners, Educational Supervisors & Specialty Advisors

Welcome to the Winter 2021 newsletter for the Board of Examiners, from the Officers of the Board of Examiners (OBoE).

Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine (DPM) Examination 2021

The results of the DPM for 2021 were ratified at the Board of Examiners (BoE) annual general meeting on 10th December. This year's results were:

- * Part 1 (the MCQ paper) – 51% (26 out of 51 candidates) passed and were awarded the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Medicine
- * Part 2 (the Short Answer Questions and Critical Appraisal Paper) – 75% (24 out of 32 candidates) passed the SAQ and 80% (25 out of 31) passed the CAP. Overall, 28 candidates took both the SAQ and CAP papers this year, 20 passed both (71%), so therefore are awarded the DPM
- * Distinctions were awarded to 2 candidates. Congratulations to candidates 8678 and 11439 for their outstanding performances.

Changes to the DPM this year:

- The DPM and CHP/DHP were held electronically for the second time in 2021 using TestReach. Various improvements were made based on lessons from the previous year:
 - Detailed tutorials were developed in TestReach to demonstrate both the MCQ and written examinations to help candidates familiarise themselves with the electronic examinations.
 - This year, candidates were allowed the option of sitting the papers in person at the faculty and a few took this option.
 - The CAP manuscript was presented as a PDF for ease of reading for candidates as well as in a text format. The text format allows candidates to copy/paste, annotate, highlight sections to support them in answering questions.
 - There were formatting changes in how SAQ/CAP questions are presented in to allow the main question and the follow up stems to be visible on 1 page.
 - The SAQ and CAP were held over two consecutive days
 - Marianne Whitelam (Examinations and Standards Manager) has been trained to be able to create the and edit examination papers directly in TestReach.
 - Process improvements in TestReach:
 - Recording phone calls with tech support
 - On-line chat with tech support now available



- Invigilation was again performed remotely by TestReach, which includes a secure and robust identification process, and live monitoring via webcam and microphone which involved checking the candidates' environment for materials, phones, etc. and monitoring during the examination. An improvement this year was that TestReach can now supply individual video recordings of candidates' examinations
- Candidates were advised to perform the test process on the device and at the location they plan to perform the actual examination. All candidates sat the examination at home this year, with around a third using a windows computer and the rest an apple mackintosh.
 - Contingency plans in case of a disaster with the electronic system were developed and were not required.
- Following the examinations, the MCQ was marked in TestReach system, and written scripts were provided as PDF files to markers.
- The FPM sent a detailed questionnaire to all candidates who sat the examinations via Survey Monkey. More than 75% candidates were either satisfied or very satisfied with the online examination process, with less than 5% being dissatisfied. Feedback will be included in a report which is required to be provided to the GMC. Learnings from the feedback, and from our experience with the TestReach system will be considered and, where applicable, incorporated in our examination processes for next year.
- Standard setting for all 3 papers took place on 24th September 2021. MCQ pass mark was set using a book-mark method, after the paper was sat. SAQ and CAP pass marks were set using a modified Angoff method before the papers are sat.
- Following the unprecedented circumstances last year, MCQ attempts in 2020 were not counted towards the maximum permitted number of MCQ attempts. COVID-19 has disrupted 2021, but to a lesser extent and the impact was not considered significant. On balance and given a lack of technical issues with the online examination this year, OBoE has agreed that taking the MCQ in 2021 does count as one of the candidate's attempts.

The FPM Examination Protocols for online remote invigilation can be found at the following website:

<https://www.fpm.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/FPM-online-exam-protocols-2020-1.pdf>

The Q&A can be found at the following website:

<https://www.fpm.org.uk/training-exams/covid-19-and-examinations/>

Impact of the new PMST curriculum on the DPM:

The GMC has approved the new curriculum for the pharmaceutical medicine speciality training (PMST) programme in May 2021. Various subgroups from the Curriculum and Assessment Working Group have developed the 14 specialty and generic capabilities in practice (CiPs) for the new curriculum. The



new curriculum will allow trainees to continue to acquire knowledge for the DPM as mapped to the IMI Pharmatrain syllabus. The DPM Exam specification will be updated to reflect the new curriculum.

DPM 2021:

Part 1 MCQ

- The MCQ paper was held on 15th September 2021.
- For the second consecutive year, the examination was performed online with remote webcam-based invigilation, using TestReach as the provider. There were no critical problems and few minor technical issues. One person chose to sit the paper at the faculty office.
- This year the pass mark was 75.2 % and 26 out of 51 passed (51%).

Part 2 SAQ and CAP

- The CAP and SAQ papers were held on 11th and 12th October 2021.
- The Critical Appraisal Paper (CAP) was generally well done this year. Overall, 25 out of 31 candidates (80%) passed the paper, with a few people performing very well. The individual marks ranged from 22.25 to 40.0 out of 50 (mean of 33.62). The pass rate for first attempters was 92%
- The Short Answer Question paper (SAQ) was also well done; 26 out of 32 (75%) of candidates passed achieving the pass mark ($\geq 56/100$).
- 3 candidates sat the SAQ paper in person and 4 candidates sat the CAP in person at the FPM Office. Everyone else took the written papers on-line.

Feedback from this year's examination

Written papers

Most candidates did very well in the written papers and the markers generally thought that candidates' answers were more concise than when handwritten, better organised, easier to read and much easier to mark.

