



Board of Examiners Newsletter Winter 2024

Dear Examiners, Educational Supervisors & Specialty Advisors

Welcome to the Winter 2024 Newsletter from the Officers of the Board of Examiners (OBoE).

Diploma in Pharmaceutical Medicine (DPM) Examination 2024

It is now standard practice for the DPM Exam papers to be taken online with remote invigilation facilitated by TestReach. Candidates are offered the option to sit the exam papers using pen and paper at the FPM Office although no one did so in 2024.

The MCQ paper was held on 11th September 2024 and the SAQ and CAP papers were held on consecutive days the following month (9th and 10th October 2024 respectively).

The MCQ paper was marked in the TestReach system, and the SAQ and CAP papers were marked via provision of PDF files of the candidates' scripts to the markers.

As in previous years, standard setting for the MCQ paper was performed using the Angoff Method, and a modified Angoff Method was used for the SAQ and CAP papers.

All three papers were reviewed by BoE members and two external experts independent from the BoE (a professional medical writer, and a professor of clinical pharmacology and therapeutics who is an expert in medical education) to check for accuracy, the overall balance of the questions and that the language used is clear and unambiguous particularly bearing in mind those candidates for whom English is not their first language.

A detailed questionnaire via SurveyMonkey was sent to all candidates who sat the exams. As in previous years very few people responded to this request for feedback, the majority of whom confirmed that they were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied with the online exam process. However, one respondent was 'very dissatisfied' and 3 stated that they would prefer to complete future examinations on paper at a central London venue, so we will keep this option for 2025. Five of the respondents felt that the time allocated for the SAQ paper was not long enough.

Changes to the DPM in 2024

In September 2024 the CPM (MCQ paper) was opened to non-physicians for the first time. The syllabus, exam specifications and overall format of the MCQ paper were unchanged as there can be no compromise to the assessment of the knowledge required to support PMST and professional registration. The same standards and pass mark applied to non-physicians as for physicians.



Results

The results of the DPM for 2024 were ratified at the Board of Examiners (BoE) Annual General Meeting on Friday 6th December 2024.

- * **DPM Part 1 MCQ/CPM**
The pass mark was set at 75.1%; 65 candidates sat the MCQ, 31 passed (47.7%) and are awarded the CPM. See below for more details.
- * **DPM Part 2 SAQ**
The pass mark was set at 57.7%; 38 candidates sat the SAQ and 25 passed (65.8%). See below for more details.
- * **DPM Part 2 CAP**
The pass mark was set at 64%; 28 candidates sat the CAP and 25 passed (89.3%). See below for more details.
- * Overall, 28 candidates took both the SAQ and CAP papers this year, 18 passed both (57.7%) and are therefore awarded the DPM. A further 9 candidates took only the SAQ paper having previously passed the CAP, 4 of whom passed. There were no candidates taking only the CAP paper having previously passed the SAQ. One candidate took the SAQ and was unable to sit the CAP. Therefore of the total of 38 candidates sitting the Part 2 exams, 22 (57.9%) were awarded the DPM.
- * The Academic Achievement Awards for the CPM (highest mark at first attempt on the MCQ paper) and the DPM (highest marks across all 3 papers, first attempts only) were both awarded to the same candidate who scored the highest mark this year for the MCQ (86.9%) and SAQ (82.5%) papers and the fourth highest mark for the CAP paper (80.66%). Congratulations to Candidate 13166 for their outstanding performance.

Part 1 MCQ

Of the 65 candidates who registered for and completed the exam, 56 were medically qualified and 9 were non-physicians. All candidates took the exam online and none reported any technical difficulties.

The pass rate is similar to that achieved in the last 4 years. This is the first year that non-physicians have sat the paper, and the pass rate was lower for this sub-group of candidates (33%) compared with the medically-qualified group (50%). It is too early to see any trends between these groups with only one year of data, and we encourage any non-physicians working in the pharma industry who are interested in acquiring the CPM to study for and sit the exam.

Part 2 SAQ and CAP

Only the medically qualified candidates are eligible to sit the SAQ and CAP papers for the DPM.

We draw candidates' attention to the [Top Tips](#) on the FPM website for guidance on how to complete these papers.



SAQ Paper

The 2024 DPM SAQ paper performed well and went smoothly. Good SAQ results were observed, with a pass rate of 65.7%. This pass rate is slightly above that of 2023 and within the range observed in the past 5 years.

Candidates generally performed reasonably across all questions, with the highest mean and median marks observed on Questions 2 and 3, related to Pharmaceutical and Exploratory Development respectively. Candidates scored most poorly on Question 1, related to Non-clinical Testing.

