



Board of Examiners Newsletter: Spring 2026

Dear Examiners, Educational Supervisors & Specialty Advisors

Welcome to the Spring 2026 Newsletter from the Officers of the Board of Examiners (OBoE).

First Spring Exam – Certificate in Pharmaceutical Medicine (CPM) in March 2026

The big news is that for the first time, candidates were able to sit the Certificate of Pharmaceutical Medicine (Part 1 of the Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine, the Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) paper) in March (Tuesday 3rd) thus providing the opportunity to sit this exam twice per calendar year. Eighteen candidates sat the exam, all physicians, including 12 who were resitting and 6 who were taking the exam for the first time. All candidates took the exam online facilitated by TestReach, and none reported any technical difficulties. The pass mark was set at 74.4% using our standard Angoff Method. Disappointingly, only 5 candidates passed, a pass rate of 27.8% which is notably lower than we are used to seeing with the Autumn exam. There was no difference in the standard of the paper, and no obvious trends on any questions. It is clearly too early to draw any conclusions after only one Spring sitting, although anecdotally it seems that candidates were less well-prepared. From next year, we will be offering the whole DPM exam twice per year, with Part 2 (the Short Answer Question (SAQ) paper, and the Critical Appraisal Paper (CAP) also in the Spring.

Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine (DPM) Examination 2025

The MCQ paper was held on 3rd September 2025 and the SAQ and CAP papers were held on consecutive days the following month (21st and 22nd October 2025 respectively).

As per our standard process, standard setting for the MCQ paper was performed using the Angoff Method, and a modified Angoff Method was used for the SAQ and CAP papers.

All three papers were reviewed by BoE members and external experts independent from the BoE to check for accuracy, overall balance of the questions and that the language used is clear and unambiguous particularly thinking of those candidates for whom English is not their first language.

This was the second time that the CPM (MCQ paper) was opened to non-physicians, following the introduction of that change in 2024. The same standards and pass mark apply to non-physicians as for physicians.



A detailed questionnaire via SurveyMonkey was sent to all candidates who sat the Autumn exams. As in previous years the response to this request for feedback was low, with no more than 16 respondents to any question. All the respondents sat the exams online in a domestic setting, and the majority indicated that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the online exam process. However, two respondents were 'very dissatisfied' and 3 stated that they would prefer to complete future examinations on paper at a central London venue, so we will keep this option for 2026. Based on the feedback from the 2024 exams, we had explored the option to increase the time allowed for the SAQ paper by 15 minutes, but the logistical complexities of this process precluded us from implementing this for the 2025 exams. Given that the evidence for considering this change was based on a small proportion of a small number of respondents, and that the 2025 pass rate for the SAQ paper did not indicate that candidates were having problems with completing the paper, we have since decided to keep the timing for this exam unchanged at 2½ hours.

Results

DPM Part 1 MCQ/CPM

- * The pass mark was set at 74.66%; 73 candidates sat the MCQ, 38 passed (52.1%) and are awarded CPM. Two of the candidates were non-physicians, one of whom passed.

DPM Part 2 SAQ

- * The pass mark was set at 54.5%; 45 candidates sat the SAQ and 41 passed (91.1%).

DPM Part 2 CAP

- * The pass mark was set at 61%; 39 candidates sat the CAP and 25 passed (64.1%).

Overall

- * Overall, there were 49 candidates sitting the Part 2 exams: 35 sat both papers, 10 sat the SAQ having previously taken and passed the CAP; 3 sat the CAP having previously taken and passed the SAQ; and 1 took the CAP but was unable to sit the SAQ. Of these 49 candidates, 32 (65.3%) were awarded the DPM.
- * The Academic Achievement Awards for the CPM (highest mark at first attempt on the MCQ paper) and the DPM highest marks over all 3 papers (first attempts only) were both awarded to the same candidate who scored the highest marks this year for all three papers, with 89.07% on the MCQ, 80.75% on the SAQ and 80.66% on the CAP paper. Congratulations to candidate 1018498 for their outstanding performance which will be recognised and rewarded at the Faculty Annual Awards Ceremony on Tuesday 30th June.

Part 1 MCQ – Autumn 2025 and Spring 2026

Two candidates sat the MCQ exam in person with FPM staff invigilating with the reminder taking the exam online facilitated by TestReach and none reported any technical difficulties.



The pass rate for the Autumn 2025 exam is similar to that achieved over the last 5 years. As noted above, the pass rate for the Spring 2026 exam was lower than we are used to seeing; there were no differences in the compilation, checking and standard setting of the exam paper. Only two non-physicians sat the exam in Autumn 2025 (compared with 9 in 2024) and none sat the Spring 2026 exam. The pass rate for non-physicians was the same as for physicians (50%, vs 52% for physicians) but the sample size is tiny! It is encouraging to see non-physician candidates taking this opportunity for recognition of their expertise, and we are keen to accept applications from all those working in the pharma industry for the CPM exam.

Part 2 SAQ and CAP – Autumn 2025

Only the medically qualified candidates are eligible to sit the SAQ and CAP papers for the DPM. Two candidates sat the SAQ and CAP papers in person with FPM staff invigilating; otherwise all candidates sat the exams online via the TestReach system and processes.

SAQ Paper

The pass rate for the 2025 DPM SAQ paper was markedly higher than in previous years. Candidates performed well across all the questions, with the highest mean and median scores on Regulatory affairs, Drug Safety Pharmacovigilance and Pharmacoeconomics, and Exploratory Development questions, and the lowest scores on the Information Promotion and Education, and Economics of Healthcare Health Economics and Pharmacoeconomics questions.

