



Faculty of Public Health

of the Royal Colleges of Physicians of the United Kingdom

Working to improve the public's health

MFPH Part A Examination

GENERAL ADVICE TO CANDIDATES FROM EXAMINERS (JANUARY 2008).

It is important to read the paper carefully, follow the instructions, and divide your time according to the marks allocated for each question and its sub-parts – equal time for equal marks. Answer all the questions and make sure answer those questions actually asked. Please resist any temptation to answer another question that you would prefer to have been asked.

Aspects that will impress the examiners:

In general examiners are looking for clarity, brevity, focus, appropriate use of technical terms, legibility, avoidance of irrelevant material and they appreciate a suitable level of neatness.

A logical order to the answer - appropriate structure / framework / headings, and use of bullet points appropriately (not for every answer) - candidates should be able to present facts and other material in an accessible, clear and logical way and there should be clear evidence that candidates have read and understood the question.

Evidence of public health knowledge, applied with care, and where necessary showing ability to make connections across narrow subject areas, i.e. an answer is NOT simply a statement of facts or definitions, NOR does it include material irrelevant to the question.

If the question is about an issue with layers of complexity, then examiners need to see evidence that the candidate understands and illustrates this.

Candidates need to show an understanding of key public health principles, demonstrate that they can apply them to a problem, and give answers that are framed from a public health perspective.

Aspects that will not impress the examiners:

Writing information that has not been asked for in the question, even if the information itself is factually correct.

Some candidates adopt a scattergun approach and write out a well-rehearsed general answer to a specific question. Candidates who use this tactic may not gain marks for relevant key points they happen to mention along with other, irrelevant material. Instead, a much more focused answer is

needed which demonstrates candidates' ability to address the specifics of the particular question being asked.

For example: Simply listing screening criteria as part of an answer to any question about some specific aspect of screening, may miss the point of the question and may lead to inclusion of irrelevant material.

Characteristics of better quality answers: -

Certain questions need evidence that candidates can relate the question to the real life setting - e.g. what would they really do with this information if faced with it in their work, rather than a somewhat abstract discussion of the concepts.

A demonstration that the candidate has enough basic knowledge and skills to respond at an appropriate level (but obviously not necessarily fully, nor single-handedly) to any legitimate issue that may require attention in public health and can progress to Part B.

For example: - demonstrating an ability to pick out important key issues, to put these in some sort of priority order, and refer appropriately to further sources of information, expertise, and help.