

University of East Anglia pharmacy technician course accreditation event report – May 2020



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	University of East Anglia
Course	Pharmacy technician course
Event type	Accreditation
Event date	26 - 27 May 2020
Accreditation period	July 2020 - July 2023
Outcome	<p>Approval</p> <p>The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the Certificate of Higher Education in Pharmacy Technician Practice course provided by the University of East Anglia should be accredited for a period of three years.</p>
Conditions	There were no conditions
Standing conditions	Please refer to Appendix 1
Recommendations	No recommendations were made
Registrar decision	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the accreditation of the course for a period of three years.
Key contact (provider)	Melanie Boughen, Director of Pharmacy Technician Education
Accreditation team	<p>Leonie Milliner (Team Leader and Lay), Director of Education, General Optical Council</p> <p>Laura McEwen-Smith (Pharmacy Technician), National Workstream Lead; Pharmacy Apprenticeships and Widening Participation Health Education England</p> <p>Catherine Davies (Pharmacy Technician), Free-lance Education and Training provider</p> <p>Ruth Edwards (Academic), Head of Pharmacy Practice and Senior Teaching Fellow</p>
GPhC representative	<p>Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC</p> <p>Philippa McSimpson (Observer), Quality Assurance Manager, GPhC</p>

Rapporteur

Jane Smith, Chief Executive Officer, European Association for Cancer Research

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, 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

The University of East Anglia opened its School of Pharmacy in 2003, initially with an MPharm programme. The School now offers a range of courses including pharmacist post-graduate qualifications, a five-year MPharm with placement programme, and a BSc in Pharmacology and Drug Discovery.

The Health Education England (HEE) Pharmacy Technician NHS pre-registration training contract was awarded to the University in 2015. This is delivered in conjunction with external providers. The Pharmacy Technician Team within the School also offers a range of Pharmacy Technician Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses including Final Accuracy Checking and Medicines Reconciliation.

The provider is now seeking accreditation for a proposed Certificate of Higher Education in Pharmacy Technician Practice, to be offered to up to three cohorts per year, each cohort consisting of a maximum of 60 students. The course is designed so it can be delivered by both via an apprenticeship route, meeting the requirements of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education for the Pharmacy Technician (Integrated) standard or as a stand-alone qualification.

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-visit

In advance of the main event, a pre-visit meeting took place via teleconference on 18 May 2020. The purpose of the pre-visit 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 26 May 2020. The remainder of the event took place via teleconference on 27 May 2020, and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff and stakeholders involved in the design of the course.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

The event

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
Day 1 – 26 May 2020		
1.	Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives	13:30 – 17:00
Day 2 – 27 May 2020		
2.	Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives	09:00 – 09:30
3.	Presentation to introduce the UEA qualification	09:30 – 10:15
4.	Q&A session with the programme representatives	10:15 – 12:00
5.	Meeting with external stakeholders involved in the design of the qualification	12:30 – 13:15
6.	Meeting to explore the learning outcomes	13:30 – 14:15
7.	Meeting with internal QA representatives	14:30 – 15:30
8.	Private meeting of accreditation team	15:30 -16:00
9.	Feedback to the programme representatives	16:00

Key findings - Part 1: learning outcomes

During the event the accreditation team reviewed all 53 learning outcomes relating to the pharmacy technician qualification. To gain additional assurance the team also tested a sample of **four** learning outcomes during a separate meeting with the awarding organisation and was satisfied that **all 53 learning outcomes would be met** during the qualification to the level required by the GPhC standards.

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

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

Applicants for the course must be working in a pharmacy environment or have secured employment as a preregistration trainee pharmacy technician and be supervised by a pharmacy professional, either a pharmacist or suitably experienced pharmacy technician. The employer will be responsible for ensuring that applicants possess the appropriate attributes and behaviours for a healthcare trainee, are fit to practise as trainees at the point of selection and have the required academic qualifications. Verification that these checks have been carried out by employers will be made by the provider's admissions team when the registration is received.

Prior to course registration, the employer will be responsible for confirming that DBS and occupational health checks have been completed for each student.

