

Common registration assessment regulations for sittings in November 2021

These are the regulations for the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC's) common registration assessment ('the assessment') in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

In these regulations, 'pre-registration training' means the period of training undertaken by a candidate prior to registration in accordance with the requirements of the GPhC's *Criteria for registration as a pharmacist* and the requirements as per the *Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1994 (the 'General Regulations')*. 'Provisional registration' means a period of work as a pharmacist when registered provisionally. Provisional registrants completed pre-registration training and then were registered provisionally – for a limited period of time – to assist providers of pharmacy services during the COVID-19 pandemic. The conditions for being registered provisionally are set out in ***Initial education and training standards for pharmacists: criteria for registering provisionally***.

These regulations apply to assessment sittings taking place in July 2021. These regulations supersede the regulations in the GPhC's 2020 Pre-registration manual and earlier versions.

1. General information

Overview

- 1.1 The assessment is set and moderated by the GPhC's board of assessors ('the board'). The board's primary purpose is to protect patients and the public by ensuring the standard of the assessment is maintained. This will take precedence over all other considerations.
- 1.2 *Purpose of the assessment:* the primary purpose of the assessment is to ensure that candidates demonstrate an understanding of how to apply pharmaceutical knowledge appropriately and in a timely manner when making professional judgements in pharmacy practice contexts. In addition, it ensures that candidates are appropriately numerate to practise as a pharmacist.
- 1.3 The assessment examines the contents of the ***Registration assessment framework*** ('the framework'). The framework for the assessment is set by the board of assessors. Changes to the framework will be made available to all potential candidates before the sitting at which the new framework will be assessed.
- 1.4 Entry to the assessment constitutes an agreement to be bound by the terms of these regulations, schedules and other materials concerning the assessment published by the GPhC.

- 1.5 The registration assessment is a computer-based assessment delivered at Pearson VUE test centres.
- 1.6 Sitting the assessment remotely with online proctoring may be granted in exceptional circumstances, and subject to availability, for:
 - 1.6.1 candidates granted this as an adjustment due to a specific need through the reasonable adjustment process (see section 3), or
 - 1.6.2 candidates who are prevented from accessing a Pearson VUE test centre due to government requirements regarding self-isolation in relation to COVID-19, or being located overseas in a jurisdiction where there is no test centre provision.
- 1.7 A variation to these regulations applies to candidates sitting the assessment remotely, see the *Appendix for candidates sitting remotely with online proctoring in July 2021*.
- 1.8 A paper-based assessment is not available.
- 1.9 Candidates must comply with government requirements (linked to the COVID-19 pandemic and more generally) during assessment periods. Requirements may vary between England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and other countries. Also, requirements may vary between regions of England, Scotland and Wales.
- 1.10 These regulations apply to every candidate entering the assessment, whether they have successfully completed an accredited Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree or accredited Overseas Pharmacists' Assessment Programme (OSPAP), or are an EEA-qualified pharmacist taking the assessment as part of the route to registration.
- 1.11 In these regulations, 'the Registrar' means the registrar of the GPhC, appointed under the Pharmacy Order 2010.
- 1.12 The board's interpretation of these regulations is final.

Applying for the registration assessment

- 1.13 In order to sit the assessment, candidates are required to submit a valid and complete application, with all supporting documentation, by the specified date and in the specified manner. If a valid and complete application is not received by the GPhC for Great Britain candidates or the PSNI for Northern Ireland candidates by the specified date, the candidate will not be permitted to sit the assessment.
- 1.14 It is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that documents are submitted to the GPhC in the required format, by the specified date; 'the specified date' will be made provided on the GPhC website.
- 1.15 Candidates who submit an incomplete application, late application, make no application or an application that cannot be validated and verified, will not be entered into the assessment and will not be able to sit the assessment.
- 1.16 It is the sole responsibility of each candidate to ensure that they:
 - 1.16.1. have read and understood the requirements for applying for the assessment;
 - 1.16.2. have read and understood any associated processes they need to follow in order to register for the assessment;

- 1.16.3. have submitted an application to the GPhC or PSNI with all supported documentation, by the specified date;
- 1.16.4. have booked a place to sit the assessment through their Pearson VUE account, once they have received confirmation of their application from the GPhC
- 1.16.5. keep the GPhC updated and informed about their current email address, postal address and telephone number. Failure to do so may result in GPhC communications not being received by the candidate.

