



Jul 18/v29

# The Society of Apothecaries of London

## Guide to The Diploma in the Philosophy of Medicine (DPMSA) Incorporating the Regulations and Syllabus

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### **Notice of future amendments to the Guide (incorporating the Regulations and Syllabus) and revisions following publication of this version.**

The DPMSA Examination will continue to change to reflect developments in philosophical thought as applied to current developments in medicine. While every attempt has been made to ensure that this version of the DPMSA Examination Regulations and Syllabus is accurate, further changes to the DPMSA examination, the Regulations and closing dates may be implemented during this time. Candidates should refer to the Society of Apothecaries website ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)) for the most up-to-date information, and where any such changes will be detailed. In order that candidates are fully briefed about the status of any proposed changes, they are advised to check the Society website regularly.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Diploma in the Philosophy of Medicine was instituted by the Society of Apothecaries of London in 1978, as a natural development of the activities of the Society's Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy, which was established in 1959. The Diploma was revised extensively in 1993, and the name of the course was changed to 'Ethics and Philosophy of Healthcare' in 2002.

The Diploma is designed as a postgraduate qualification primarily for members of the health care professions, although it is open to a number of other graduates.

The Diploma is intended to indicate familiarity with contemporary philosophy of medicine and, in particular, with the philosophical aspects of problems within the theory and practice of medicine and healthcare; and with selected aspects of the history of philosophy related to those problems.

## COURSE CONTACT DETAILS

For further details of the course please contact:

Course Administrator  
Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy  
Society of Apothecaries  
Apothecaries' Hall  
Black Friars Lane  
London  
EC4V 6EJ

Tel: 020 7236 1189

Fax: 020 7329 3177

[facultyHP@apothecaries.org](mailto:facultyHP@apothecaries.org)

[www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)

## DATE AND PLACE OF THE EXAMINATION

The Diploma Examination is held annually at Apothecaries' Hall (for address, refer to front cover).

## EXAMINATION TIMETABLE AND FEES

Please refer to the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** (available online at [www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)).

## REGULATIONS FOR ADMISSION TO THE EXAMINATION

1. Only candidates who have completed the Ethics and Philosophy of Healthcare course run by the Faculty of the History and Philosophy of Medicine and Pharmacy will be admitted to the examination. Attendance at a **minimum of 70%** of the course lectures will usually constitute completion of the course.
2. Form A (for those applying for the first time) or Form R (for re-entrants) and the fee must have been received by the closing date published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** (available online at [www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)). Application forms may be submitted in anticipation of completing the course, but the required attendance level must be achieved before the candidate can be admitted to the examination.
3. If applicable, Form Q (Application for Special Examination Arrangements) must have been received by no later than 4 weeks before the application deadline for the examination, published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**.
4. Entry and re-entry to the examination must be made within 3 years of completing the course.

## THE EXAMINATION

5. The examination will be conducted in English throughout, and will consist of:
  - a. **The essay** from a given list of titles (available from the Course Director). The essay is to be submitted to the Registrar no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)).
  - b. **The written examination:** two 2-hour papers.
  - c. **The dissertation** will be on a topic chosen by the candidate and approved by the Course Director. Please refer to the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** for related deadlines.

N.B. All elements of the examination must be taken at first entry. The published deadlines for receipt of the essay and the dissertation will be strictly applied.

N.B. Please see Appendix 1 for marking guidance.

6. A candidate who fails the written papers taken together will fail the examination. In that instance, if the essay and / or dissertation has / have been awarded a pass mark or pass marks, the essay and / or dissertation, as appropriate, may be taken forward as part of a subsequent entry.
7. A candidate who passes the written papers but fails in one or both of the other elements may be permitted to take forward the written paper pass and must resit the element(s) failed the following year.
8. Successful candidates are entitled to use the letters DPMSA after their names.
9. The examination fee will be determined from time to time by the Examinations Board. Candidates who withdraw from the examination after the closing date will forfeit a proportion of or the entire fee if they have taken part of the examination. For further details refer to the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org))
10. Candidates will be issued with an admission document once a place for the examination has been confirmed. This must be produced on the day of examination, along with some form of photographic identification.
11. On the day of the written examination, candidates are forbidden to bring books, papers, mobile telephones, calculators or any other electronic aid into the examination rooms. It is strictly forbidden for candidates to talk to, or to attempt in any other way to communicate with each other whilst a written examination is in progress.
12. Candidates' completed examination scripts become the property of, and will be retained by, the Society. Under no circumstances will they be available for study.

