



Examiners' comments – Feedback to Candidates

March 2025

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 March 2025 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 March 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 March 2025 sitting are also published on the [FPH website](#)

Paper I

Question 1 & Question 2:

Candidates on the whole performed well on Q1, and several responses to Q2 were particularly excellent. Some candidates may have lost time providing background information that the question does not seek instead of answering the specific question. A common weakness in answers to these questions related to the comparative elements of questions asked. Merely providing information for each of two alternatives but not providing focused points of comparison where these were requested, lost many candidates points across both questions.

Question 3 & Question 4:

Q3 answers were strong, whereas Q4 answers were less so. For Q3 specifically, candidates could have improved performance by offering specific actions in the contexts these were requested, rather than general principles where this was required; for example, distinguishing between specific examples of structural interventions vs more general models of approaching particular health issues. Answers to Q4 reflected inconsistent preparation in health protection.

Question 5 & Question 6:

Q5 responses were of a lower standard than in previous years, despite a question of comparable difficulty to previous papers. Common faults in responses to Q5 came in the use of “common sense” as opposed to specific, focused public health knowledge, and a lack of concision. Q6 responses suffered from a similar lack of concision but reflected good preparation on the part of candidates. Answers could be improved by linking points together where appropriate.

Question 7 & Question 8:

Q7 and Q8 answers were generally of an acceptable standard, though a lack of substantive knowledge in core public health concepts came as a detriment to a substantial chunk of candidates. This was especially noticeable in answers to Q8. Use of appropriate public health concepts to structure answers would have improved performance. Where questions indicate that candidates should reflect specific contexts in their answers, these should be included.

Question 9 & Question 10:

Q9 answers were often let down by an inadequate grasp of relevant theories or models, and the inability to define these correctly and concisely. A common issue in responses to Q9 came in the use of ambiguous or “common sense” concepts without a concrete link to underpinning models and theories. Excellent candidates selected relevant frameworks or models then applied them, including naming the context where these frameworks would be applied and linking these with tangible examples. Responses to Q10 similarly suffered from inaccurate and irrelevant accounts of frameworks.

Paper IIA

Responses often came up short on interpretation of core epidemiological concepts. A lack of concision in answers (a common issue on this paper) often complicated marking. A balanced account of critical appraisal is important as well.

Paper IIB

Performance on this paper was highly variable. Questions around the interpretation of study results tended to be answered well, with some candidates clearly taking consideration of the number of marks available for question parts. Some showed good ability with calculations. In many cases candidates did not provide any working, which meant an incorrect final answer missed out on methods marks. Poorly performing candidates also struggled to interpret the answer they had calculated.