General
Pharmaceutical
Council

Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians

October 2017

Contents

About us

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales. It is our job to protect, promote and maintain the health, safety and wellbeing of members of the public by upholding standards and public trust in pharmacy.

Our main work includes:

- setting standards for the education and training of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and approving and accrediting their qualifications and training

- maintaining a register of pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies

- setting the standards that pharmacy professionals have to meet throughout their careers

- investigating concerns that pharmacy professionals are not meeting our standards, and taking action to restrict their ability to practise when this is necessary to protect patients and the public

- setting standards for registered pharmacies which require them to provide a safe and effective service to patients

- inspecting registered pharmacies to check if they are meeting our standards

Introduction

Pharmacy professionals play a vital role in ensuring public and patient safety by providing safe and effective care. The safety of people is at the heart of these standards and must be central to the education and training of pharmacy technicians across all learning environments.

Public and patient safety is not a separate requirement – it is embedded in all these standards and criteria. Course providers and employers must prioritise public and patient safety in all aspects of the course and its delivery.

This document sets out the standards for the initial education and training for anyone wanting to train and register as a pharmacy technician in Great Britain. Awarding bodies and course providers will need to meet the standards and criteria set out in this document to have their pharmacy technician course approved by us.

These standards should be considered alongside the criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician, the evidence framework for course providers and also our standards for pharmacy professionals. Combined, these four documents provide a full picture of the initial education and training requirements for pharmacy technicians.

Embedded within these education standards are the standards for pharmacy professionals, which are the professional standards trainees will be expected to meet, once they join the register.

The standards and registration as a pharmacy technician

The purpose of initial education and training is to give early-career pharmacy technicians a broad base of skills and qualities that means they can work in a range of pharmacy settings across all the countries in Great Britain.

Overall, registration as a pharmacy technician requires applicants to complete:

- one of the approved knowledge and competency training programmes

- a minimum of two years relevant work-based experience in the UK under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician to whom the applicant was directly accountable for no less than 14 hours per week.

Pharmacy technician education is flexible in its delivery. The standards combine both knowledge and competency elements, to allow trainees to learn based on experience of clinical, operational and scientific practices and procedures. As such, it can be delivered face-to-face, at a distance, online or a combination of these and the standards apply to all these delivery methods.

Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians

The standards consist of two parts:

- Part 1: learning outcomes – includes the skills, knowledge, understanding and professional behaviours a trainee must demonstrate at the end of their initial education and training

- Part 2: standards for initial education and training course providers – sets out the key features of courses that deliver the learning outcomes in part 1 of the standards.

The standards include the term 'person-centred care' and refer to a 'person' throughout. This means 'the person receiving care'. However, although we have not specifically mentioned carers or patients' representatives, these terms apply to them too depending on the context. This is consistent with our use of 'person' in our standards for pharmacy professionals.

Part 1: Learning outcomes

Standard: On successful completion of their initial education and training, pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will have achieved the learning outcomes in these standards.

Describing and assessing outcomes

The outcome levels in these standards are based on an established competence and assessment hierarchy known as 'Miller's triangle':
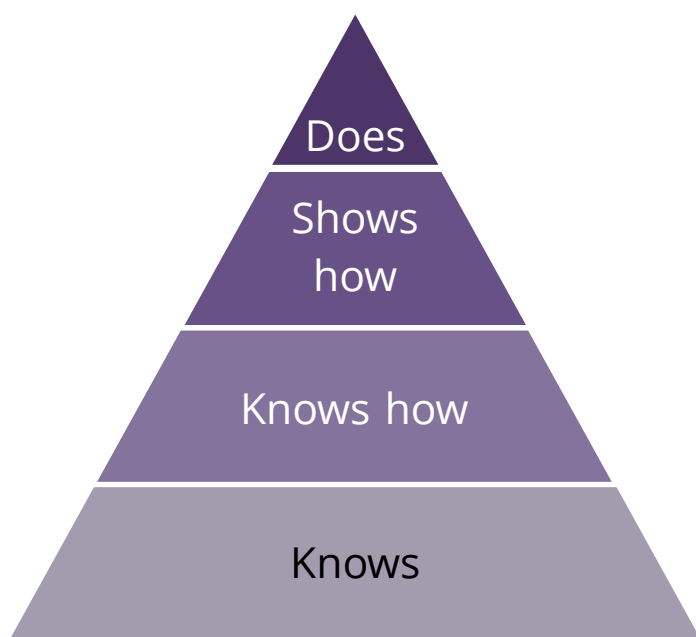
As what is being assessed at each of the four levels is different, the assessment methods needed are different too – although there will be some overlap. Generally, achieving one level of Miller's triangle requires achieving and exceeding the preceding level.

