



Board of Examiners Newsletter Winter 2022

Dear Examiners, Educational Supervisors & Specialty Advisors

Welcome to the Winter 2022 newsletter for the Board of Examiners, from the Officers of the Board of Examiners (OBoE).

Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine (DPM) Examination 2022

The results of the DPM for 2022 were ratified at the Board of Examiners (BoE) annual general meeting on 9th December. This year's results were:

- * Part 1 (the MCQ paper) – 52% (24 out of 46 candidates) passed and were awarded the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Medicine
- * Part 2 (the Short Answer Questions and Critical Appraisal Paper) – 64.3% (17 out of 28 candidates) passed the SAQ and 84.6% (22 out of 26) passed the CAP. Overall, 26 candidates took both the SAQ and CAP papers this year, 15 passed both (58%), so therefore are awarded the DPM. 2 candidates took only the SAQ paper and both passed and 3 candidates took only the CAP paper having previously taken and passed SAQ. 2 of these candidates passed. Overall 19(61.3%) candidates were awarded the DPM.
- * The Academic Achievement Awards for the CPM and the DPM were both awarded to one candidate who scored the highest mark this year for the MCQ, SAQ and CAP papers. Congratulations to candidate 10922 for their outstanding performance.

Changes to the DPM this year:

- The DPM and CHP/DHP were held electronically for the third time in 2022 using TestReach. Key points were:
 - Detailed tutorials were developed in TestReach to demonstrate both the MCQ and written examinations to help candidates familiarise themselves with the electronic examinations.
 - Candidates were allowed the option of sitting the papers in person at the faculty and a few took this option.
 - The SAQ and CAP paper were both available as a resource in TestReach so the whole paper can be viewed at once
 - The SAQ and CAP were held over two consecutive days in October
- 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. 85% of responders would in future prefer to compete future examinations online. More than 70% responders felt the overall examination period was excellent or good compared with paper examinations. There was no dissatisfaction with the functionality of the online



examination for the SAQ paper or the CAP paper (i.e. formatting text, copy/paste, note taking etc). There was also no dissatisfaction with the remote invigilation process or the TestReach support

- Standard setting for all 3 papers took place using an angoff method before the papers were sat.

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/>

DPM 2022:

Part 1 MCQ

- The MCQ paper was held on 14th September 2022.
- The examination was performed online with remote webcam-based invigilation, using TestReach as the provider. There were no critical problems and 3 candidates reported technical issues. 45 candidates sat the paper via TestReach and One person chose to sit the paper at the faculty office.
- This year the pass mark was 73.3 % and 24 out of 46 passed (52%).

Part 2 SAQ and CAP

- The SAQ and CAP papers were held on 10th and 11th October 2022.
- The Critical Appraisal Paper (CAP) was well done this year. Overall, 22 out of 26 candidates (84.6%) passed the paper, with a few people performing very well. The individual marks ranged from 24.71 to 44.83 out of 50 (mean of 28). The pass rate for first attempters was 86%
- The Short Answer Question paper (SAQ) was also well done; 17 out of 28 (64.3%) of candidates passed achieving the pass mark (56%).
- One candidate sat the SAQ paper in person at the FPM Office. Everyone else took the written papers on-line.

Feedback from this year's examination

MCQ Paper

3 candidates had connectivity issues. For one candidate the issue was resolved after a short time, they passed the exam. However, in 2 cases the issue could not be resolved, despite the efforts of



TestReach IT support, and the candidate was not able to take the exam. In one case, the candidate's webcam could not be connected, a pre-requisite for the remote invigilation. In the other, the issue was a slow internet connection. For the 2 candidates who could not start the exam, this year will not count as an attempt.

This year an Angoff-based standard setting model was used and this went smoothly. The MCQ pass mark was 73.3% giving an overall pass rate of 52% (46 candidates took the MCQ and 24 passed) . There was good consensus around the pass mark and all processes were followed properly. The pass mark is very similar to the last 2 years.