The provider was asked how they will ensure that employers assess students appropriately against the course entry requirements, especially against the more subjective attributes such as values, attitudes and qualities. The provider has developed some standard questions that can be asked to address these areas. Model answers to these questions will be made available to all employers. The provider will work with large NHS employers initially and expects the required attributes to be essential criteria for all employers recruiting into the NHS. Community and hospital pharmacy representatives who had been involved in the design of the course confirmed that in both settings students they would expect their employees to demonstrate the subjective characteristics required for entry to the course.

To ensure consistency in the application of admissions criteria across different employers, at least one person on each interview panel will be required to have had recruitment training, to ensure there is knowledge of equality and diversity legislation and good practice.

If students change employer part-way through the course, the provider will support them on a case-by-case basis, but there will always be a check that the new workplace will meet the required standards.

The team was satisfied that the criterion is met but the provider should give consideration to how this will continue to be the case if and when students are recruited from a broader range of workplaces.

Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to the equality, diversity and inclusion requirements are or will be met. One criterion requires minor amendments.

A key feature of the course design is the flexibility offered to students in the timing of their studies. The gaps within and between the study blocks are designed to be family-friendly and to enable students to plan their work to suit their individual needs. An over-arching Equality and Diversity Strategy has been developed at School level. Attainment and progression against this strategy will be monitored at a course level.

Stakeholders are satisfied that equality and diversity issues had been addressed in designing the course, particularly in relation to students with disabilities, and are confident that the course is inclusive.

Equality and diversity data will be collected centrally and shared with the course team and will be used to identify issues and to inform future course developments. Data on differential progression or attainment will also be monitored and used to inform course developments. Students will be consulted on issues that are identified and on the changes needed.

The provider will update the course handbook to explicitly state that although reasonable adjustments will be made to course delivery and assessment for students with particular learning needs, the learning outcomes will not be modified.

Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to the management, resources and capacity requirements are or will be met.

There is a defined management plan for the course which details the staff structure and the lines of accountability and reporting through the university management structures. All staff directly involved in the program have defined roles for the delivery of the course. Staff delivering the course are all experienced educational and practicing pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with a breadth of experience from in different sectors and settings. The course team is embedded within the School of Pharmacy and as such has access to the expertise and resources available within the School.

The provider confirmed that resources to deliver two cohorts of 60 students each are already in place and staffing will be increased to maintain the staff:student ratio if and when a third cohort is introduced.

The management plan also details the learning agreement, employer agreement and the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the education and training of students in the workplace. There are defined responsibilities of employers, Educational Supervisors, Workplace Assessors and Clinical Supervisors. In addition, the responsibilities of the student are detailed. Students will be given a copy of the agreement between the employer and the provider in the course handbook. In the stakeholder meeting, employers confirmed that they viewed the

agreements as their contract with the provider. Stakeholders had been given an opportunity to comment on a draft of the employer agreement and roles and responsibility documents.

All students will have a three-monthly review with their employer and the provider to check that the commitments in the agreement are being met. At the same review meeting, all student workplaces will be assessed against HEE trainee workplace standards. If a student changes employer part-way through the course, then the provider will liaise with the new employer and will require them to sign a new agreement. For any cross-sector trainees, a lead employer will be identified who will take primary responsibility for fulfilling the agreement.

The course will be delivered largely online. Students will be supported to study online with a comprehensive induction, recognising that some students will not be familiar with learning in an online environment. Employers will be required to give students access to IT facilities and their tutor will be available to support them, with technical support available from the University's IT support.

Staff members are familiar with online delivery and are already working on the development of course material. In the light of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic, the provider has launched a new initiative to identify and invest in digital champions three 0.1 FTE equivalent members of staff have taken on this role in the faculty.

The management plan identifies potential risks to the successful delivery of the course and measures in place to mitigate these. The potential risks associated with the course were examined by the university as part of the internal course approval processes.

Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to the monitoring, review and evaluation requirements are or will be met.

