



Candidate Feedback Summary (March 2025)

79/139 candidates responded to the survey that was sent out directly after the exam (57% response rate).

This exam sitting was the first time that test centres were used to hold the exams. The test centres were distributed across seven locations in the UK with one centre in Hong Kong. The DFPH exam was previously conducted with remote invigilation, and the majority of the candidates sat the exam at home.

Candidate membership status

Of the 79 responses received, 69% of responses were from registrars in a UK Public Health Training Post, 19% were based in the UK but not in a Public Health Training Post and 9% of the responses were from trainees at the Hong Kong College of Community Medicine.

81% of the respondents were sitting the Diplomat DFPH exam for the first time.

Pre Exam Administration

Guidance and FAQs

The majority of respondents (73%) voted the guidance and FAQs made available in advance to be 'excellent/good'. 17% of respondents said that these documents were adequate.

Candidates commented that the emails in advance from the exam team were excellent, they noted that the emails were supportive and provided regular useful information. However, some candidates also commented that they received a number of emails from the Faculty and TestReach automated emails in the lead-up to the exam that they would have preferred to have been summarised into fewer emails.

Exam preparation materials

Candidates commented that past exam paper materials published in late January 2025 for Paper I assisted with their preparation. Candidates also noted that the preparation materials on the FPH website are not centrally located and could be easily missed. Some respondents commented that they felt the preparation materials for papers IIA and IIB also need to be updated.

TestReach functionality test

78 candidates accessed the Functionality Test in advance of the exam; of these, 97% said they found this useful in preparing for the exam.

Application process

96% of respondents found that the application process was clear and easy to follow. One of the comments noted that they found the reasonable adjustment process difficult as it involved obtaining Training Programme Director (TPD) or employer support for the application which resulted in additional administration time. They also commented that time taken to find out if the adjustments were approved was too long.

Exam centre related

Exam centre location

36% of the respondents sat the exam at the London (Croydon) venue; 18% in Birmingham; 14% in Liverpool; 9% in Hong Kong; 8% in Edinburgh; 8% in Leeds; 6% in Bristol and 1% in Belfast. 76% of the respondents commented that it was easy to get to the exam test centre.

For those who said it was difficult to get to the centre, reasons included: the time taken to reach the test centre by public transport, that public transport options were limited, traffic issues, and the centre was a long way from their home.

Exam venue set up

53 of the 79 respondents stated that exam centre signage was clear on arrival. Other respondents noted that while the signage was not easily spotted on arrival, staff were available at the reception desk and provided directions.

92% of the candidates noted that registration process was clear and easy to follow. Some candidates noted that long queues were experienced when checking-in.

Exam venue facilities

All of the respondents were able to locate the allocated exam station easily. 86% of the respondents commented that they found the test centre equipment was easy to use and/or reasonable. Some candidates commented that the exam station desk was too small, the chairs were not comfortable, the screens were too small and having other candidates in the same room led to noise from keyboard tapping. Candidates noted that the availability of ear plugs helped with the background noise.

87% of the respondents noted that exam centre facilities were 'good/adequate'. For those who voted 'poor' candidates noted that breakout areas were small, storage facilities for candidate belongings were not adequate and they sometimes had to wait to access the toilets due to them being occupied.

Exam invigilation experience

The majority of candidates noted that the exam centre invigilators were friendly and professional and made their exam experience pleasant. Candidates who previously sat the exam with remote invigilation said that having an in-person invigilator was reassuring.

Choice between remote invigilation and test centre exam

68% of candidates said that given the choice, they would select to sit the exam at a test centre, 18% of the respondents preferred remote invigilation and 14% of the respondents were unable to say.

Candidates that preferred remote invigilation noted that avoiding the commute to the exam centre reduces stress and fatigue. Some candidates noted that the centre was about hours' drive away from their home.

Feedback on having a day in-between exam

When asked if candidates preferred having a day-in-between each exam paper, 92% (61/66) of those who sat both days said that they preferred this. 13 candidates had previously banked a paper so were only sitting one day of the exam.

Candidates noted that there were additional costs involved for hotel accommodation when the exam has a rest day in between.

