

Buttercups Training pharmacy technician training course reaccreditation event report, July 2022



Contents

Event summary and conclusions	1
Introduction	3
Role of the GPhC.....	3
Background.....	3
Documentation.....	4
Pre-event.....	4
The event.....	4
Declarations of interest	4
Schedule	4
Key findings - Part 1 - Learning outcomes	5
Key findings - Part 2 - Standards for the initial education and training	6
Standard 1: Selection and entry requirements.....	6
Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion.....	6
Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity.....	7
Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation.....	8
Standard 5: Course design and delivery	9
Standard 6: Course assessment.....	10
Standard 7: Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience.....	11
Apprenticeship pathway (End Point Assessment)	12

Event summary and conclusions

Provider	Buttercups Training
Course	Pharmacy technician course (programme)
Event type	Reaccreditation
Event date	20-21 July 2022
Approval period	October 2022 – October 2025
Relevant requirements	Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017
Outcome	<p>Approval</p> <p>The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the pharmacy technician course provided by Buttercups Training should be reaccredited for a period of three years, subject to one condition.</p>
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Buttercups Training, working with the EQA, must develop clear, measurable, and documented policies and proformas for the work of the EQA in their role, showing clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and independence to the quality assurance of the programme. These documented policies and proformas must be informed by best practice of similar regulated qualifications. This is to meet criteria 4.1, 4.2, and 6.8. This was because although the team could see some evidence of independence in the contractual responsibilities of the EQA, and the subsequent quality assurance of Buttercups Training assessment decisions, the team could see limited documented evidence of how this is enacted and managed.
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be found here .
Recommendations	No recommendations were made.
Registrar decision	<p>Following the event, the provider submitted evidence to address the condition and the accreditation team was satisfied that this condition had been met.</p> <p>The Registrar of the GPhC accepted the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the reaccreditation of course for a period of three years.</p>
Key contact (provider)	Andrew Wightman, Principal Pharmacist

Provider representatives	<p>Emma Seton, Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Nick Marler, Head of Client Services and Products</p> <p>Andrew Wightman, Principal Pharmacist</p> <p>Monisha Naik, Programme Development Lead</p> <p>Manjit Nahal, Head of Centre</p> <p>Lesley Bates, IQA Team Leader</p> <p>Glen Savage, EQA</p>
Accreditation team	<p>Professor Ruth Edwards (team leader - pharmacy academic) Professor of Pharmacy Education and Head of School of Pharmacy, University of Wolverhampton</p> <p>Laura McEwen-Smith (team member - pharmacy technician) National Programme Lead; Primary and Community Integrated Care</p> <p>Joanne Bye (team member - pharmacy technician) Senior Medicines Management Pharmacy Technician, West Suffolk Clinical Commissioning Group (WSCCG)</p> <p>Liz Harlaar (team member - lay) Independent Business Consultant</p>
GPhC representative	<p>Chris McKendrick, Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Education) General Pharmaceutical Council</p>
Rapporteur	<p>Dr Ian Marshall, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde</p>
Observer	<p>Rakesh Bhundia, Quality Assurance Officer (Education) General Pharmaceutical Council</p>

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales (the countries of Great Britain). In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be registered with the GPhC and have satisfied us that they meet our detailed requirements. If you are a training provider or awarding body, you will need to follow the process set out **Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017** to have your pharmacy technician competency and knowledge-based course/qualification approved by us.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the accreditation of pharmacy education are legislated in the Pharmacy Order 2010. For more information, visit:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/231/contents/made>

Background

Buttercups Training was approved to deliver the Pharmacy Technician Training Programme (PTTP) to the 2017 IET Standards for a period of three years in April 2019, for an accreditation period of June 2019 – June 2022, which was subsequently extended to October 2022. In addition, the provider was approved subsequently to deliver the Pharmacy Technician (integrated) apprenticeship programme in December 2019, which was adapted from the PTTP programme to meet both the GPhC standards and apprenticeship standards.

Currently Buttercups is delivering the programme via the non-apprenticeship, known as PTTP and the apprenticeship, known as PT(i), routes. The programme will be known as the Pharmacy Technician Training Programme (PTTP) for both apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship delivery and will meet GPhC, Ofsted, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) requirements.