13. Candidates who present themselves for written examinations after the start time stated in the admission document will be admitted if they arrive within 30 minutes of this time, but may not be admitted if they arrive thereafter. In any case, candidates will forfeit the time lost. In exceptional circumstances, where all candidates are affected by delays, the examination timings may be amended.
14. The Society reserves the right to refuse to admit to the examination, or to proceed with the examination of any candidate who infringes a regulation or who refuses to comply with the reasonable request of an officer of the Society.

## REVIEW AND APPEAL PROCEDURES

15. The processes outlined below will be dealt with according to the Examination Review and Appeal Procedure, which is available on the website. In no circumstances should a candidate make representations directly to an examiner.
16. The stages of the review and appeal procedures (which are on the examination area of the website) are as follows:
  - a. Feedback – first, compulsory stage;
  - b. Review – second, optional stage;
  - c. Appeal – third, optional stage.
17. **Feedback (compulsory).** The feedback process operates through the Registrar. Feedback on examination performance may be available to unsuccessful candidates at their request. Requests must be made in writing and be received by the Registrar within 28 days of the date of the result letter.
18. The Registrar has authority to pass to the candidate a breakdown of the results of each section of the examination where this is not provided with the result letter. This information should be read in conjunction with the explanation of the marking scheme and the standard that is required to achieve a pass in the examination contained in the relevant Guide to the Diploma.
19. The Registrar can also relay a transcript of additional general advice directly to the candidate, if such advice is available. This is advice generated by the Examination Panel, which had been agreed at the time of the examination. The Registrar's role is to distribute the prepared information but not to interpret it.
20. There is no charge to the candidate for this service.
21. **Review (optional).** A request by a candidate for a review of a paper must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the feedback. A request for a review cannot be made without first going through the feedback stage. There is a fee of £175 for a review.
22. **Appeal (optional).** An appeal to the Society's Examinations Board is open to a candidate who is not satisfied with the decision of the Examination Panel, feedback or the Review Panel. In accordance with the Society's Examination Review and Appeal Procedures, available to download, the detailed grounds on which the appeal is made must be stated. The appeal must be received in writing within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the examination result or the review. It is not necessary to seek a review before appealing. There is a fee of £250 for an appeal.
23. If the appellant is dissatisfied with the report of the Examinations Board Appeal Tribunal and wishes to make an appeal to the Court of Assistants, this should be communicated to the Registrar within 28 days of the date of the notification informing the candidate of the decision of the Appeal Tribunal.

## ANONYMITY FOR MARKING

24. To ensure that examiners do not know which candidate's work they are marking, it is important that candidates' names are not written on either the essay or the dissertation. Instead, candidates should use their Candidate Number, which can be obtained from the Examination Office.

## THE ESSAY

25. A selection of essay titles will be given during the autumn term of the course. Alternative titles may be approved by the Course Director.
26. The essay should be no longer than 2,000 words (including footnotes but not references). **Three** typed and double-spaced hard copies and an electronic (Word™) copy of the essay must be submitted to the Registrar to arrive no later than the date published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**. **N.B.** Failure to submit the essay in the specified form by the due date will result in rejection of the essay and will preclude the prospective candidate from entering the examination that year.
27. A machine-readable, electronic version of the essay must be submitted via e-mail to [examoffice@apothecaries.org](mailto:examoffice@apothecaries.org), no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**.
28. **File name** – Each essay should be presented as a single file. Files names must be created as: Your name DPMSA essay title Date (YYMMDD). For example:

**Bob Smith DPMSA Can Medical Ethics do without Moral Theory? 120626.doc**

29. The essay should include a title page with the following:

|  |
|--|
| <b>Diploma in the Philosophy of Medicine</b> |
| Essay title                                  |
| Candidate number                             |
| Date (e.g. 26 June 2017)                     |
| Word Count: (e.g. 1,879)                     |

30. For information on referencing or sources refer to Regulations 38-45 (below).
31. Candidates who do not produce an essay of sufficient standard may be required to submit a second essay.

## THE WRITTEN PAPER

32. The two written papers are each of 2 hours' duration. The papers taken together are regarded as a single exercise and marked as a pair.

**Paper 1** comprises 8 compulsory, short-answer questions. Answers should be given in note form.

**Paper 2** comprises 2 questions: one compulsory, case-based question; the second from a choice of 4/5 questions. Answers must be given in essay form.

The marks are divided equally between the papers and together these papers provide 40% of the total mark for the examination.

33. Please note that scripts must be legible. If two examiners cannot decipher the handwriting, the script cannot be marked and marks cannot be awarded.

## THE DISSERTATION

### The abstract

34. Before any detailed research or writing is undertaken the candidate must submit the proposed title and an abstract of no more than 200 words to the Course Director for formative comment.
35. This process allows the examiners to monitor the relevance of proposed work and to point out any pitfalls.
36. Candidates must submit their proposed title and abstract to the Course Director no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)).