Feedback about questions, images, and figures

Questions:

Positive

- Candidates noted that questions were easy to read.
- It was helpful to provide the number of sub-questions at the beginning, to make sure no questions are missed.
- The questions were clear, and the mark breakdown was helpful.
- Candidates noted that using test centre equipment with a larger screen made it easier to read the question.

Negative

- Candidates noted that most questions had many sub-sections, so they had to keep scrolling to see the whole question.
- Candidates noted that due to time pressure they forgot the functions available such as the ability to enlarge.
- Candidates noted that Paper IIB was particularly hard to finish on time.

Images, tables and figures

Positive

- The majority of candidates noted that the experience of viewing figures and tables was fine.
- Some candidates noted that the flexible canvas was easy to use, and the zoom function on the table and resource panel was helpful to be able to read detail.
- It was useful to have the tables and figures alongside the question.
- Candidates commented that they did not experience any issues after practising ahead of the exam on the Functionality Test.

Negative

- A couple of the tables were overly complicated given the time pressure of the exam.
- Scrolling to view subsections of the question and resizing the table was time consuming.
- A very small number of candidates noted that they usually use two screens so had difficulty working with one screen and trying to organise the screen.

Paper IIA article

Positive

- The majority of candidates noted that the article was clear and were able to view the content of the paper without a problem.
- Candidates noted that the option to increase the font size was helpful.

Negative

- Some candidates noted that they struggle to read articles onscreen and would have preferred to have a paper copy.

Formulae sheet feedback

- 60 candidates found the formulae sheet to be useful but did not leave any comments about their experience.
- Some candidates noted that it would be helpful to have the formulae sheet as a pop up that can be viewed alongside the question. They noted that this would minimize the scope for error when switching between windows.
- A small number of candidates noted that they would have preferred to have a printed copy of the formulae sheet available for use as that would save time.

Best aspect of the exam

- The majority of the candidates commented that being in a test centre is much easier than being at home and being reliant on their own equipment and internet connection.
- Most candidates noted that test centre staff were very friendly and made the experience more relaxed and supported.
- Candidates noted that seeing colleagues face to face encouraged mutual support to face the exam.
- Candidates noted that communication from the Faculty was helpful.

- Some candidates noted having a day between the exams as the best aspect.
- Candidates noted that receiving an email after the exam saying that the exam had been submitted successfully was reassuring.

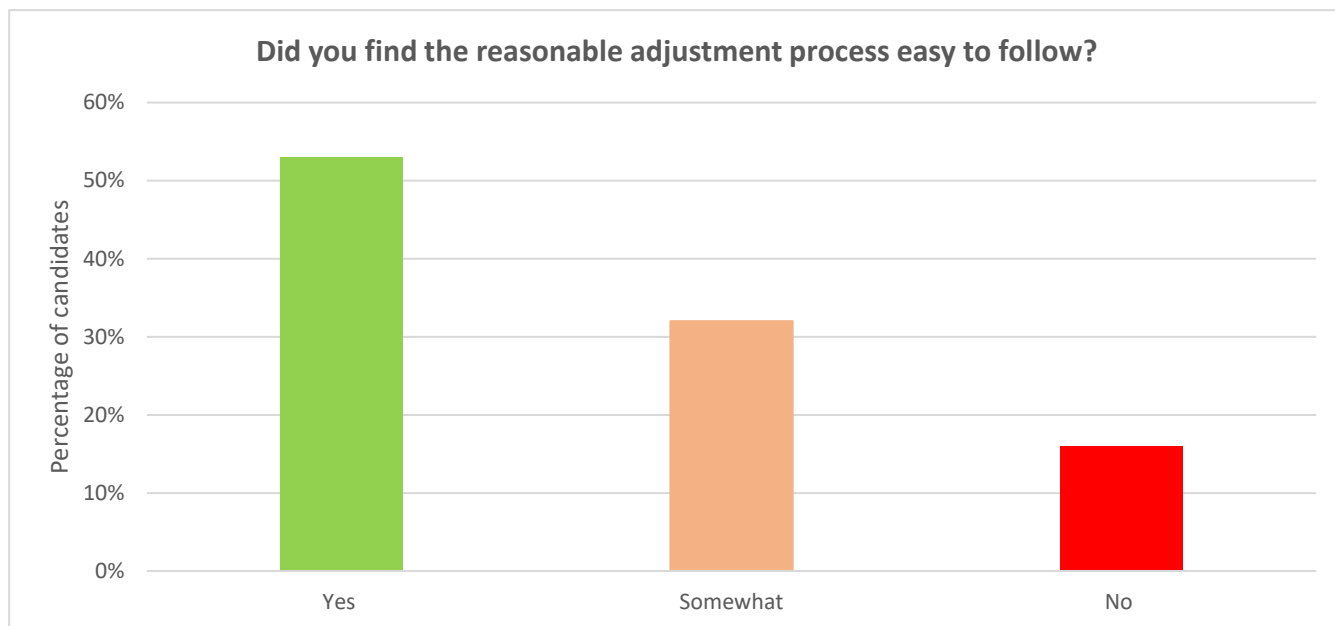
Part of the exam most in need of improvement