The programme will be used in a non-apprenticeship pathway to meet the GPhC Initial Education and Training (IET) Standards to allow for registration as a Pharmacy Technician. In addition, it will be used in the apprenticeship pathway to meet the Pharmacy Technician (integrated) apprenticeship standards, set by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) and under regulation by the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA). Although the programme will sit within both pathways there will be additional learning and development undertaken by the apprenticeship pathway to meet the apprenticeship standards, therefore learners will not be able to move between pathways. The revised End-Point Assessment means that both apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship delivery assessment strategies can be aligned.

The submission indicated that apart from course updates in line with the provider's quality assurance strategy, there are no proposals to change the curriculum and syllabus. The team was told during the provider's presentation that pre-registration pharmacy technicians had been impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, both personally and professionally. This had included reduced or no training time available in the workplace as well as wider unprecedented disruption to trainees lives such as the potential for anxiety and exhaustion. The team was told that Buttercups Training is experienced in

providing blended learning with remote teaching and assessment which minimised the disruption, and that its teams were available and at full capacity throughout the pandemic.

Documentation

Prior to the event, the provider submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales. The documentation was reviewed by the accreditation team and it was deemed to be satisfactory to provide a basis for discussion.

Pre-event

In advance of the main event, a pre-event meeting took place via videoconference on 7 July 2022. The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the provider to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

The event began with a private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives on 20 July 2022. The remainder of the event took place via videoconference on 21 July 2022 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff and stakeholders involved in the design of the course/qualification.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

Meeting	Time
Day 0 – 20 July 2022	
Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representative	14:00 – 15:45
Day 1 – 21 July 2022	
Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives	09:00 – 09:30
Accreditation team and GPhC representatives meet with the course provider representatives	09:30 – 11:00
Meeting to discuss the learning outcomes	11:30 – 12:30
Meeting with the internal and external quality assurance of the course	13:30 – 14:15
Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representative	14:15 – 16:00
Deliver outcome to provider	16:00 – 16:16

Key findings - Part 1 - Learning outcomes

During the event the accreditation team reviewed the provision against all 53 outcomes relating to the pharmacy technician course. To gain additional assurance, the accreditation team also explored a sample of 6 learning outcomes during a separate meeting with the provider and was satisfied that **all 53 learning outcomes are met** during the course to the level required by the GPhC standards. The learning outcomes tested were, 6, 7, 15, 27, 34, and 52.

A detailed list of learning outcomes can be found in the **Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017**

Key findings - Part 2 - Standards for the initial education and training

Standard 1: Selection and entry requirements

Standard met/will be met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to the selection and entry requirements are met

The team was told that the employer's suitability to provide the necessary infrastructure and support for the learner, and the learner's potential to become a pharmacy technician given their current ability, health and character are screened during the application process. Employers with multiple sites have some screening at their head office level and other criteria assessed at a training site level. Those who are single site employers have all screening completed at site level. If screening indicates there could be a significant risk, Buttercups may undertake further investigations or a site visit to check for suitability. In the case of any concerns, the team was told that a pharmacy professional would investigate the situation. With employers the team was told that it is generally the learning environment that poses a risk; for learners it is usually a potential Fitness to Practise (FtP) issue. All candidates are screened with an online assessment to ascertain whether their levels of maths, English language and science are at the appropriate level prior to enrolment onto the course. If candidates fail any aspects of the screening, they are not permitted to enrol but are offered Level 2 functional skills training or foundation science training before any subsequent enrolment. Applicants need to confirm their good character at the point of employment and adequate health to start training. Both learners and employers are directed to Buttercups' FtP policy and its importance. All Buttercups staff are required to complete ACAS Equality and Diversity training as part of their induction. Over the past three years Buttercups are confident that no protected group has been, or has likely to have been, disadvantaged by the selection and entry requirements. If an applicant were a family member of the pharmacy's owner the team was told that the relationship would be checked; usually a pharmacist independent from the owner would act as the workplace training supervisor (WTS).

Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are met

The submission indicated that Buttercups advocates and promotes EDI throughout its courses, mainly through EDI 'hotspots', case studies and through assessments. Although there is some expected variation with respect to age, gender, ethnicity and start point, the team was told that there is no significant difference that warrants concern with regards to progress through the programme. A monthly internal course progress report is used by all tutors and assessors to monitor the progress of learners and provides oversight to the management team to allow identification of trends at an early stage. This can filter progress according to EDI data such as ethnicity, gender, age and additional needs and is used to shape the way systems are delivered and developed. Where there is learner disclosure of a learning difficulty or disability, learners will be reviewed by the Additional Learning Support Coordinator (ALSCo) to ensure that learners' needs can be supported during the programme and if any assessment adjustments are required. Any support programmes or interventions tailored to

the learner are also shared, with learner consent, with their workplace training supervisor to ensure they are able to support their learner in the best way in the workplace. The teaching platform has been developed to allow for full online accessibility, with changeable fonts, text size, colour of the pages, in addition to having video subtitles, printed copies and read-aloud functions. The platform can be used on all electronic devices, allowing learners flexibility on when they choose to learn. Learners have access to further support via email or phone, including an out-of-hours helpline.

Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to management, resources and capacity requirements are met

The course is a three-way partnership between the employer/workplace training supervisor, the learner and Buttercups. An employer agreement states the expectations of resources, infrastructure and support for both the learner and the WTS, and Buttercups' support and responsibilities. The WTS and learner have their responsibilities outlined in the enrolment form. The team was told that the WTS undertakes a course prior to enrolment of their learner that covers their important role and ensures that they are appropriately trained and aware of their responsibilities. The course is available on b-Hive and a handbook includes tools for completing OSCEs, having difficult conversations, the role of pharmacy technicians, and escalating concerns. Buttercups undertakes a risk assessment of the learner, the training environment and the WTS prior to enrolment. There is a troubleshooting guide for when roles and responsibilities are not being met which outlines actions and resulting outcomes such as sanctions.

Each employer is required to sign an Agreement for Services which outlines employers' responsibilities towards supporting the programme, the learners and the WTSs, including contingency plans should any changes occur that could affect the learner. It was emphasised that employers and WTSs play a crucial role in feedback and quality assurance, along with stakeholder groups and online surveys, in addition to more formal client relationship meetings, which allow the majority of issues to be dealt with proactively. Learners undertake bi-monthly reviews with their WTS and bi-monthly progress reviews with their Buttercups tutor in conjunction with their WTS. Learners complete an appraisal every six months with their WTS, including 360-degree feedback which obtains feedback from patients and other service users, on how workplace training and activities have affected patients' experiences. The team was told that difficulties can arise if learners do not get sufficient protected time for study. This may lead to the Buttercups tutor having a conversation with the WTS and developing an action plan with accountabilities.

The programme was developed by an in-house Products team made up of registrants from both pharmacy professions across a range of pharmacy sectors. This ensures that the programme is current and relevant to practice, whilst being cognisant of the challenges seen by the workforce. Buttercups has engaged with stakeholders through formalised meetings and collected learner/WTS feedback via informal routes such as tutor discussions, and more formal focus groups and surveys. There is a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Department (TLA) consisting of over 70 pharmacy professionals managed by the Head of Centre. It is responsible for the tutoring and assessing of the level 3 programmes. Within the Department there is a dedicated Safeguarding and Welfare Team that is responsible for identifying and investigating any safeguarding or welfare-related issues. All staff

involved in the writing, teaching and assessment of the programme have job descriptions and a clear understanding of their role and responsibilities. A Products team regularly reviews course materials and receives feedback to inform development under the direction of the Principal Pharmacist. The Digital Technology Services Department oversees the IT infrastructure and the development of new technologies. There is a customised learning management system (LMS) and a bespoke e-learning platform (b-Hive) which hosts staff training and learner training. There is a full disaster recovery plan for the systems should there be a major incident affecting Buttercups' premises.

The projected annual intake going forward will be around 1500, equivalent level to pre-pandemic levels. The staff numbers of registered professionals will be sufficient for a ratio of 1 tutor to 65 learners. There is a specific WTS course with an assessment as recognition of competence in their role.

Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that three of the five criteria relating to monitoring, review and evaluation requirements are met with two criteria subject to a condition.