### Advice on selecting an appropriate title

37. The topic, to be chosen by the candidate, is to be in a field of special personal and/or professional interest. This work must be well-documented with references and bibliography. It is not to be a paraphrase of standard works but should argue for a particular position, taking counter-arguments into account. The topic should be on a substantially different subject from that of the essay.
38. The Society is unable to offer candidates formal tutorial assistance but course tutors are usually willing to provide guidance.
39. It is emphasised that although the dissertation allows the candidate to demonstrate specialist knowledge, it should be written with the non-specialist in mind.

### References

40. Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's thoughts or words as if they were the writer's own. If another person's work is quoted, it must be acknowledged fully by means of a reference in the text (source to be given in the reference list) and putting the quotation in quotation marks, i.e. "...".
41. This also applies to verbatim short sections from a source. Paraphrasing statements/text of factual knowledge or ideas from published works, lectures or web sources is not plagiarism if the original source is referenced and the paraphrasing is not extensive.
42. Any diagrams, tables, graphs etc which have been taken directly from a source or modified from a source must include appropriate details of the author and source, as well as being acknowledged e.g. from Bloggs et al 1998 or adapted from Bloggs et al 1998.

**NB. The work of any candidate who is found to have plagiarised material in the dissertation will be rejected.**

43. The text of the dissertation should be supported by references taken from the relevant published literature.
44. References to Internet sources should include all the information required for a full and complete reference plus full details of the website (the URL of the site) and the date on which it was accessed, as the content of sites may change with time.

45. References should be numbered consecutively in the order that they are first mentioned in the text and placed in superscript each time the author is cited. The full list of references should be arranged at the end of the dissertation in numerical order.
46. The format of references should follow either the Harvard or Vancouver styles and should be consistent throughout. Full details of the styles of referencing, which should be followed meticulously, can be found at:  
<http://bma.org.uk> - search for "Harvard" or "Vancouver" to display the BMA's Reference Styles factsheet.
47. **Legal references** should be cited in the form used in reports issued by the Incorporated Council of Law Reporting: e.g. DPP v Smith [1990] 2 AC 783

Guidance on legal references can be found in Raistrick, D. Index to Legal Citations and abbreviations. London. Sweet & Maxwell. 2008.

## Further requirements

48. Dissertations should be no more than 6,000 words in length (including footnotes and references); appendices may be added to inform the reader regarding sources mentioned in the text.
49. Three hard copies and an electronic copy must be submitted no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates** ([www.apothecaries.org](http://www.apothecaries.org)).
- N.B.** Failure to submit the dissertation in the specified form by the due date will result in its rejection and will preclude the prospective candidate from entering the examination that year.
50. Candidates are advised to be thorough when proof-reading for typing errors.
51. Any evidence of plagiarism at the time of the examination or subsequently will result in rejection of the candidate.
52. The dissertation should include a title page with the following:

|   |
|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Diploma in the Philosophy of Medicine</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dissertation title</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Candidate number</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Date (e.g. 26 June 2017)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Word Count: (e.g. 5,254)</p> |
|---|

53. Candidates should make and sign a declaration such as the one given below. It should be submitted at the same time as the dissertation but **NOT** incorporated into the work.



## Declaration

Name .....

I certify that this dissertation is entirely my own work without plagiarism. I allocate joint copyright to the Society of Apothecaries.

Signed ..... Date .....

54. Dissertations should be produced in accordance with the guidelines set out in this guide and it is important that they are strictly adhered to. Dissertations not in this format may be rejected by the Examinations Panel.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PRINTED VERSION

55. **Printing** - Dissertations should be printed in 12 point black type, double-spaced on single sides of A4 paper. The left hand margin should be wide enough to accommodate the binding without obscuring text.

56. **Binding** - Dissertations must be bound in an efficient, but not necessarily formal, manner. Inexpensive binding techniques include comb binding, perfect binding, velobinding and wire-O binding.

**Two bound copies** must be submitted.

57. **Headers and footers** – Your candidate number and the dissertation title should appear in the document header from page 2 onwards. The page and total number of pages, given as “Page x of y”, should appear in the document footer.

### REQUIREMENTS FOR THE ELECTRONIC VERSION

58. **One machine-readable, electronic (Word™) version** of your dissertation must be submitted via e-mail to [examoffice@apothecaries.org](mailto:examoffice@apothecaries.org), no later than the deadline published in the **Administrative Guidance for Candidates**.