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, with a pass rate (64%) that was lower than recent years (71 to 81%), but higher than 2017 (46%) and on par with 2014 (67%). The pass-mark this year was 54.5% which was in line with the last 9 years when the designated pass-mark ranged between 52 – 56%. This pass rate is considered appropriate for the SAQ paper. No specific question raised concern during the pre-adjudication process with respect to question content or associated model answer(s).

CAP paper

The manuscript provided for the CAP this year described a randomised controlled clinical trial of a COVID-19 vaccine. This was a paper titled 'Safety and Efficacy of the BNT162b2 mRNA Covid-19 Vaccine' (Polack F., et al) published in the New England Journal of Medicine 2020 Dec 31;383(27):2603-2615

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 on what methods or data sources could you use to investigate a rare serious adverse event that emerges during the post-authorisation period, which few candidates got the full 3 marks.
- There was a question to briefly describe 5 limitations of the chosen study design. The maximum mark was 5, no candidates scored the full 5 marks and candidates typically scored 3 or less.
- There was a question asking candidates to give a lay language summary for patients on the benefit:risk for BNT162b2, which many candidates did not score well for.
- There was a question asking candidates to briefly describe 4 key approaches taken by regulators to minimise delays in approving COVID-19 vaccines in Europe; several candidates wrote approaches for the US, indicating that candidates do not read the questions carefully.

The structure of the CAP and the choice of questions and answers are intended to achieve a fair paper which can be attempted within the allocated time. It was noted that candidates did do this year, however many do not read the question properly and therefore do not score marks. There were no specific issues of contention raised in relation to the exam.

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 screen 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. It is advised that candidates have a back-up computer/laptop available (with webcam facilities) and to ensure their broadband is of sufficient quality.

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

Academic Achievement Awards

In February 2022, the Faculty announced it will now give two new annual awards for academic achievement, each with a cash reward. These will replace the Distinction awards. The CPM Achievement Award to the candidate with highest marks for the CPM (MCQ paper) and the DPM Achievement Award to the candidate with highest marks over the 3 exam papers (SAQ, MCQ and CAP) for the DPM. Only first attempts at the papers will be counted. This first year, both Academic Achievement Awards were awarded to one candidate who scored the highest mark this year for the MCQ (88.27%) and the DPM SAQ + CAP + MCQ (84.5% + 89.63% + 88.27%). Congratulations to candidate 10922 for their outstanding performance.

DPM in 2023

In 2023, 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 9th, 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.

A special thanks to Steve Warrington, who is stepping down as the chair of the DHP/CHP group, for his dedication and long support for the FPM.

Dates for 2023

Examiners' training day : Friday 3 March 2023

DPM Part 1: Wednesday 13 September 2023

DPM Part 2: Tuesday 10 October and Wednesday 11 October 2023

BOE AGM: Friday 09 Dec 2023

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

Jo Collier

Kay Grimwood (Examinations Manager)



Changes to the BoE in 2023:

In 2022 three new examiners completed all training activities and were approved as BOE members by the OBOE. Welcome to: Shaun Flint, Daniel Jabbari and Vibha Patel.

The following examiners stepped down from the BOE this year and we thank them for their service
Fto: Karen Cheng, Katherine Hanrott, Bill Jenkins, Ennis Lee, Maria St Claire

Jon Sisson is handing responsibility for the MCQ paper on to Jo Collier, and Sanjay Patel is standing down as secretary.

A very special thanks for Ruth Dixon who has completed her 3-year term as the chair of OBOE. She has been instrumental in navigating OBOE through a very challenging period encompassing the COVID-19 pandemic and expediting the online examinations. We wish her all the best in her future endeavours. A new chair has not yet been appointed

Many thanks also to Jon Sisson who has been the MCQ conveyor for many years and is handing over this responsibility onto Jo Collier, and Sanjay Patel who is standing down as secretary.

A special thanks to Kay Grimwood for her commitment and work for the BoE throughout the year.

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