Internal procedures detail the processes that all relevant departments and parties must follow for the course. Each standard operating procedure has an accountable person who ensures that the policy remains fit for purpose, relevant and up to date. Annual learner surveys provide feedback on the programme, and all learners complete an end of programme review form. Tutors and workplace training supervisors are invited to attend regular focus groups. Learners and WTSs will be able to report concerns using the 'Report a Concern' button that will be available on each page of the learner's training course.

There is a quality management group which meets quarterly to review performance against the Ofsted standards, known as the Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and from this the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) is updated. This focuses on four key areas: Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development, Leadership and Management. Assessors and tutors are provided with clear data relating to their learner's progress. The senior management team meets on a fortnightly basis to review and plan action for improvements when identified. The team was told that the currency of the programme is ensured by the IQAs and by the course developers working in practice. Any changes are risk-assessed in terms of the learner and for patient safety with high-risk changes implemented within ten days. The Teaching Development Manager leads the quality assurance of the teaching and IQAs monitor both quality of assessment decision and quality of feedback. IQA reports are sampled and reviewed by another IQA to ensure consistency in feedback. Learners receive oral and/or written feedback after each period of training from both Buttercups and their WTS which is logged in their e-portfolio. Live tracking of learner progress occurs on the b-Hive and e-portfolio and can be seen by the learner and their WTS in real time.

As discussed in more detail in the commentary to Standard 6 below, although the team could see some evidence of independence in the contractual responsibilities of the EQA, and the subsequent quality assurance of Buttercups Training assessment decisions, it could see limited documented evidence of how this is enacted and managed. Accordingly, it will be a **condition** of reaccreditation that Buttercups Training, working with the EQA, must develop clear, measurable, and documented policies and proformas for the work of the EQA in their role, showing clear lines of accountability,

responsibility, and independence to the quality assurance of the programme. These documented policies and proformas must be informed by best practice of similar regulated qualifications.

Standard 5: Course design and delivery

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course design and delivery requirements are met

The curriculum has fifteen modules of learning split into four levels of learning. The documentation explained that the programme requires experiential learning to link the knowledge to the practical skills and behaviours that are required in the IET standards. The first level can be undertaken without any prior experience in pharmacy. Learners are introduced to the GPhC Standards for Pharmacy Professionals at the start of the programme. Each subsequent level builds on the knowledge, skills and behaviours taught in the earlier levels. Much of the summative assessment to meet the outcomes of the qualification is in the second half of the course, but each module of learning has formative assessments that can be used to monitor the learner's progress. Throughout the programme, teaching and learning resources are linked to the nine domains of the GPhC standards. A blended learning approach uses a bespoke b-Hive platform. Feedback on the design and the delivery of the programme is gathered from a range of stakeholders including employers, expert patients, the public, learners, workplace training supervisors, staff, external quality assurance agencies, Ofsted, Matrix and subject matter experts. The team was told that the views of patients, including those of expert patients, are gathered through various mechanisms throughout the course. Examples include during specific assessments such as patient case studies and 360-degree feedback to learners. The team learned that Buttercups now relies on employers gathering patient feedback and was told that the subject of remote consultations is now a major point. The programme undertakes routine, cyclical course reviews in which programme development specialists address stakeholder feedback and virtual annual focus groups. A risk-led approach is used when making changes or updates to course material.

Since the course was first accredited, the role of a 'second' WTS has been introduced to ensure learners receive support and supervision without increasing workload and pressure on the WTS. The team learned that there is a separate training video for 'second' WTSs covering which tasks can be delegated to them. A training plan ensures that learners are competent and being introduced to workplace tasks at the appropriate time during their training period. It was emphasised that the 'second' WTS mainly covers practice elements of the training and reports back to the primary WTS who is responsible for the overall educational process.

Standard 6: Course assessment

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that nine of the ten criteria relating to the course assessment requirements are met with one criterion subject to a condition.

Each assessment carries an assessment brief for the learner outlining the regulations and assessment criteria. Verification of the assessment is undertaken by the IQA team, overseen by the Head of Centre, and subject to external scrutiny by the EQA. In order for the learner to demonstrate the learning outcomes they need to draw on learning across many modules. The majority of the learning outcomes are at the “does” level, requiring the learner to have assimilated the knowledge and skills, and applied them to their practice. A portfolio style of assessment is used. This contains summative assessments to demonstrate the learning outcomes, along with developmental or formative assessments. There is no pass or fail for each module. Instead, the qualification is assessed as a pass or fail at the end of the programme. The majority of the assessments are completed in the workplace at the level of “does” by the Buttercups tutor, supported by the WTS and/or the ‘second’ WTS, all of whom have been trained in their assessment role, including their responsibilities to report risks or concerns via the Fitness to Practise policy.