The assessment

- 1.17 The assessment comprises two time-limited papers:
 - 1.17.1. Part 1, a 2-hour calculations paper; and
 - 1.17.2. Part 2, a 2.5-hour multiple choice paper.
- 1.18 To pass the assessment, a candidate must achieve the pass mark or greater for Part 1 and Part 2 in the same sitting.
- 1.19 Marks from one sitting cannot be carried forward to another sitting.
- 1.20 Candidates may not be in possession of, or have access to, any reference sources other than those provided during a sitting. Resources such as extracts from BNFs, pictures, charts and Summaries of Product Characteristics, will be provided online during sittings. This list is not exhaustive.
- 1.21 The assessment is set in English, because this is the principal language used in practice in Great Britain.
- 1.22 Both papers of a sitting must be sat on the same day. This is to ensure that candidates can apply a breadth of knowledge and depth of reasoning in a defined and limited period of time. For this reason, papers cannot be sat on separate days.

Sitting attempts

- 1.23 The registration assessment can be sat a maximum of three times within the time limit available to apply for registration as a pharmacist. For this reason, candidates are not guaranteed or entitled to three attempts at the assessment.
- 1.24 All previous valid sittings, irrespective of the delivery method (for example, paper-based sittings taken within examination venues) count towards the maximum.
- 1.25 Where candidates have had a nullification request granted, an appeal against a failed sitting upheld or have withdrawn from a sitting, this does not negate the timeframe to apply for registration as a pharmacist, and it does not qualify a candidate any further attempts at the registration assessment if they are outside of the time limit to apply for registration as a pharmacist.

Eligibility to apply to sit the assessment

- 1.26 To be eligible to apply to sit the assessment, candidates must have received a satisfactory 39-week progress report signed by their pre-registration tutor and have applied by the specified date.

2. Dates of assessment sittings

- 2.1 Sitting dates are provided on the GPhC's and PSNI's website.

3. Reasonable adjustments for specific needs

- 3.1 The purpose of reasonable adjustments is to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged by a permanent or temporary specific need.
- 3.2 Reasonable adjustments cannot alter the standard of the assessment or undermine its purpose, as described in 1.2.
- 3.3 A candidate who wishes to request reasonable adjustments to accommodate a permanent or temporary specific need must submit the request to the GPhC in the specified format and by the specified date.
- 3.4 To make a request for a reasonable adjustment(s), candidates must meet the requirements as stipulated in the guidance for Requesting a reasonable adjustment for the common registration assessment
- 3.5 Requests for reasonable adjustment, or appeals against decisions made by the adjustments panel, that are received after the deadline will only be heard if the requirements specified in the guidance for Requesting a reasonable adjustment for the GPhC registration assessment are met, as detailed on the GPhC's website.
- 3.6 If a candidate does not make a reasonable adjustment request in accordance with 3.3 and 3.4, makes a request which is not granted, or has their appeal rejected in accordance with 3.8 and still decides to sit, they will have deemed themselves fit to sit.
- 3.7 Adjustments will not be retracted once granted.
- 3.8 Candidates may appeal to the Registrar against a decision made by the adjustments panel by the specified date, on the following grounds only:
 - 3.8.1. there are reasonable grounds to believe that there was a procedural error that affected the outcome of the decision, and/or;
 - 3.8.2 there is credible evidence that could not have been obtained or known to the candidate at the time of the application that may have influenced the decision of the adjustments panel.
- 3.9 Appeals must be submitted via the method specified in the guidance for Requesting a reasonable adjustment for the common registration assessment on the GPhC's website.
- 3.10 There are two possible outcomes to an appeal against an adjustment request that is not granted:
 - 3.10.1 the appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision of the adjustments panel stands, and the request is not granted, or;
 - 3.10.2 the appeal is upheld, in which case the request is granted or partially granted.