Level 1: Knows

This is knowledge that may be applied in the future to demonstrate competence. Assessments may include essays, oral examinations and multiple-choice question (MCQ) examinations.

Level 2: Knows how

Context-based tests – a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician knows how to use knowledge and skills. Assessments may include essays, oral examinations, MCQs and laboratory books.

Level 3: Shows how

A pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician is able to demonstrate that they can perform in a simulated environment or in real life. Assessments may include objective structured clinical examinations (OSCEs) and other observed assessments; simulated patient assessments; designing, carrying out and reporting an experiment; dispensing tests and taking a patient history.

Level 4: Does

Acting independently and consistently in a complex but defined situation. Evidence for this level is provided when a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician demonstrates the learning outcomes in a complex, familiar or everyday

situation repeatedly and reliably. Assessments may include OSCEs or other observed assessments.

Level of study

Initial education and training for pharmacy technicians is a vocational learning experience, combining learning and work. Courses must be designed and delivered to at least Level 3 in the National Qualifications Framework (England and Wales) or Level 6 in the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework.

Domains of study

The learning outcomes fall under four domains:

1. Person-centred care
2. Professionalism
3. Professional knowledge and skills
4. Collaboration

All domains and learning outcomes have equal importance.

1. Person-centred care

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will:

1.	Involve, support and enable every person when making decisions about their health, care and wellbeing	**Does**
2.	Optimise a person's medicines to achieve the best possible outcomes	**Does**
3.	Listen to the person, and understand their needs and what matters to them	**Does**
4.	Give the person all relevant information in a way they can understand, so they can make informed decisions and choices	**Does**
5.	Advise people on the safe and effective use of their medicines and devices	**Does**
6.	Obtain relevant information from people – including patients, carers and other healthcare professionals – and use it appropriately	**Does**
7.	Recognise and value diversity, and respect cultural differences – making sure that every person is treated fairly whatever their values and beliefs	**Does**
8.	Adapt information and communication to meet the needs of particular audiences	**Does**
9.	Apply the principles of information governance and ensure patient confidentiality	**Does**
10.	Effectively promote healthy lifestyles using available resources and evidence-based techniques	**Knows how**
11.	Be able to provide public health advice and recommend recognised health screening or public health initiatives	**Knows how**
12.	Understand how to safeguard people, particularly children and vulnerable adults	**Knows how**

2. Professionalism

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will:

13.	Apply professional judgement in the best interests of people	**Does**
14.	Recognise and work within the limits of their knowledge and skills, and refer to others when needed	**Does**
15.	Understand how to work within the local, regional and national guidelines and policies	**Knows how**
16.	Respond effectively to complaints, incidents and errors and in a way that demonstrates person-centred care	**Does**
17.	Use information to make effective decisions	**Does**
18.	Take personal responsibility for the health and safety of themselves and others, and following up any concerns about the workplace which might put them, or others, at risk	**Does**
19.	Demonstrate leadership skills within their scope of practice as a trainee	**Does**
20.	Recognise when their performance or the performance of others is putting people at risk and respond appropriately	**Does**
21.	Raise concerns even when it is not easy to do so	**Does**
22.	Act openly and honestly when things go wrong	**Does**
23.	Effectively use a variety of methods, including feedback, to regularly monitor and reflect on practice, skills and knowledge	**Does**
24.	Carry out a range of relevant continuing professional development (CPD) activities	**Does**
25.	Reflect and act on feedback or concerns, thinking about what can be done to prevent something happening again	**Does**

3. Professional knowledge and skills

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will:

26. Provide a safe, effective and responsive pharmacy service	**Does**
27. Take personal responsibility for the legal, safe and efficient supply of medicines	**Does**
28. Understand the basic principles of biology, microbiology, physiology and chemistry	**Knows how**
29. Understand the basic pharmacological principles that apply to the use of medicines in relation to disease processes and the treatment of identified clinical conditions	**Knows how**
30. Confirm the suitability of a person's medicines for use	**Does**
31. Accurately retrieve and reconcile information about a person's medicines	**Does**
32. Assess a person's present supply of medicines and order appropriate medicines and products	**Does**
33. Order, receive, maintain and supply medicines and other pharmaceutical products safely, legally and effectively	**Knows how**
34. Receive requests for medicines, including prescriptions, and check for their validity, safety and clarity, taking action to deal with any problems	**Does**
35. Effectively use systems to support the safe supply of medicines	**Does**
36. Accurately assemble prescribed items	**Does**
37. Apply pharmaceutical principles to the safe and effective formulation, preparation and packaging of medicines and products	**Knows how**
38. Ensure the quality of ingredients to produce and supply safe and effective medicines and products	**Knows how**
39. Issue prescribed items safely and effectively and take action to deal with discrepancies	**Does**
40. Carry out an accuracy check of dispensed medicines and products	**Does**
41. Accurately perform pharmaceutical calculations to ensure the safety of people	**Does**

