



## **Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Health Medicine (AFOEM) 2024 Stage B Written Examination**

The 2024 AFOEM Stage B Written Examination Paper 1 was held on Saturday 7 September and Paper 2 on Sunday 8 September 2024.

The exam is a summative assessment that tests trainees' knowledge through several short answer questions. Each paper has five equally weighted questions. Each question is a scenario and includes a variable number of sub-questions. Scenarios are sampled from the *Occupational and Environmental Medicine Training Curriculum*.

Paper 1 | Domains 10, 30, 40 and 80 (but may refer to other domains)  
Paper 2 | Domains 10, 20, 50, 60, 70, 80 and 90

This document provides feedback for candidates, outlining the characteristics of responses that achieved high marks and the areas for improvement where lower marks were achieved.

Candidates who performed well on the examination provided responses that demonstrated they had read the question and ensured that their responses were targeted to what was being asked in the stem. Overall, candidates had good theoretical knowledge; however, the application of knowledge was insufficient. Demonstrating high-level thinking will improve candidates' outcomes. Candidates who performed poorly gave incorrect or inadequate answers.

Candidates are reminded that only the first responses are marked, and there is nothing to be gained by providing more responses than requested. Poor handwriting should be avoided because marks cannot be rewarded for illegible answers.

In 2024, the overall pass mark was determined to be 65%. The pass mark is initially set using the modified Angoff method, followed by post-examination analysis for the removal of questions that were misinterpreted or had wording problems.

## **Paper 1 Question 1**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Understanding strengths and weaknesses of randomised controlled trials.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Interpretation and explanation of significant findings.
- Demonstrated limited knowledge regarding per protocol analysis and intention to treat.

### **Other comments:**

- In order to provide a high-quality answer, candidates should provide clear, specific responses to the questions with legible handwriting.
- State specific key words when necessary and a brief explanation when required to demonstrate understanding of the topic.

## **Paper 1 Question 2**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Study type and understanding the weaknesses and strengths of different studies.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Many were unfamiliar with steps required for a systematic review. Almost all did not recognise that a case control study cannot be performed when all members of a group are exposed. Possibly a misunderstanding of the question.

## **Paper 1 Question 3**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Knowledge of potential long-term health effects associated with isocyanate exposure.
- Most likely diagnosis of occupational exposure to isocyanate-based paints and recommendations for return to work.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Main components of an individual health monitoring program for workers exposed to isocyanates.
- Elements of a worksite assessment.

### **Other comments:**

- Take care to read the question – some questions required justification of the answer rather than just the direct answer, some required answers to be in order (hierarchy).
- For longer questions – try to structure answer so that the information on the same point or topic is written under one heading.
- It was evident that some candidates were not familiar with worksite assessments – familiarity with this would be useful. Would also be useful to be familiar with the components of health surveillance.

## **Paper 1 Question 4**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Return to work considerations in the patient with MS. Overall the highest scoring candidates provided succinct, well-ordered, logical and readable responses.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- The medicinal cannabis question was poorly answered. Typically, poor scoring answers failed to address the question and were vague in their responses.
- Candidates who scored poorly overall displayed a lack of structure and organisation, often did not address the question and had virtually illegible writing.

### **General comments:**

- Exam technique should be practiced so that candidates develop a framework which can be used to answer most questions to a satisfactory level. Higher scoring candidates provided their responses in an organised manner. Lower scoring candidates would benefit from practicing exam technique more thoroughly and under examination conditions.
- Legibility of handwriting should be reviewed prior to a handwritten exam.

## **Paper 1 Question 5**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- The first part of the question relating to initial exposure investigation.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- The question related to communication was poorly answered. Many candidates provided unstructured answers. There was too much focus on personal communication techniques rather than audience and systems approach.
- There were vague answers as to which authorities to involve which suggested a lack of knowledge.
- There was little, if any mention of working with companies to create a corporate risk reduction strategy.

### **Other comments:**

- It is important to understand the various interfaces between occupational/environmental health and public health.

## **Paper 2 Question 1**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Establishing return-to-work plan.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Clinical knowledge of PTSD.

### **Other comments:**

- Poor handwriting and excessive wordiness make it hard for examiners to read and understand what the candidate wants to say.

## **Paper 2 Question 2**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Naming practicable accommodation/modifications to current work for a worker with diabetes.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Not reading or understanding what is asked, e.g. asked to give clear answers and occupational medicine rationale, however this was not addressed or done well.

### **Other comments:**

- Poor handwriting and failing to structure answers well result in difficulty in reading answers and understanding what candidates know.
- Answers not clear and to the point; scattergun approach makes it hard for examiners to interpret their intent.
- Repeated answers do not give extra marks.

## **Paper 2 Question 3**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Most candidates are well versed in the lead exposure routes and understood that the pregnant woman in the lead exposure role needed to be removed from lead exposure.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Generally poor understanding of lead removal levels, action levels and retesting timelines.
- Knowledge of acute lead exposure symptoms were not good.

### **Other comments:**

- Explanation of the consent process involved in informing the workplace of the pregnant woman in a lead exposure role; however, lacked information about how this would be managed.

## **Paper 2 Question 4**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- Identifying relevant pieces of legislation. Type of information to request for an independent medical assessment.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Important points required for consent for an independent medical assessment.
- Factors to consider regarding chronic disability in worker's compensation system.

### **Other comments:**

- Important to structure answers specific to the scenario, rather than providing generic answers.

## **Paper 2 Question 5**

### **Candidates performed well in the following areas:**

- The way workers may be detected as affected by drugs and alcohol and who in the workplace **MUST** be involved in setting AOD policy.

### **Candidates performed poorly in the following areas:**

- Overall poor knowledge of the elements of an APOD policy and explaining the importance of each element.
- Candidates focused too much on testing procedure and not on the broader elements of a drug and alcohol policy.

### **Other comments:**

- Candidates should follow instructions such as "listing" answers, and providing answers relevant to the scenario rather than generic answers.
- Providing space between answers helps the markers to read answers clearly.