4 Admission to and conduct in the assessment

- 4.1 Final instructions will be provided to all candidates by the GPhC before the assessment sitting.
- 4.2 Candidates are required to provide identification documents, as specified by the GPhC, in order to verify their identity at the test centre. Only the specified documents will be accepted.
- 4.3 Candidates will not be permitted to sit the assessment if they arrive more than 15 minutes after the start time for that paper.

- 4.4 Candidates may not leave the assessment room during each part of the assessment except to use toilet facilities or to access water. Candidates must notify an invigilator who will escort them from their seat to the facilities or designated drinking area. Candidates who may wish to drink water should leave a clearly named, transparent water bottle in the designated area outside the assessment room.
- 4.5 During the assessment, other than IT equipment being used to sit the assessment, only the items included on the **Pearson VUE comfort aid list** and detailed on the **GPhC website** and in assessment day guidance may be present on a candidate's person, or accessible to a candidate, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustments process.
- 4.6 Candidates are not permitted to use a standard pen/pencil and paper during a sitting. Test centre staff will provide candidates with a wipeable notepad and non-permanent pen for their own notes and workings out; a separate wipeable notepad will be provided for part 1 and part 2. These items must remain intact and will be collected in at the end of each paper. Writing materials cannot be removed from the test centre.
- 4.7 No mobile phones, cameras, devices with communication functionality or smart technology, watches of any kind, or other electronic devices of any kind may be present on a candidate's person, or accessible to the candidate during the assessment. The exception is electronic devices which have been permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process.
- 4.8 No books, documents, or printed or hand-written written materials of any kind may be present on a candidate's person, or accessible to the candidate, at any time during the assessment (other than writing materials provided by test centre staff). The exception is materials that have been permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process.
- 4.9 Any bag or other belongings brought to the assessment by a candidate must be left in a place specified by the test centre. No liability for the loss of any item(s) will be accepted by the test centre or the GPhC.
- 4.10 Assessment questions are the copyright property of the GPhC. The copying, saving, or recording of questions in any format constitutes misconduct. If misconduct is proven, it will result in a candidate being failed. Questions may not be distributed or shared by candidates in any way, including by email or text message, or posting on social networking sites. This list is not exhaustive.
- 4.11 Candidates must follow all instructions given to them by test centre staff.
- 4.12 Contravention of regulations 4.2 – 4.11 by a candidate may be considered as alleged misconduct. See section 8 'alleged misconduct'.

5 Withdrawal from the assessment

- 5.1 A candidate may withdraw from an assessment sitting at any point before the sitting, and up to five working days after the sitting if they choose not to sit. A candidate should not sit the assessment if they consider that their performance is likely to be adversely affected by illness, indisposition due to COVID-19-related circumstances or other circumstances.

- 5.2 A candidate who withdraws and does not sit the assessment, must inform the GPhC using the method specified on the GPhC's website on or before the specified date. If a candidate withdraws from a sitting, that sitting is not counted as one of their sitting attempts.
- 5.3 Once a candidate has notified the GPhC of their decision to withdraw from a sitting in line with 5.2, the decision is final and cannot be reversed. Once a candidate has withdrawn from a sitting, they will no longer be permitted to sit that sitting of the assessment, regardless of eligibility.
- 5.4 A candidate who applies to enter a sitting of the assessment, and has been approved, but does not sit, and does not notify the GPhC of their decision to withdraw in line with 5.2, will forfeit the sitting attempt through non-attendance. The sitting will be removed from the total number of remaining sitting attempts available to the candidate within their timeframe to apply for registration as a pharmacist.
- 5.5 Where a candidate has not complied with 5.2, by not notifying the GPhC of their withdrawal within the time stipulated, they will forfeit the assessment fee for that sitting.