- Some candidates noted that questions were ambiguous and did not present a fair opportunity to demonstrate knowledge.
- A few candidates noted that Paper IIB had some difficult questions and meant that they were pressed for time to complete the paper.
- Candidates noted that lack of recently updated resources to practice paper IIA and IIB was an area for improvement.
- Candidates noted that using non-programmable calculators increase the risk of error.
- Some candidates noted that test station hardware could have improved, with bigger screens and keyboards that are easy to type on and do not 'click' as loudly.

Feedback from those with adjustments (March 2025)

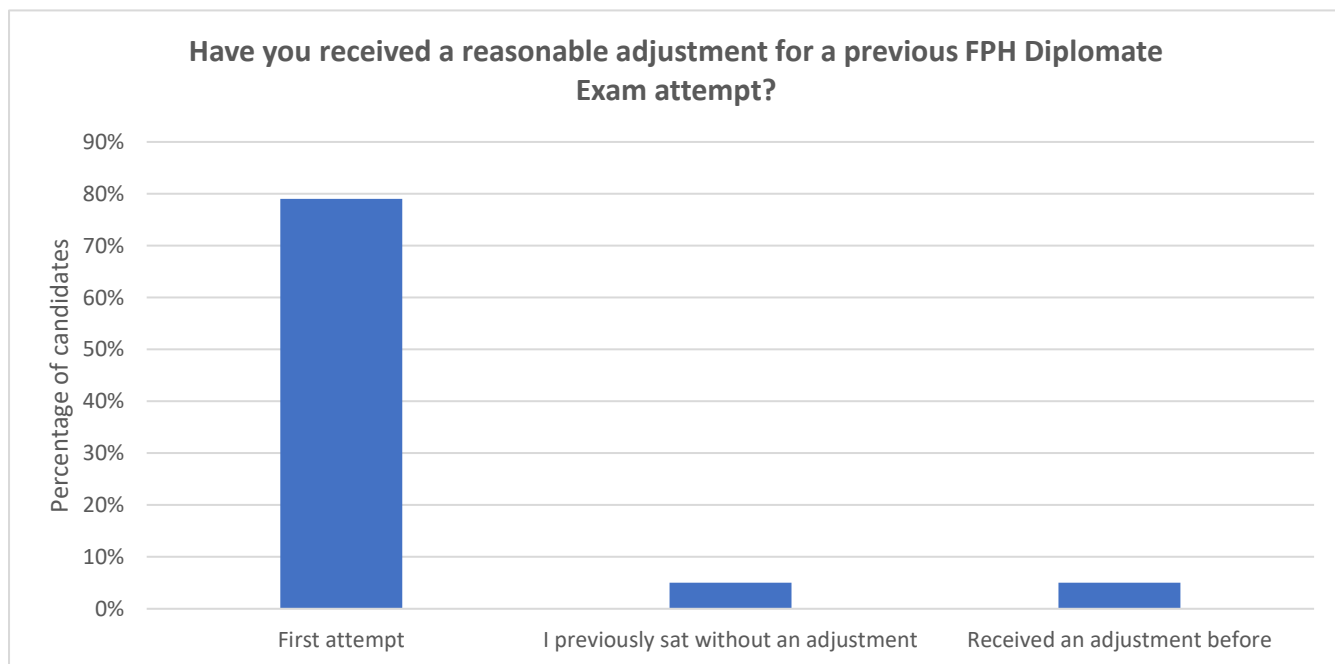
20 candidates who completed the survey received a reasonable adjustment (RA).

