Examiners' comments – Feedback to Candidates

October 2022

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 2022 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 2022 sitting are also published on the FPH website

Paper I

Q1 & Q2: Most candidates provided a reasonable answer to Q1, but many candidates performed less well on Q2. For Q2, some candidates used a great deal of time describing the detailed process of data collection they would undertake whereas the question asked them to consider what approaches could be used to address an important public health issue. In addition, some candidates failed to gain full credit in Q1 by not linking their answers back to the specific scenario in the question.

Q3 & 4: These questions were generally answered well, though a few struggled to answer the final section of Q4 despite it focusing on a key public health concept. Candidates who scored highly typically used a relevant structure or framework in their responses, which helped ensure that their answers were easy to follow and that no key issues were omitted.

Q5 & 6: Again, most candidates produced reasonably answers to these questions, but again better answers adopted a clear structure in their responses. In particular, for Q5 (where candidates were asked to outline a set number of points) those who simply provided a list of items, with no explanation as to the relevance of each to the scenario, received far less credit. In Q6, some candidates wrote a great deal text where only a single mark was available and less in other sections where more credit was available.

Q7 & 8: In general, these questions were answered reasonably well, with the best candidates taking a broad view of health and related concepts in Q7. Those who performed less well in this question did not specifically address the question asked. Candidates scoring highly in Q8 demonstrated a good understanding of sociological theory and applied this clearly to the question asked.

Q9 & 10: These questions were generally answered well, particularly where candidates used good examples to illustrate their points. Occasionally, candidates used frameworks that were not appropriate to the question being asked and these did not help them gain credit. In these cases, the framework constrained their response so that they didn't consider the full range of issues being addressed.

Paper IIA

Q1 was answered reasonably well by most candidates, with the best responses providing a succinct summary of the study's key findings in their own words (demonstrating that they clearly understood the article's results), as well as a clear description of the study's specific

strengths and limitations, setting these in a broader public health context. Some candidates appeared to have copied and pasted text from the article into their answer, which did not demonstrate their own understanding. Q2 was poorly answered by many candidates, which examiners found surprising, given that this related to common statistical concepts and their application in this study.

Q3 was generally well answered, with the best candidates clearly adapting their language to the intended (non-technical) audience. However, in both Q3 and Q4, some candidates focused their answers on the article's results and did not draw upon a wider knowledge of Public Health in order to consider the implications for public health messaging and implications for the scenario described in the question. In addition, some candidates provided a very generic answer to Q4 without clearly linking this to the scenario described, which meant they scored relatively poorly.

Paper IIB

Most questions were answered reasonably well in this Paper, though candidates appeared to struggle more with questions that drew on knowledge from across the syllabus. Candidates who performed well were able to go beyond simple descriptions of data when asked to interpret findings, recognising the public health implications of the results presented. Some candidates struggled with Q2 and Q3 as they were not able to perform the requested calculations and could not therefore adequately comment on the findings.

Generic advice for the examiners:

- Read the question and sub-questions carefully and answer each part.
- Good answers often apply the example in the specific 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 many marks.
- Well-structured answers are usually more comprehensive and thus score higher marks.
- If the question asks for an example, please provide one, and if a question asks for a specific number of points to be included, candidates should be aware that providing any above that number will not be considered.
- 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, and it is important to show these.
- When asked to interpret findings (e.g., from a table), ensure you consider the broader implications of the data presented (relevant to the question scenario).