The team was told that three attempts overall are allowed for the summative assessment, with feedback given before any third attempt. It was stressed that the assessment is holistic rather than modular and that there can be an overall fail. Tutors will flag any safety issues and additional teaching will be given before the learner continues on the course. If a safety issue is identified it will be subject to a review, including the WTS, and could be escalated to FtP. Learner progress will be reviewed and an action plan formulated, again involving the WTS, if the learner is not working at the required level. If lack of feedback to the learner is an issue, the Buttercups tutor will discuss with the WTS.

Live tracking of learner progress occurs on the b-Hive and e-portfolio; this can be seen by the learner, tutor and their WTS in real time. In addition, the employer can track progress against expected progress in real time. On a bi-monthly basis the WTS has a short review meeting with their learner and the Buttercups tutor will monitor the learner’s progress as part of their assessment. On a three-monthly basis, Buttercups will conduct a more detailed review of the learner’s progress with them and their WTS. Every six months, the learner will have an appraisal in the workplace based on their performance in the role. This will be led by their WTS but include multi-source feedback for example, by patients and colleagues.

Buttercups appoints independent External Quality Assurance for the Level 3 programme to sample both apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship routes of delivery. Although the team was assured that the external quality assurance was independent of the company, it was concerned that the EQA report was presented on a Buttercups-labelled document and was not signed off by the EQA. The team also noted that the report appeared in parts informal and non-quantitative in relation to all sampled assessments. Accordingly, it will be a **condition** of reaccreditation that Buttercups Training, working with the EQA, must develop clear, measurable, and documented policies and proformas for the work of the EQA in their role, showing clear lines of accountability, responsibility, and independence to the quality assurance of the programme. These documented policies and proformas must be informed by best practice of similar regulated qualifications. This was because although the team could see some evidence of independence in the contractual responsibilities of the EQA, and the

subsequent quality assurance of Buttercups Training assessment decisions, it could see limited documented evidence of how this is enacted and managed.

Once work is submitted, learners receive timely feedback. For work marked automatically it is instant. For work assessed by the Buttercups tutor, it is reviewed at the end of each period of training and feedback provided for all assessments during that month.

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

Standard met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience requirements are met

The team learned that stakeholder feedback found that learners' reliance on WTS engagement and input can result in delayed progression and programme completion. Thus, a "second" pharmacy professional WTS role was developed to undertake, supervise and sign off observations within assessments and undertake OSCEs with learners. Any potential lack of support from pharmacy professionals is identified at enrolment, and subsequent lack is identified at the review stages. Similarly, the opportunity to work as part of a multidisciplinary team is identified at enrolment; this tends to vary with the sector of pharmacy. There are forums, webinars and case studies to illustrate and discuss multidisciplinary team-working. The team was told that learners cannot complete the course without interacting with multidisciplinary working.

There is a Learner Support team that deals with queries or directs the learner to an alternative tutor where necessary. Outside of office hours, there is a learner support phone line open evenings and weekends, operated by tutors. A Learner Review Team supports learners with pastoral issues. Learners are signposted to the 'Stay Safe' website during pastoral review calls and also by the Safeguarding and Welfare team when they do not wish to speak directly with the Team; this enables learners to obtain confidential support. The employer SLA ensures that learners have access to multidisciplinary interaction during their training period. At Buttercups, they have access to their designated tutor who will be a GPhC registrant. Learners can report concerns using the 'Report a Concern' button that is available on each page of the learner's training course of the b-Hive platform. The final process for sign-off will involve a 24-month appraisal in the final period of training from the WTS, in addition to demonstration of the learning outcomes.

The team reviewed 17 surveys, collected directly by the GPhC, about the quality of the Buttercups pharmacy technician course provision, completed by past and present trainees. Overall, these surveys indicated that trainees were well supported on the course and had access to a wide range of academic and pastoral support systems.

Apprenticeship pathway (End Point Assessment)

See commentary under Background above.