59. **File name** – Each dissertation should be presented as a single file. File names must be created as: Your name DPMSA Dissertation title Date (YYMMDD). For example:

**Bob Smith DPMSA Can Medical Ethics do without Moral Theory? 170626.doc**

### MARKING

60. Marks are awarded in the following proportions: essay - 20%; written papers taken together - 40%; dissertation – 40%.

61. The pass mark overall and the pass mark for each section is 50%.

### SYLLABUS

62. The following topics constitute the syllabus:

- a. Philosophy as a reflective discipline which offers and evaluates arguments in areas, such as ethics, where concepts, methods and criteria of success are contended. Similarities and differences between philosophy and the natural sciences. Health care in relation to philosophy, science and society.

- b. Informal reasoning (*the logic of real arguments*): identifying and evaluating arguments in ordinary discourse; truth and falsehood of statements; validity and invalidity of arguments; clarity and coherence; ambiguity, assumptions, irrelevance and rhetoric; common fallacies. Examples from discussions of issues in health care.
- c. The conditions of knowledge; reason and experience as sources of knowledge; rationalist and empiricist traditions in philosophy. Links with treatments of issues in health care.
- d. Ethics: morals and law; moral feeling and moral thinking; description and evaluation; types of normative ethical theory (e.g. utilitarianism, deontology and rights-based theories); principles and dilemmas; casuistry; virtue theory.
- e. Some normative ethical theorists in the history of Western philosophy: e.g. Plato, Aristotle, Kant, the English Utilitarians. Links with some aspects of medical ethics since Hippocrates.
- f. Moral principles in health care ethics: respect for autonomy; non-maleficence (doing no harm); beneficence (doing good); justice, including distributive justice, legal and moral justice; scope of the principles; characteristic applications, e.g. of the principle of autonomy to informed consent; ethical dilemmas arising from conflict between the principles in particular cases; weighing of the principles; judgement; reasons for and against arguing from principles.
- g. What is meant by the meaning, sanctity and quality of life. QALYs.
- h. Ethical issues in health care, e.g. at the beginning and end of life, e.g. in abortion, reproductive technology, advance directives, resuscitation, euthanasia, definitions of death, criteria of a good death.
- i. The concept of health. Health care, the individual and society; distributive justice and resource allocation; political philosophy and health care provision; responsibility for health and ill-health; health promotion.
- j. Aspects of the ethics of medical research and of the medical model of health care.

Note. The syllabus will be covered as far as possible but not necessarily exclusively by lectures, discussions, some student-led seminars, reading and written work. The professional experience of members of the course will be drawn on throughout and the learning initiatives of candidates are encouraged.

MRS J M E MACLEAN  
Registrar

**DPMSA Essay and Dissertation marking.**

**The following are the characteristics on which marks are awarded.**

**What is the question to be answered?** Is it clearly set out, preferably in first paragraph? Is it clearly captured in the title? Is it on an important topic, relevant to this course and to health care? Does it reflect the writer's past or proposed professional experience?

**Is there a chain of argument,** or to what degree? An argument of some sort is necessary as opposed, for instance, to empirical data alone, or unsupported evaluative claims, or recitals of free-floating theory. But note that empirical data must normally be used within an argument, as fact-free ethics are vacuous.

**Is the structure of the argument clear** and systematic? Are the strongest counter-arguments clearly set out? Are these counter-arguments really the strongest, and are they responded to adequately? Does the final conclusion take the response to the counter-arguments into account? Is the argument logically valid? That is, does the reasoning work? (Validity, in this sense, is a property of argument.) If the piece centres on an ethical dilemma, what is the dilemma, and why does the writer come down, on balance, on one side rather than the other?

**Is there evidence for, or acceptability, of premises** (i.e. reasons)? Are the statements put forward as reasons empirically or logically true or (where evaluative) acceptable? (This assumes fact/value distinction to some degree.) Is the writing well-informed as to relevant matters of fact and relevant theory? Does the dissertation demonstrate intellectual seriousness and humane sensibility?

**Is the style of writing clear?** Is there good use of 'topic sentences' at the start of each paragraph? (They say what the paragraph does.) Is there good use of 'linking' phrases and sentences? Is there proper use of English? Is the work free of grammatical errors and spelling mistakes? Has the writer 'proof-read' it?

**Is there evidence of a literature search?** Is there an appropriate choice of articles, books etc. referred to, used and commented on? (NB Sources available only online, e.g. non-peer reviewed websites, should not normally be relied upon as main sources, unless this is necessary because of the nature of the subject under discussion.)

**Are the references consistently formatted?** Choose a format such as Harvard or Vancouver and keep to it. If websites are referenced the full URL of the page must be cited, together with the date the page was accessed.

**David Misselbrook**  
**Former Course Director, DPMSA**