6 Being fit to sit the assessment

- 6.1 It is the sole responsibility of every candidate to ensure that they only sit the assessment if they are fit to do so. Being 'fit to sit' means that a candidate knows of no reason why their performance would be adversely affected during the assessment. A candidate who is affected by illness or other adverse circumstance before the sitting, but decides to sit the assessment, will be treated as being fit to sit by the board. For further information on making a decision to sit the assessment see the GPhC's website.
- 6.2 If, on or before the day of an assessment, a candidate knows of an illness or adverse circumstance that might affect their performance, they should not sit. An illness or adverse circumstance known to a candidate on or before the day of an assessment cannot be used as grounds for nullification of the sitting attempt, or as grounds for an appeal or as evidence in an appeal.

Nullification of sitting attempt

- 6.3 A candidate who is taken ill or experiences other adverse circumstances during the assessment, must draw this to the attention of test centre staff immediately, in order for the member of staff to assist with the indisposition. The member of test centre staff will submit a report to the GPhC. If the candidate wishes their circumstances to be considered by the board under the provision of 6.4, they must then submit a written request to the board, via the GPhC, for their illness or adverse circumstances to be considered under the provisions of 6.4 below
- 6.4 Request for an assessment attempt to be nullified: a candidate who considers that their performance has been affected by illness or other circumstance during the assessment, may request in writing to the board that they be deemed not to have sat the assessment on this occasion, and that their assessment attempt be nullified.
- 6.5 In order for a request to be considered under 6.4 the request must be in the specified format, including appropriate supporting evidence as detailed in 6.3. The request must be received by the specified date after the assessment, to ensure that it can be considered by the board at its post-assessment meeting.
- 6.6 The lack of specified items which are to be supplied by the candidate, as specified on the **GPhC's website** and in the assessment day guidance, cannot be used as grounds for nullification; this

includes failure to bring a functioning calculator that conforms to one of the makes and models specified.

- 6.7 When considering a candidate's request for their assessment attempt to be nullified, the board will do so before undertaking the process of awarding results and without knowing the candidate's provisional marks.
- 6.8 The board will consider nullification requests without knowing the candidate's identity, the number of their assessment attempt, or whether or not they have been granted an adjustment.
- 6.9 If the board grants the candidate's request for nullification, the candidate will not be informed about any marks they might have obtained, and they will be deemed not to have sat. The candidate may apply to re-sit a subsequent sitting of the assessment provided that they meet the eligibility requirements and are able to meet the time limit to apply for registration as a pharmacist. For such a further sitting, the candidate will be required to pay a new fee.
- 6.10 If a candidate's request for their assessment attempt to be nullified is not granted, the board will move on to consider their marks with those of other candidates within the process of awarding results. The board will not pay further regard to the candidate's reported illness or other adverse circumstance.

7 Notification of results

- 7.1 GPhC candidates will be notified of their individual results by the GPhC, and PSNI candidates will be notified of their individual results by the PSNI. Candidates will be provided with the mark required for each paper in order to pass the assessment, along with the mark they achieved for each paper, and their overall pass or fail result.
- 7.2 Individual candidate results will not be provided to anyone other than the candidate, in any circumstances.

8 Alleged misconduct

- 8.1 The GPhC reserves the right to withhold notification of an assessment result to a candidate if misconduct by the candidate in the assessment, or pertaining to the assessment, is alleged. Notification of the candidate's result will be withheld while the alleged misconduct is investigated.
- 8.2 Cases of alleged misconduct will be heard in accordance with the process for investigating and hearing Allegations of misconduct in the registration assessment.
- 8.3 Cases will be judged on balance of probabilities.
- 8.4 If it is concluded that misconduct has taken place, the candidate will be deemed to have failed that sitting of the assessment, irrespective of the marks they obtained. If a candidate is failed as a result of misconduct being determined, their marks will not be released. The candidate will be required to declare the finding of misconduct at any subsequent application for registration as a pharmacist with the GPhC and this will be considered alongside any subsequent application.
- 8.5 Appeals against outcomes of hearings of alleged misconduct may be made to the Registrar.
- 8.6 Examples of misconduct include:
 - a. Disturbing other candidates with inappropriate behaviour, which is behaviour likely to distract another candidate during a sitting;