Candidates should note the requirements of the question. If the question says "List", "Give" or "State" a few words for each item will suffice. "Briefly describe" means give a couple of sentences – a one-word answer is unlikely to score full marks. Refer to [Top Tips](#) on the FPM website for full details.

All candidates are given general instructions including allocation of marks to parts of questions, and some specific advice, for example that where a question asks for a listing of X features, that they may list more than X to maximise their chance to score the available marks.



SAQ Paper

This year the overall results were good for the SAQ paper, being just slightly lower than in 2020 with a pass rate that is consistent with previous years. The pass-mark this year was 56% which was in line with the last 6 years when the designated pass-mark ranged between 52 – 55.6%. The pass rate of 75% was also in line with that seen in the previous 6 years when the pass rate ranged between 67 – 81%.

Questions 1, 6 and 9, were particularly well answered which were related to the Development of Medicines, Ethics and Legal Issues, and Drug Safety, Pharmacovigilance and Pharmacoepidemiology respectively. Question 7 related to Data Management and Statistics was generally poorly answered. This was a question concerning assessments for a new swab test for COVID-19 compared to a gold-standard PCR test, relating to positive predictive value, negative predictive value, , sensitivity and specificity. The expectation of the Board was that this would be well answered.

CAP paper

The manuscript provided for the CAP this year described a clinical trial of a new acute treatment for migraine. This was a paper titled 'Ubrogepant for the Treatment of Migraine' (Dodick DW, Lipton RB, Ailani J, Lu K, Finnegan M, Trugman JM, Szegedi A.) published in the New England Journal of Medicine 2019 Dec 5;381(23):2230-2241

Candidates were not expected to have detailed knowledge on the therapy area, and more general principles of the key considerations in design of studies would warrant full marks.

In general, candidates answered the descriptive questions well; there was variation in the quality of answers for the critique questions, with a number of candidates who did well in the descriptive questions but then performed badly in the critique questions.

Comments on trends in candidate answers are given below.

- There was a question asking about how patients were randomised to treatment. Few candidates included the comment that there was an optional second dose & patients were re-randomised 1:1.
- There was a question on what the co-primary endpoints were and how were they assessed. Most candidates answered the former correctly, however did not give details about how they were assessed.
- There was a question stating that ALT >3x Upper Limit of Normal (ULN) was an adverse event of interest and candidates were asked what other types of information the panel of experts might consider when assessing these cases. The maximum mark was 5 and in general subjects scored 3 or less.
- There was a question asking what covariates were used in the analyses and although descriptive, few candidates got the full 3 marks.
- There was a question asking candidates to comment on the external validity and generalisability of the results. Most answered that the study was conducted in one country, but the majority of candidates scored poorly on this question.



It should be noted that candidates cannot print the manuscript in TestReach. They can view the manuscript on one side of the screen and have the questions on the other to complete their answers. The TestReach technology allows the text version of the manuscript to be annotated and to cut and paste portions into the answer. It is recommended to have a good-sized computer monitor and that candidates fully utilise the TestReach 'test' paper to familiarize themselves with the setup.

We will aim to rotate among common areas of pharmaceutical medicine and to vary the topic of the paper featured.

DPM in 2022

In 2022, we will continue with the electronic examinations, allowing flexibility to candidates in the location they attend and to accommodate overseas candidates too.

DHP, CHP and DET examinations

At the BoE AGM on Dec 10th, updates on the Certificate and Diploma in Human Pharmacology (CHP and DHP) and the Diploma in Experimental Therapeutics (DET) were given. Details of these qualifications can be found on the FPM website.

Dates for 2022

Examiners' training day (Virtual): Friday 4 March 2022

DPM Part 1: Wednesday 14 September 2022

DPM Part 2: Monday 10 October and Tuesday 11 October 2022

BOE AGM: Friday 09 Dec 2022

Officers of the Board of Examiners

Ruth Dixon (Chair)

Sanjay Patel (Secretary)

Rene Van Der Merwe (Critical appraisal paper convenor)

Jon Sisson (MCQ paper convenor)

Tim Crossman (SAQ paper convenor)

Chris Brearley

Darren Wilbraham

Sadia Halim



Marianne Whitelam (Examinations and Standards Manager)

Changes to the OBoE in 2021:

We warmly welcome Sadia Halim, who has joined OBoE.

Special thanks to Eric Teo who was the SAQ conveyor for many years and has left OBoE this year.

In 2021 six new examiners completed all training activities and were approved as BOE members by the OBOE. Welcome to: Brihad Abhyankar, Karen Atkin, Karen Cheng, Alec Mushunje, James Penton, Maciej Zatonski.

Farewell this year to: Sheuli Porkess, Ed Nagy, Julie Benyon, Kate Owen, Zoya Panhaloo and Usman Farooqui. We are very grateful to these examiners for their contribution and thank them all for their valuable contributions throughout the years.

A special thanks to Marianne Whitelam for her continued commitment and work for the BoE. We wish her all the best for her upcoming maternity leave.

We also want to thank all the BoE members who in any way contribute to the examinations such as supporting the question setting, marking, standard setting, paper review and all other activities.

BoE members are welcome to submit MCQ or SAQ questions, or a paper you think would be good for the CAP at any time, to any member of OBOE or the FPM.

Sanjay Patel, Examinations Secretary on behalf of the OBoE