



Examiners' comments – Feedback to Candidates

March 2021 sitting

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 2021 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 2021 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 2021 sitting are also published on the [FPH website](#)

Paper I

Question 1 and 2

Most candidates provided reasonable answers to this question.

Candidates who did less well were unable to differentiate between key epidemiological terms and/or had difficulty correctly explaining the key features of a particular study design. Some candidates, while able to correctly define a concept or definition, demonstrated that they did not fully understand the definition when asked to apply it to the example in the question.

Question 3 and 4

Answers should focus on the population (rather than individual) level, and strategies should be evidence-based. Answers based around a recognised model usually scored higher. Some candidates appeared to confuse the health threats described in the question.

Question 4 and 5

Both these questions were generally well answered.

Question 7 and 8

Questions were generally answered well, although candidates who provided less specific, more generic answers did not score as well. Some candidates, while providing a correct definition, demonstrated through their example, that they did not actually understand the concept defined.

Question 9 and 10

Although these questions were generally well answered, better scoring candidates applied a more suitable and relevant model, while weaker candidates used less appropriate examples that meant they were less likely to demonstrate some of the relevant points.

Paper IIA

The answer to this question has a word limit, so candidates should pay special attention to answering the specific question set rather than waste words on a more generic answer, or on summarising the paper. Candidates should also ensure that their critical appraisal focuses on the implication and application of the findings and is not presented as a peer review for a publication. The best answers were from candidates putting themselves in the role described in the question's preamble. Candidates who struggled to outline the key features/assumptions of statistical tests scored less well. Similarly, poorer scoring candidates did not use an appropriate structure or language for their proposed media communication.

Paper IIB

In some instances, candidates correctly identified the relevant formula, but did not then correctly calculate the answer. Also, where a question asks for a summary of the findings, a written (text) description/interpretation is usually expected, rather than a calculation.

Generic advice from the examiners:

- Read the question carefully and answer each part.
- Good answers often apply the example in the question to illustrate required definitions and explanations.
- Candidates should ensure that they focus on specifically answering the question rather than spending time on including a broad introduction to the topic, which is unlikely to attract any marks.
- Well-structured answers are usually more comprehensive and thus score higher marks.
- If the question asks for an example, please provide one.
- If a question asks for a specific number of features/examples/stake holders, candidates should be aware that providing any above that number will not be considered, for example, if a question ask for THREE benefits, only the first three listed will be marked.
- Look at the marks associated with a question. If a question that asks for two examples is associated with 4 marks, candidates are usually expected to describe/discuss the relevance of the example to the concept it illustrates, rather than simply providing a brief list of examples.
- Practice performing calculations when the data are presented in a variety of different ways and in different formats. Preliminary steps may be needed before the calculation can be carried out.