- b. being in possession of items specified in 4.8;
- c. being in possession of other items, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process. This includes items being present on a candidate's person, or accessible to the candidate during the assessment;
- d. being in possession of any form of reference source, revision material, written material or document, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;
- e. being in possession of an electronic device including mobile phone, camera, device with communication functionality or smart technology unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;
- f. being in possession of a watch unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;
- g. being in possession of a calculator during the part 1 paper that is not a model approved by the GPhC, or during the part 2 paper where calculators are not permitted;
- h. concealing reference texts/revision material, including handwritten reference sources/revision material, in the environs of the assessment area;
- i. leaving the assessment room during a sitting for any reason other than to visit toilet facilities, or without notifying an invigilator;
- j. being misrepresented during a sitting of the assessment, for example having someone sit the assessment on one's behalf;
- k. attempting to cheat, for example attempting to see and/or copy answers entered by other candidates;
- l. sharing answers with other candidates during a sitting;
- m. communicating or attempting to communicate with others during a sitting, for example with a mobile phone, smartwatch, other communications device or verbally;
- n. copying, saving, or recording questions.

This list is not exhaustive.

9 Quality assurance of candidates' marks

- 9.1 Processes for the checking of candidates' answers and marks awarded are in place for assurance of accuracy. Processes are reviewed regularly by the board of assessors and the GPhC.
- 9.2 Results are final; no further review of individual marks will be undertaken.

10 Appeals

- 10.1 A candidate who fails an attempt at the registration assessment may appeal against the fail result on one or more of the following grounds only:
 - 10.1.1 procedural grounds, that is where a procedure was not correctly applied; and/or

- 10.1.2 where there are exceptional circumstances unique to a candidate that may have affected a candidate's performance during a sitting but were not known and could not have been known to a candidate before or during a sitting.
- 10.2 The following are non-appealable grounds:
- 10.2.1. Information technology failure, including but not limited to failure of a computer or other delivery device, webcam, or internet connection, before or during a sitting, because these are beyond the GPhC's control, and could be used as grounds to apply for nullification (see section 6)
 - 10.2.2. failure to bring a functioning calculator that conforms to one of the makes and models specified by the GPhC.
 - 10.2.3. that the registration assessment was delivered in a Pearson VUE test centre;
 - 10.2.4. that a candidate was unable to attend a test centre for reasons beyond the GPhC's control, including because government requirements prohibited attendance;
 - 10.2.5. that the registration assessment was not delivered in the manner it has been in previous years;
 - 10.2.6. that due to a provisionally registered pharmacist candidate's work duties they were not prepared to sit; and/or
 - 10.2.7. that a request for reasonable adjustment was made, but was not granted by the adjustments panel, or an adjustment was granted by the panel but was not possible to accommodate due to capacity or other reasons.
 - 10.2.8. that a specific need was known to the candidate but an application for reasonable adjustment was not made.
- 10.3 To ensure that an appeal is heard, a candidate must set out the grounds of the appeal in writing and ensure it is received by the GPhC by the specified date, via the method specified.
- 10.4 Exceptional circumstances which could have formed the basis of a request for nullification under 6.4 cannot be used as the basis of an appeal or as evidence in an appeal.
- 10.5 There are only two permissible outcomes to an appeal against a fail result:
- 10.5.1 the appeal is not upheld, in which case the fail mark stands, and the candidate fails that attempt at the registration assessment; or
 - 10.5.2 the appeal is upheld, in which case the candidate's sitting attempt is nullified.
- 10.6 Appeals will be considered by the registrar.
- 10.7 Appeals will be heard as soon as is practical.
- 10.8 Candidates who have appealed against a result for a given sitting are advised to apply for the next sitting by the specified deadline if they have not been advised of the outcome of their appeal by then. If the appeal is upheld the fee for the later sitting will be refunded.
- 10.9 Appeals received after the specified date will only be heard when:
- 10.9.1. appropriate supporting evidence is provided to support the reason for late submission, and;

- 10.9.2. the reason for lateness relates to unforeseeable circumstance(s) beyond the candidate's control that meant they were mentally or physically incapable of submitting by the deadline, and;
- 10.9.3. it is agreed that there are valid and evidenced reasons to explain why the candidate did not submit prior to the deadline.