42. Recognise adverse drug reactions and interactions and respond appropriately	**Does**
43. Safely and legally dispose of medicines and other pharmaceutical products	**Knows how**
44. Respond appropriately to medical emergencies, including providing first aid	**Knows how**
45. Identify and respond effectively to errors and near misses	**Does**
46. Apply the principles of clinical governance	**Does**
47. Understand the principles of audit and quality-improvement strategies, and how to implement recommendations effectively	**Knows how**
48. Understand the principles of risk management	**Knows how**

4. Collaboration

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians will:

49. Demonstrate effective team working	**Does**
50. Communicate and work effectively with members of the multidisciplinary team	**Does**
51. Check their own and others' work effectively	**Does**
52. Take part in the learning and development of others	**Does**
53. Prioritise time and resources effectively to achieve objectives	**Does**

Part 2: Standards for initial education and training course providers

Domain 1: Selection and entry requirements

Criteria to meet these standards

1.1 Entry requirements must ensure that applicants are fit to practise as trainees at the point of selection.

1.2 Selection criteria must be clear and unambiguous. They must include as a minimum:

- meeting specified English language requirements
- meeting specified numeracy requirements
- other academic requirements or experience equivalent to national level 2 or above
- taking account of good character checks
- taking account of health checks

1.3 Applicants must be working in a pharmacy environment or have secured a placement as a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician, and be supervised by a pharmacy professional.

1.4 Selectors must apply the selection criteria consistently, in an unbiased way and in line with relevant legislation. They should be trained to do this and training should include equality, diversity and inclusion.

Domain 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard 2

All aspects of pharmacy technician education and training must be based on principles of equality and diversity and keep to all relevant legislation.

Criteria to meet this standard

2.1 Equality and diversity must be embedded in course design and delivery.

2.2 Equality and diversity data must be used in designing and delivering courses, and in planning the whole experience of being a

pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician.

2.3 Reasonable adjustments must be made to course delivery and assessment to help pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians having specific needs to meet the learning outcomes. Teaching, learning and assessment may be modified for this purpose but learning outcomes may not.

Domain 3: Management, resources and capacity

Standard 3

Courses must be planned and maintained using transparent processes which must show who is accountable for what at each stage of initial education and training. The education and training facilities, infrastructure, leadership, staffing and staff support must be adequate to deliver the course.

Criteria to meet this standard

3.1 All courses must be backed up by a defined management plan which must include:

- a schedule of roles and responsibilities, in the learning and training environments and in the workplace

- lines of accountability, in the learning and training environments and in the workplace

- defined structures and processes to manage delivery

- processes for identifying and managing risk

3.2 There must be agreements in place outlining the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in delivering a course.

3.3 Each pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician must have a learning agreement covering all the learning and training environments. This must outline roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability, and must say how trainees will be supported during the course. Course providers must explain how they will be reassured that learning agreements will be implemented in full.

3.4 All course providers must have pharmacy professionals involved in the design and the delivery of the course.

3.5 In all the learning and training environments, there must be:

- appropriately qualified and experienced staff

- sufficient staff from relevant disciplines to deliver the course and support pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians' learning

- sufficient resources to deliver the course

- facilities that are fit for purpose

- access to appropriate learning resources

3.6 Everyone involved in managing and delivering the course must understand their role and must be given support to carry out their work effectively.

3.7 Each pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician must be supported as a learner in

the workplace. There must be systems in place for liaising with course providers regularly about the progress of a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician.

Domain 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard 4

The quality of courses must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated in a systematic and developmental way.

Criteria to meet this standard

4.1 All relevant aspects of courses must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated systematically. When issues are identified they must be documented and dealt with within agreed timescales.

4.2 There must be a quality-management structure in place that sets out procedures for monitoring and evaluation. This must include who is responsible, and the timings for reporting, review and taking action when appropriate.

4.3 There must be systems in place to monitor and evaluate the standard of teaching, learning and assessment to make sure that quality is maintained across all learning environments.

4.4 Course monitoring and review must take into account the external environment, especially pharmacy, to make sure that courses stay up to date as they are delivered.