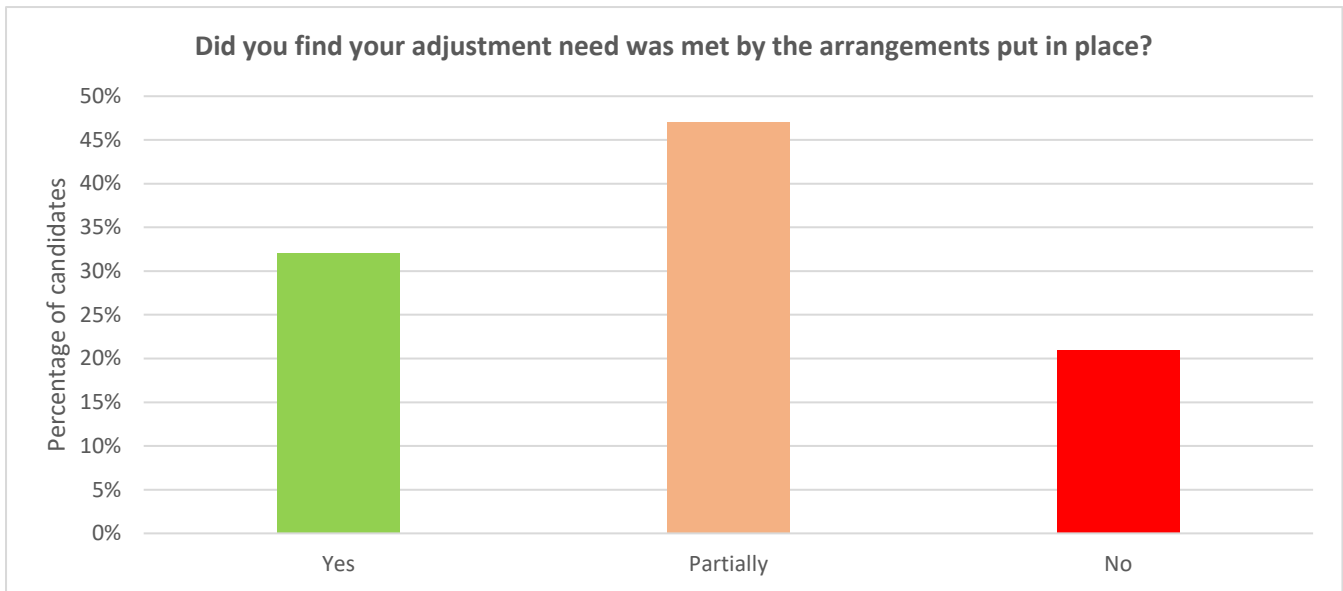
- 1 of which did not wish to provide further feedback on their RA experience.
- 19 candidates responded to the reasonable adjustment section of the survey from 29 candidates who received a reasonable adjustment (66%).



Comments:

- The process is easy to follow. However, it is not clear to me why we need to get our TPD to sign off our request for a reasonable adjustment. It feels unnecessary and adds extra administrative burden.
- Specific detail of one type of adjustment (spellcheck) adjustment was not provided before being asked to sign documentation.



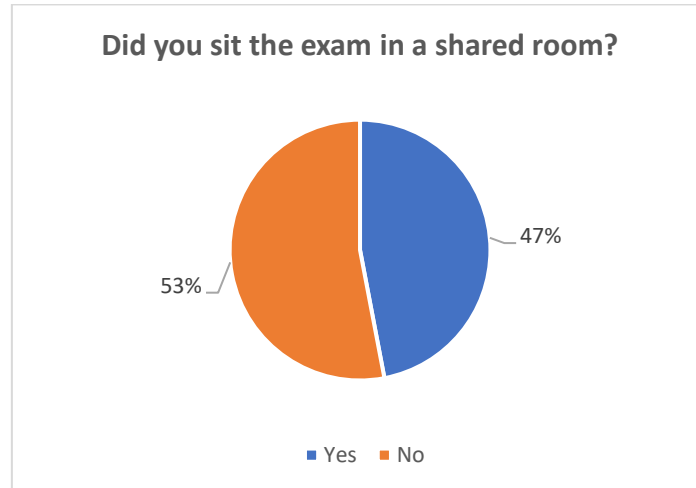


Comments from those who voted 'partially':