The quality management structure for the course is defined in a management plan which sets out lines of accountability, escalation and requirements for monitoring, evaluation and review. At a School level, the course will follow the processes already in place for postgraduate professional courses. There will be close liaison between the external examiner and the School, including a review of course material, assessments and attendance at the Exam Board. The external examiner will make a formal report and this, along with the School's response, will be considered at the School Learning and Teaching Committee and at Faculty level.

Appropriate systems are in place to gather feedback from students and employers, during and at the end of the course. A student representative from each regional study group will be appointed to a Staff Trainee Liaison Committee (STLC) which will be chaired by a member of the School of Pharmacy not directly involved in the delivery of the program. The group will have a virtual meeting at least every six months. The minutes of these meetings will be considered at the course delivery team meetings and a response provided via the virtual learning environment (VLE).

Processes are in place to quality assure and standardise the work of the workplace educational supervisors and assessors. There will be a compulsory induction day, looking at examples of the standard of evidence students are expected to submit. Regular standardisation meetings will be

held throughout the year, and each assessor will be required to attend at least two of these events. A robust sampling strategy is also in development. Assessors will be monitored through the reviews that will take place between the student, provider and employer every three months.

Trainee progress and performance at assessment will also be reviewed at course delivery team meetings, and actions plans put in place for students who need them, in conjunction with Educational Supervisors.

Course materials will be reviewed and updated before each cohort. Any significant changes to practice during the course will be communicated to students in the workplace via the VLE or email, with the final study day used to reiterate these changes and to inform students of forthcoming changes.

Standard 5: Course design and delivery

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

The UEA Certificate of Higher Education in Pharmacy Technician Practice is a two-year programme of study, with an integrated spiral curriculum at level 4 of the QAA framework. Knowledge will be provided through a combination of on-line materials, study days and learning within the workplace by shadowing colleagues and developing practical skills under supervision of clinical supervisors. Trainees will be allocated a named Educational Supervisor who will have responsibility for their training within the workplace who will have completed mandatory induction training provided by the course team.

There will be at least one regional study day per 5-week block of teaching, giving students the opportunity to receive face to face support and cover topics in a more 'hands on' way. There will be approximately 10 students per study group, with students grouped according to geography to reduce travel times. It is planned that these will initially take place across six counties in the region, and these are resourced in the business plan. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, it might be necessary to hold these as online events initially.

The course is will be delivered both via an apprenticeship route, meeting the requirements of the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IFATE) for the Pharmacy Technician (Integrated) standard or as a stand-alone qualification. For students there will be no discernible difference in the training or assessment they undertake.

The course consists of four modules, each of 30 credits:

- The Pharmacy Technician as a Health Care Professional: Safe medicines supply
- Medicines, diseases and health 1
- Providing safe and effective person centred care in a complex environment
- Medicines, diseases and health 2

The course is organised into study blocks of five weeks' duration, with horizontal and vertical integration between the content of the two modules. Each study block will commence with a diagnostic multiple choice assessment, designed to help the student to understand the learning ahead and plan where they need to focus their learning. At the end of each block the trainees will retake this assessment to confirm their learning and prepare for assessments. Students will

be directed to complete activities within their workplace to further contextualise learning and develop competence.

The GPhC standards are mapped to the curriculum and are revisited at multiple points of the course. Students are required to provide evidence of professional behaviour through their portfolio.

Representatives from hospital and community pharmacy and patient representatives had been involved in the development of the course and confirmed that their contributions had been welcomed and taken into account.

Appropriate regulations are in place for a professional course and there are procedures for raising concerns about a student's conduct, behaviour, or health, or for students themselves to raise concerns about the course or their workplace.

Standard 6: Course assessment

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course assessment requirements are or will be met.

Assessments are designed to ensure that students have the required knowledge and skills and are mapped to the GPhC standards. The two Medicines, diseases and health modules are assessed via multiple choice questions and calculations assessments. These will cover the underpinning science in a patient context. The assessments will be carried out at the start of the study days under supervision and computers will be available if students do not have their own.

The remaining two modules are assessed through an e-portfolio of work-based assessment and coursework. All assessments are marked on a Pass/Fail basis and students have the opportunity to complete a reassessment in the same format as the original assessment, following feedback. All workplace assessments are subject to an internal review process by the provider. It is recognised that some workplaces might not have workplace assessors, in which case an assessor will be provided by the University and will not be involved in the internal quality assurance process.

