



Examiners' comments – Feedback to Candidates

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

Paper I

Question 1 – This question was generally answered well by candidates, with most able to clearly articulate the key features, strengths and weaknesses required. Better performing candidates were able to apply their knowledge to the context of the question stem, where weaker answers could provide generic strengths and weakness but did not say why these were important for the scenario presented.

Question 2 - This question had a bigger range of answers provided by the candidates which may have reflected a lack of understanding of the technical aspects of the question. One of the more common pitfalls for candidates was not providing sufficient detail in their definitions, where it is possible that the candidates did know the answer just didn't write enough detail to convey this convincingly. Weaker performing candidates were not able to provide the statistical test asked for, and discussed other aspects that did not gain marks. Candidates should read the question carefully and ensure that their answer follows the questions direction.

Question 3 - There was generally a clear distinction between those with knowledge to answer the question and those who that did not. Candidates who answered well showed clear understanding or experience of the practical aspects of investigating outbreaks in these settings. Good candidates were also able to describe a range of approaches available to manage outbreaks such as these. Poorer performing candidates used organisms that were not those being asked about or described organisms at length when this was not actually requested.

Question 4 – Overall, this question was well answered. Weaker performing candidates struggled to clearly describe the difference and interaction between long term patterns and short-term events. Poorly performing candidates repeated responses to sections b and c and did not see how the question builds and progresses. Similarly repetition of points in section d was common, particularly involving ethnicity which appeared to be a 'stock' answer without explaining why that was a not a duplicate of socioeconomic factors.

Question 5 - Most candidates were able to offer a response for each of the sections in this question although the quality of explanations in some areas was disappointing. Those who did well provided answers that were specific to the context and to the question asked. For example, selecting specific strengths and weaknesses that were pertinent to the use of data from this source for the purpose of informing public health strategies. While most candidates were able to give simple definitions when required, many were not able to apply these to the question stem. Some candidates also provided circular definitions (where the definition is simply a rearrangement of the words in the name, not defining what it actually was). Weaker performing candidates simply listed all the findings or narrated the contents of the table, rather than pulling out the key findings of practical significance. Candidates would be advised to ensure that they know the definition of key statistical terms and ensure that they apply this to the context asked.

Question 6 - Most candidates were able to offer a response for each of the sections of this question. Those who did well provided answers that were specific to the context and to the question asked. Candidates who did well were able to provide clear and accurate definitions to demonstrate a clear understanding of the differences between them. Candidates who did well were also able to provide suitable examples that supported what they were describing.

Poorly performing candidates could provide names but were not able to provide clear descriptions or clear examples to demonstrate their understanding. Several candidates did not provide an example when requested. There was also a lack of understanding of the process of what was being discussed. Candidates should try to select suitable examples relevant to the context provided in the question introduction.

Question 7 - Overall, this was answered well. Most candidates understood the topic area. Part b was answered less well by some candidates. Some simply wrote about different methods of evaluation/analysis rather than approaches to addressing the issue. The best answers used an example to demonstrate their understanding of technical terms.

Question 8 - Overall, this was answered poorly. This was a straightforward question that candidates who knew their definitions of health economic terms would have passed, even without providing an appropriate example. A few candidates wrote near perfect answers, but several candidates struggled to provide a passable answer. Candidates are advised to ensure that they know key definitions and concepts in all aspects of the curriculum.

Question 9 - This question was generally well answered, and people were able to articulate the definitions well. The latter part of the question was where some candidates lost marks. Candidates who were able to clearly identify the four pieces of information and outline their use and importance performed well in this question. Whereas those candidates who provided more than four often performed less well. Candidates are advised to read the question carefully and follow the instruction, where a specific number of points are requested, only provide that number, any more wastes time in the exam and does not provide additional marks, since credit is only given for the first four not the best four.

Question 10 - In the main candidates scored highly on this question. Because of this, there was a potential ceiling effect on marks. Candidates were able to outline the elements required well. Candidates also demonstrated a good understanding of the wider determinants that needed to be considered when answering the question. Poorer candidates did not use an appropriate framework for the implementation. Candidates also, when asked for four factors to be taken into consideration often mentioned more which does not improve the mark. Writing more answers than the question requires means time is wasted. When a framework is required think about the context of the framework that is being asked for and only apply frameworks that are appropriate to that situation.

Paper IIA

Candidates generally answered questions well, the critical appraisal strengths and limitations sections were addressed well for most, where many set out the structures of their answers in line with the question. Some did not recognise the need to critically appraise and summarise the paper for the first part and provided very brief answers for 6 marks. We advise candidates to read the question and note the marks available for each subsection when thinking about how much information may be required.

The final part of the question required a media statement. Candidates are advised to be familiar with the different forms of response potentially required (letter, media statement etc) and use the format requested.

Candidates should try to avoid providing generic answers based on familiarity with the format of the questions. Read the context provided and try to ensure that answers recognise this context. Additionally, when discussing strengths and weaknesses candidates should be able to demonstrate their understanding. For example, stating an aspect of the study design “results in bias” without further explanation will not gain a mark when there is no indication that the candidates understand what the impact of a design flaw/strength is.

Bullet points are effective in reducing word count and maximising marks for Q1.

Paper IIB

Performance had a wide range but there were very few non-responses indicating that most candidates were able to ‘have a go’ on each question. Questions relating to multi-step calculations were highly discriminant, with candidates tending to perform either very well or very poorly. In every case, candidates who showed their workings were able to retain partial marks even if the answers were incorrect. Poorly performing candidates would present figures without explaining what the figure meant. This meant that answers that went wrong somewhere along the way were harder to award partial marks to.

Advice to candidates to maximise marks is

- 1) Show your workings (if preferred, these can be written out rather than using the equation symbol tool).
- 2) Interpret your estimates to show you know what the number means.
- 3) Use precision in language to demonstrate understanding rather than writing down vague words and hoping they attract credit.