- The second screen was not set up on arrival
- There were issues with the 'Pause' button on TestReach
- Received extra time, however, I was not in a separate room and for the afternoon paper, I started before everyone else and finished after. This meant I was disturbed twice by candidates entering and leaving.
- The spellcheck solution required additional time for copying and pasting and resulted in residual formatting issues.

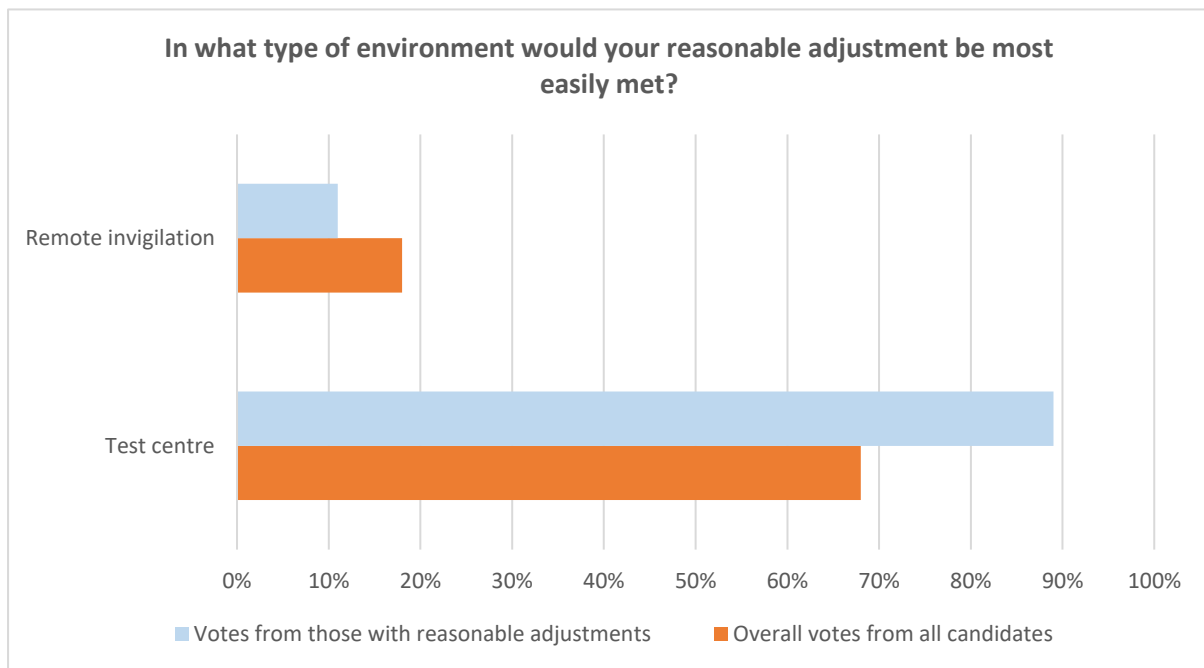
Comments from those who voted 'no':

- Not being able to take rest breaks as agreed in advance.



Comments included:

- Disruptive with other candidates entering and exiting the shared room.
- This was no problem, the main issue was the invigilator understanding of how to pause the exam and what to do when this didn't work, which caused disruption.
- There was significant disruption that given the time pressures of the exam, I regret not flagging as I was unable to concentrate during protracted conversations about issues other candidates were having.
- It was helpful that those of us with adjustments were placed at the back so there was less distraction when others came in and started their exam.



Comments on the overall experience of the reasonable adjustments:

Whilst I massively appreciate the accommodations, I have been given I still believe the exams could be a more equitable process for candidates with disabilities.