CAP paper

The publication provided for the CAP this year described a randomised open-label noninferiority post-authorisation safety end-point trial involving patients with active rheumatoid arthritis. This was a paper titled 'Cardiovascular and Cancer Risk with Tofacitinib in Rheumatoid Arthritis' by Ytterberg et al published in the New England Journal of Medicine 2022 Jan 27;386(4):316-326

No specific therapeutic area knowledge would be required to score full marks.

All 28 candidates sat the exam remotely. One candidate experienced a technical issue and was unfortunately unable to submit their completed paper. Generally candidates performed very well with a pass rate of 89.3%, which is consistent with, although numerically the highest of, the last 5 years.

In general, candidates answered the descriptive questions well; there was variation in the quality of answers for the critique questions, with a number of candidates who did well in the descriptive questions but then performed badly in the critique questions, even achieving no marks.

There were a few specific observations:

- A question asking what is a co-primary endpoint and what special consideration is required for the statistical analysis was not answered well – very few candidates scored full marks on this
- In response to a question about censoring, many candidates did not demonstrate a clear comprehension of this
- As in previous years, candidates rarely scored well when asked to write a lay language summary of the main results to inform trial participants of the outcomes of the study

DPM in 2025

In 2025, we will continue with the online examinations, allowing candidates flexibility in the location they choose to sit the exam and to accommodate overseas candidates too. However, based on feedback in 2024, we will continue to offer the option of writing the exam with pen and paper at a central London invigilated location.



DHP, CHP and DET examinations

At the BoE AGM on December 6th, updates on the Certificate and Diploma in Human Pharmacology (CHP and DHP) and the Diploma in Experimental Therapeutics (DET) were given. Details of these qualifications can be found on the FPM website.

CHP and DHP examinations were held on 23rd, 24th and 25th October 2024. All candidates sat the papers online via TestReach. No technical problems arose during any of the 3 papers.

There were no candidates for the DET exam in 2024.

Dates for 2025

Examiners' training day : Friday 7th March 2025

DPM Part 1: Wednesday 3rd September 2025

DPM Part 2: Tuesday 21st October and Wednesday 22nd October 2025

BOE AGM: Friday 12th December 2025

Officers of the Board of Examiners

Kristina Strutt (Chair)

Jo Collier (Multiple Choice Question Paper co-Convener)

Mayura Deshpande (Multiple Choice Question Paper co-Convener)

Rene Van Der Merwe (Critical Appraisal Paper co-Convener)

Caz Canavan (Critical Appraisal Paper co-Convener)

Jon Sisson

Chris Brearley

Darren Wilbraham

Alistair Paice

Helen Philpott

Marianne Whitlam (Examinations Manager)

The positions of Vice-Chair, Secretary, Short Answer Question (SAQ) Convener and co-Convener are currently vacant.



Changes to the BoE in 2024

In 2024 five new examiners completed all training activities and were approved as BoE members by the OBoE. Welcome to: Caz Canavan, Mayura Deshpande, Luke Kuttschreuter, Alistair Paice and Fred Reid.

The following examiners stepped down from the BoE this year and we thank them for their service: Prashanti Shah, Rajan Bajracharya, Phil Barrington, Liz Clark, Sue Green, Yashmi Yogessar, Imran Lodhi, Tim Mant, Steve Pawsey, Andrea Spezzi and Martin Toal.

Sadia Halim has resigned from OBoE and Jon Sisson is stepping down from the role of Convener for the SAQ paper. Thank you both for your commitment and expertise in your respective roles.

A special thanks to Marianne Whitlam for her commitment and work for the BoE throughout the year.

We also want to thank all the BoE members who contribute to the examinations in any way, such as supporting the question setting, marking, standard setting, paper review and other activities. As you can see from the numbers above, we have a net loss of 6 members of the BoE in 2024. If you or anyone you know is interested in finding out more with a view to potentially joining us, please contact Marianne Whitlam at the Faculty. Similarly, if you are thinking you might like to join the OBoE please don't be shy – we would love to welcome you on board, so let Marianne know and we can follow up with you.

And a final note to remind all BoE members of the requirement to submit draft MCQ or SAQ questions (with answers!), or any published papers that you think might be good for the CAP. These can be submitted at any time, and should be sent password protected, with the password emailed separately to the FPM office (exams@fpm.org.uk).

Kristina Strutt, Chair of the Board of Examiners on behalf of the OBoE

For information and ease of reference, here is the link to the exam site on the Faculty's website.

<https://www.fpm.org.uk/training-exams/diploma-in-pharmaceutical-medicine/>