CAP paper

The publication provided for the CAP this year described a real-world study:

Cost-effectiveness of GLP-1 receptor agonists versus insulin for the treatment of type 2 diabetes: a real-world study and systematic review, Yang et al published in Cardiovascular Diabetology (2021) 20:21.

The pass rate was notably lower for the CAP than we have seen over the past 5 years, which appears to reflect candidates' lack of preparedness for such a publication. All the CAP examiners noted that those candidates who failed did not demonstrate a fundamental understanding of many aspects related to study design, data analysis and its application. As usual, the descriptive questions were generally well-answered, but candidates fell down on the comment/critique and/or next steps questions. Candidates consistently answered poorly on questions related to statistical analyses (specifically related to sensitivity analyses and sources of bias), and basic definitions related to health economic analyses were generally poorly understood and easily confused. Whilst most candidates scored well when considering additional data and study types that could be useful, interpretation of the results in the context of clinical practice and policy making was more variable.

Candidates should be reminded that to be successful in the CAP, a detailed knowledge on the therapy area is not required, but the style of study or research presentation will vary and they should be familiar with the range of possible publications.



Examining on the 2024 PharmaTrain syllabus from Autumn 2026

From Autumn 2026, we will be examining on the PharmaTrain Syllabus version 3, dated 2024 and updated from the 2018 version. The number of syllabus sections is unchanged (13), essentially covering the same areas with some small changes to the syllabus section titles. However there are changes to the sub-sections including the introduction of new content in the majority of these sections.

Candidates preparing to sit the exam for the first time should follow the 2024 Syllabus to direct their learning and revision. Candidates who have previously prepared for and/or sat any of the DPM papers, including those candidates who have already passed the Part 1 MCQ exam plus/minus one of the Part 2 exams, should now switch to the 2024 Syllabus. The new syllabus is available on the Faculty website, together with a marked-up version showing the changes from 2018.

Update on the BoE:

In 2025 three new examiners completed all training activities and were approved as BoE members by the OBoE: welcome to: Clinton Lai, Harriet Gray Stephens and Arpan Tahim.

The following examiners stepped down from the BoE during 2025, and we thank them for their service: Karen Atkin, Tim Crossman, Nada Mason and Hamzah Baig.

Thus we had a net reduction of one examiner in 2025.

I am delighted to say that there has already been an encouraging level of interest from potential examiners this year – so much so, that we are planning an additional Spring Examiners' Training Day at the beginning of June (see below). However, if you or anyone you know is interested in joining our team of examiners, please let us know. Thanks to the commitment of our small team, we have sustained delivery of all DPM exams, including the introduction of the Spring exams starting this year with the MCQ paper (CPM). In this respect, I want to particularly acknowledge **Jo Collier**, MCQ paper convener: Jo was awarded the FPM Volunteer Award for 2025, a richly deserved recognition of her tremendous expertise and commitment to delivering the DPM – well done Jo, and thank you!

It is of course obvious that the full introduction of the Spring exam schedule from 2027 with the addition of the SAQ and CAP papers will require double the number of examiners for these papers, as well as doubling our requirement for new SAQ as well as MCQ questions. And we still have gaps on OBoE, notably a Vice-Chair, Secretary and at least one more paper co-Convener. So don't be shy – we would love to welcome existing examiners to OBoE.

Being an examiner is very rewarding. It is a great way to stay connected with like-minded colleagues, and to keep up-to-date, as well as providing useful supporting information and CPD points for revalidation. As a reminder, the requirements for members of the Board of Examiners include: submitting at least two draft Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) and at least one draft Short Answer Question (SAQ) every year; making yourselves available to review the draft examination papers, participate in standard setting, or mark any of the exams at least once every three years; attend an examiners' training day at least once every three years; and attending the Annual General Meeting of



the Board of Examiners. All examiners are also required to complete Equality and Diversity Training at least once every three years.

Thank you to all examiners for your expertise and commitment. Please keep those MCQ and SAQ questions (with answers!) coming: they should be sent password protected, with the password emailed separately, to the FPM office (exams@fpm.org.uk), and can be sent throughout the year. Also, if you come across any published papers that you think might be good for the CAP, please do send us these via the same route at any time.

And finally, but by no means least, a huge thank you to Marianne Whitlam for her tremendous drive to keep everything on track and her expertise in managing the logistics of all the exams, the interface with TestReach and all of our meetings and communications.

Dates for 2026

Examiners' Summer Training Day: Friday 12th June 2026

Examiners' Autumn Training Day: Friday 9th October 2026

DPM Autumn Exam Part 1: Tuesday 15th September 2026

DPM Autumn Exam Part 2: Wednesday 7th October and Thursday 8th October 2026

BoE AGM: Wednesday 9th December 2026

Kristina Strutt, Chair of the Board of Examiners

On behalf of the OBoE:

Jo Collier (Multiple Choice Question Paper Convener)

Mayura Deshpande (Multiple Choice Question Paper co-Convener)

Rene Van Der Merwe (Critical Appraisal Paper Convener) – *stepping down in 2026*

Caz Canavan (Critical Appraisal Paper co-Convener)

Sadia Halim (Critical Appraisal Paper co-Convener)

James Penton (Short Answer Question Paper co-Convener)

Kristina Strutt (ad interim Short Answer Question Paper co-Convener)

Jon Sisson

Chris Brearley

Darren Wilbraham

Alistair Paice

Helen Philpott

Marianne Whitlam (Examinations Manager)

N.B.: The positions of Vice-Chair, Secretary, Short Answer Question co-Convener are currently vacant.

<https://www.fpm.org.uk/training-exams/diploma-in-pharmaceutical-medicine/>