



# Board of Examiners Newsletter

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## Winter 2018

### Dip Pharm Med Exam Results 2018

The results of the DPM for 2018 were ratified at the Board of Examiners (BoE) annual general meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> December. This year's results were:

- Part 1 (the MCQ paper) - 73% (30 out of 41 candidates) passed
- Part 2 (the Short Answer Questions and Critical Appraisal Paper) – 64% (27 out of 42 candidates) passed
- Distinctions were awarded to three candidates. Congratulations to candidate numbers 10, 59 and 63 for your outstanding performances.

#### Part 1

The MCQ paper was held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2018. The pass rate this year (73%) and the mean score (77%) were both a little above the average of the previous 11 years' papers. The pass mark was higher reflecting (in the standard-setting panel's opinion) a slightly easier paper. Individual scores ranged from 67.5 to 88.5%.

Twenty-six candidates who passed the MCQ went on to take Part 2 this year and were joined by 16 who had passed the MCQ in a previous year.

Generally, we observe that people taking both parts together tend to have a higher pass rate in Part 2 than those who defer it to a subsequent year. DPM candidates should be aware that there is nothing lost in applying for both Parts 1 and 2 upfront as the Part 2 fee is refunded in case of failure in Part 1. However, a successful candidate in Part 1 who did not apply for Part 2 cannot then change their mind and sit Part 2 that year.

#### Part 2

The Critical Appraisal Paper (CAP) was generally well done this year. Overall, 35/42 candidates (83%) passed the paper, with quite a few people performing very well. The individual marks ranged from 50% to 89.5%.

The Short Answer Question paper (SAQ) was passed by 71% of candidates. The individual marks ranged from 38.25% to 81.25%.

In summary:

27/42 (64%) passed the SAQ and CAP and therefore passed the DPM overall.

- 4 candidates (10%) failed both the SAQ and CAP
- 3 candidates (7%) failed the CAP but passed the SAQ
- 8 candidates (19%) failed the SAQ but passed the CAP.



### **Feedback to DPM candidates**

We have a few observations from this year's examination which may be useful to future candidates:

- We continue to encourage candidates to use bullet points and short notes for both the CAP and SAQ papers and to read the question. As usual we had candidates answering the question they wish had been asked, rather than the one actually asked (*nil pointes*).
- Candidates might want to be aware of "hot topics" - we thought that transparency and disclosure of information (Question 9 of the SAQ) was a hot topic, but this was not well done. This was a question relating to what, when and how the following should be declared
  - a) Clinical trials,
  - b) Support given to Patient Organisations by a pharmaceutical company and
  - c) Transfers of value made to Healthcare Professionals.The question was preceded by a statement that transparency was a key principle in pharmaceutical medicine. This is an important topic and for example for part a) at least 50% of the marks available for this part could be obtained just by stating that trials should be registered on a public website and reported publicly.
- In the CAP, many questions were generally answered well, although some areas were not answered so well:
  - Description of design characteristics
  - Rationale for the study
  - Limitations of the study design
  - Sources of bias which may influence the conduct or outcome of the study
  - Some candidates had no idea what a case control study was.

### **Considerations for future DPM exams**

#### **Syllabus**

The IMI Pharmatrain syllabus was revised in early 2018 and will be implemented for the 2019 exam. Changes to the content of the syllabus are relatively minor, although section 14 (Therapeutics) will disappear. The SAQ mandatory questions are not affected and the 3 MCQ mandatory for therapeutics have been distributed to other sections. More details will be on the FPM website shortly.

#### **Equality in the DPM**

For some years we have observed that, in common with other medical specialty exams, the DPM pass rate is lower for non-UK graduates than UK graduates. Aiming to ensure that the questions are clear and comprehensible to all candidates, this year OBoE implemented a specific review of the draft exam papers (MCQ, SAQ and CAP) by non-UK and non-native English-speaking examiners. The master examiner database was updated to record the country of graduation of all our examiners to help identify non-UK, non-native English-speaking graduates. The feedback was useful, and adjustments were made to the wording of the questions where required. OBoE will make ongoing efforts to ensure that the questions are written in plain English and are understandable to all.



### ***Electronic MCQs***

We hope to implement an electronic MCQ for the 2019 exam, subject to logistics in finding a suitable provider and ratification by the GMC. This will mean that instead of a paper/pencil exam, candidates will complete the test on a computer and it will be possible to offer a wider choice of venues. This is the way the theory part of the driving test is done, and there are test centres that we can use which are ready set up to operate like this.

### **DHP, CHP and DET examinations**

At the BoE AGM on Dec 7<sup>th</sup>, 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](#).

DHP, CHP and DET examinations were held in March this year:

- 7 candidates sat the CHP exam, both passed.
- 8 sat the DHP, with 1 candidate passing.
- No candidates sat the DET this year.

The next D/CHP and DET exams will be on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

### **BoE Membership**

The BoE currently stands at 49 members and we are at more-or-less steady state between leavers and new examiners. While that sounds a good number, we have just enough examiners to resource the setting and review of the papers for the various examinations, invigilation, and marking of the scripts. Four new examiners were ratified at this year's AGM, but there were 3 resignations.

We proactively solicit new members from among new holders of the CCT in pharmaceutical medicine and/or Educational Supervisors and Specialty Advisers and please encourage any of your colleagues who might be suitable to join the BOE to share the load.

We appreciate all our examiners, and recognise you are giving your time voluntarily to support pharmaceutical physician education.

### **Feedback to BoE members**

As a reminder, according to the examiners' specification, all BoE members must attend the examiners' training day once every 3 years, complete equality and diversity training every 3 years, offer to mark or invigilate every 3 years and submit an MCQ or an SAQ question every year (with the answers please!). A template is available to guide format of the questions.

BoE members will shortly be receiving a letter to confirm your completion of activities as examiners during the year (training, submitting questions, marking, etc) to use as supporting evidence for your annual revalidation appraisal.

### **Call for questions for 2019 Dip Pharm Med**

All BoE members are invited to send in potential MCQs, short answer questions or manuscripts suitable for the CAP for the next DPM exam at any time. All welcome!



### **Dates for 2019:**

**Examiners' Training Day - Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

**Part 1 (MCQ paper) - Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

**Part 2 (SAQ and Critical Appraisal papers) - Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

**BOE AGM - Friday 6<sup>th</sup> Dec 2019**

### **Officers of the Board of Examiners**

Juliet Roberts (Chair and SAQ paper convenor)

Andy Webb (Vice-Chair)

Marianne Whitelam (Education and Standards Manager)

Ruth Dixon (Secretary and MCQ paper convenor)

Sheuli Porkess (Critical appraisal paper convenor)

Steve Warrington (Dip/Cert in Human Pharmacology)

Chris Brearley

Kate Owen

Jon Sisson

Eric Teo

**Thanks to everyone who contributes to the examinations in any way.**

Previous editions of the newsletter can be found at

<https://www.fpm.org.uk/trainingexams/exams/dippharmed>