The e-portfolios will be internally quality assured both formatively and summatively to ensure that assessment practice is fair and consistent irrespective of sector or setting.

Towards the end of the two-year course and not before 21 months, employers will confirm that students may pass through the gateway for End Point Assessment (EPA), the formality for all trainees on Apprenticeships. This will be dependent on satisfactory completion of all assessments, being signed off on all GPhC learning outcomes and completion of required off-the-job training hours. Apprentices will be end point assessed by assessors external to the course and non-apprentices end point assessed by the course assessors. This assessment will include a discussion based on portfolio of evidence and observation of practice with a question and answer session.

Patient safety is a core requirement and integral to the program. Students will be assessed across the learning outcomes and be required to provide evidence to demonstrate that they are able to practice safely.

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

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

All students will be required to attend an induction study day where they will be introduced to the course and associated assessments. All students will have a designated tutor from the course team who will be their primary contact with the university for the duration of their course. This will be an educational Pharmacist or Pharmacy Technician who will provide academic and an independent advisor in a pastoral role for support.

Students will also be allocated a named work-based Educational Supervisor (Pharmacist or Pharmacy Technician) who will be responsible for their day to day training and support within the workplace. All workplace staff who have direct responsibility for the supervision of trainees will be required to complete induction training which will include an overview of the GPhC guidance on tutoring and supervising pharmacy professionals in training. All Educational Supervisors, clinical supervisors and workplace assessors will be required to complete an online training module for Educational and Clinical Supervisors Core Skills and sign a self-declaration that they have read and will abide by these guidelines.

Every three months, students will have a formal progress review with both their UEA tutor and Educational Supervisor. The e-portfolio will be reviewed, progress monitored, and plans agreed for the next three months. These meetings will be documented and the record uploaded to the e-portfolio.

In addition to the nine study days each year, students will be required to have the equivalent of 20% of their working week to study and complete 'off the job' learning activities. This study time may be spent, for example, completing course learning materials via the VLE, shadowing others within the workplace, learning new skills, or completing evidences for the portfolio.

Students have the opportunity and support to explore patient safety issues during the course. Regardless of sector of work, students will be required to work with the multidisciplinary healthcare team including doctors, nurses and pharmacists and will be required to provide evidence of this multidisciplinary working within their portfolios of evidence.

The provider has considered and planned for the possible impact of COVID -19 on the course delivery. Study days will be delivered online if necessary and resources are in place to allow for this.

Appendix 1 - Standing conditions

The following are standing conditions of accreditation and apply to all providers:

1. The record and report include other comments from the team and the provider/awarding body are required to take all comments into account as part of the accreditation/recognition process. The provider/awarding body must confirm to the GPhC that required amendments have been made.
2. The provider/awarding body must respond to the definitive version of the record and report within three months of receipt. The summary report, along with the provider's response, will be published on the GPhC's website for the duration of the accreditation/recognition period.
3. The provider/awarding body must seek approval from the GPhC for any substantial change (or proposed change) which is, or has the potential to be, material to the delivery of an accredited/recognised course/qualification. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. the content, structure or delivery of the accredited/recognised course/qualification;
 - b. ownership or management structure of the institution;
 - c. resources and/or funding;
 - d. trainee numbers and/or admissions policy;
 - e. changes/conditions imposed by qualification regulators;
 - f. any existing partnership, licensing or franchise agreement;
 - g. staff associated with the course.
4. The provider/awarding body must make trainees and potential trainees aware that successful completion of an accredited course or recognised qualification is not a guarantee of future employment as a pharmacy technician.
5. The provider/awarding body must make trainees and potential trainees aware of the existence and website address where they can view the GPhC's accreditation/recognition reports and the timescales for future accreditation/recognition events.

Whenever required to do so by the GPhC, providers/awarding bodies must give such information and assistance as the GPhC may reasonably require in connection with the exercise of its functions. Any information in relation to fulfilment of these