4.5 Feedback to pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must be a part of monitoring, review and evaluation processes.

Domain 5: Course design and delivery

Standard 5

Courses must develop the required skills, knowledge, understanding and professional behaviours to meet the outcomes in part 1 of these standards by using a coherent teaching and learning strategy. The design and delivery of training must take account of stakeholders' views and must ensure that trainees practise safely and effectively.

Criteria to meet this standard

5.1 Courses must be designed and delivered using strategies which bring together knowledge, competence and work experience.

5.2 The GPhC's standards for pharmacy professionals must be part of all courses and used actively. This is to make sure that pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians know what will be expected of them when they are registered.

5.3 There must be a course teaching and learning strategy which sets out how trainees will achieve the outcomes in part 1 of these standards.

5.4 Courses must be designed and delivered to develop the skills, knowledge, understanding and professional behaviours required to meet the learning outcomes in part 1 of these standards.

5.5 Awarding bodies and course providers must get the views of a range of stakeholders – including patients, the public and employers – and take account of them when designing and delivering the course.

5.6 Courses must be revised when there are significant changes in practice, to make sure they are up to date.

5.7 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must be supervised using an agreed system in all learning and training environments, to ensure patient safety at all times.

5.8 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must carry out only tasks in which they are competent, or are learning under supervision to be competent in, so that patient safety is not compromised.

5.9 Course regulations must be appropriate for a course that leads to professional registration. That is, they must prioritise professionalism, patient safety, and safe and effective practice.

5.10 All course providers and employers must have procedures to deal with concerns. Serious concerns that may affect a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician's suitability for future registration must be reported to the GPhC.

Domain 6: Course assessment

Standard 6

Courses must have an assessment strategy which assesses required skills, knowledge, understanding and professional behaviours to meet the outcomes in part 1 of these standards. The assessment strategy must assess whether a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician's practice is safe.

Criteria to meet this standard

6.1 Courses must have an assessment strategy which ensures that assessment is robust, reliable and valid.

6.2 The assessment strategy must assess the learning outcomes in part 1 of these standards. Methods used must be appropriate for what is being assessed; and teaching, learning and assessment must be aligned.

6.3 The assessment strategy must include a methodology to assess decisions of competence in the workplace and other appropriate environments.

6.4 Patient safety must come first at all times, and the assessment strategy must assess whether a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician is practising safely as a trainee.

6.5 Monitoring systems must be in place in all learning and training environments. The systems must assess a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician's progress

towards meeting the learning outcomes in part 1 of these standards. They must ensure that a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician's practice is safe at all times, as a trainee. Causes for concern must be dealt with as soon as possible.

6.6 Agreements must be in place between course providers and the workplace regarding the roles and responsibilities for assessment.

6.7 Assessments must be carried out by appropriately trained and qualified people who are competent to assess the performance of pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians.

6.8 There must be independent quality assurance of assessment processes. Quality assurance processes should be carried out by an external and appropriately qualified person or organisation, that is not an employee of the course provider and has no involvement with the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician in their day-to-day work.

6.9 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance, to support their development as learners and professionals.

6.10 Assessment regulations must be appropriate for a course that leads to professional registration. That is, they must prioritise professionalism, patient safety, and safe and effective practice.

Domain 7: Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience

Standard 7

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must be supported in all learning and training environments to develop as learners and professionals during their initial education and training.

Criteria to meet this standard

7.1 There must be a range of systems in place to support trainees to achieve the learning outcomes in part 1 of these standards, including:

- induction
- effective supervision
- an appropriate and realistic workload
- personal and academic support
- time to learn
- access to resources

7.2 There must be systems in place for pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians to meet regularly with workplace colleagues to discuss and document their progress as learners.

7.3 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must have support available to them covering academic study, general welfare and career advice.

7.4 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must have access to pharmacy professionals who are able to act as role models and give professional support and guidance.

7.5 Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must have the opportunity to work in multidisciplinary teams.

7.6 There must be clear procedures for pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians to raise concerns. Any concerns must be dealt with promptly, with documented action taken when appropriate. Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must be made aware of the GPhC's guide to raising concerns about pharmacy education and training.

7.7 Everyone supporting pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must take into account the GPhC's guidance on tutoring for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in their work.

Other supporting documents

- **Standards for pharmacy professionals** GPhC (2017)

- **Criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician** GPhC (2013)

- **Draft evidence framework GPhC (2017)**

- **How to raise a concern with the GPhC**

- **Guidance on tutoring for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians** GPhC (2014)

- **Accreditation and recognition of pharmacy technician programmes** GPhC (2010)