General Pharmaceutical Council

GPhC style guide to the registration assessment 2020

Contents

Introduction

Why have we written this guide?

Passing the GPhC's Registration Assessment is a prerequisite for applying to register as a pharmacist. This guide provides information on the agreed style and format of the assessment papers and resource packs. This is to ensure consistency throughout the assessment papers and to make sure wording and formatting are aligned with current practice. It reflects the style rules that are usually followed in the registration assessment.

Who is this guide aimed at?

This guide is a primarily a reference source for the board of assessors, question writers and GPhC staff.

An evolving document

This guide is an evolving document and will be updated on a regular basis. If you come across an item or topic that isn't covered, or is not addressed in enough detail, please email education@pharmacyregulation.org.

1. Font

1.1 Typeface

- Calibri 12-point is used for all standard text
- Black text is used throughout

This type face is used throughout the question papers and resource packs. The only exception to this rule is where a signature is used. For example, on a prescription template, the prescriber's signature is presented using *Bradley Hand ICT font.*

1.2 Use of bold

Bold type face is used for:
- question numbers, for example: **5.**
- question stem, for example:
  What percentage of this child's recommended daily salt allowance is contained in the total daily dose of Gaviscon suspension?
- directions, for example: **Questions 25 and 26**
- answer options, for example: **B**
- titles of each resource in the resource pack
- titles in tables

1.3 Use of underlining

Underline is not used in the question papers or resource packs.

1.4 Use of italics

With the exception of Latin names of organisms, italic font is not used.

1.5 Use of block uppercase

Block uppercase text is used in two instances:

The first is the main titles of the question papers, resource packs and answer sheets.

The second is where the word NOT is used in a question, for example:

Which of the following is NOT related to the long-term use of proton pump inhibitors?

Occasionally, block uppercase is used when representing a dispensing label, for example:

Take one tablet TWICE a day

2. Layout

2.1 Use of bullet points

Bullet points may be used to make a list of items clearer to read, such as a list of medicines in a stem in both the question paper and resource pack. For example:

The woman is currently taking the following medication:

- aspirin 75 mg once daily
- atorvastatin 40 mg once daily
- ramipril 10 mg once daily

Bulleted lists will follow these style rules:

- the list start with a 'lead-in' line
- all items in the list will start with a lower-case letter, unless proper nouns
- all items will make sense running from the lead-in line
- commas, semi colons, 'and' or 'or' will not be used at the end of items
- full stops will not be used
- may or may not be listed in alphabetical order

The following styles of bullet point are used for primary and secondary level bullets:

- XXXXXX
    - XXXXXX
    - XXXXXX
- XXXXXX
- XXXXXX

Numbers or letters are used as bullet points only where there is a need to show listed items in a hierarchy or a specific grading or reference system.

2.2 Full stops and spacing

In a paragraph, single spacing is used after full stops.

Full stops are used after each question number.

Full stops are not used between a number and its unit, for example: 40 mg

Line spacing of 1.15 is used throughout the question paper.

Appendix 1 shows the spacing used in the part 1 and 2 papers and the resource packs.

2.3 Alignment

Text is left-justified with a ragged right edge.

2.4 Margins

Question papers and resource packs use 'Normal' margin widths:

- Top: 2.54 cm
- Bottom: 2.54 cm
- Left: 2.54 cm
- Right: 2.54 cm

2.5 Question layout

All question content is contained within a table layout. Text boxes are not used.

A table with invisible borders is used to standardise the layout. The width of the table for all questions is 16.11 cm.

Where a question contains a table capital letters are used for the first word in each cell. The text is left aligned.

Full stops are not used at the end of text in cells.

2.6 Question paper layout

The first page of the question paper provides instructions to candidates. The reverse of this page is blank so that the first question begins on the right-hand side of the question booklet.

Page numbering starts on the same page as question 1 and finishes on the same page as the final question.

The statement 'end of final question' is included after the last question.

When a blank page appears in the middle of a question paper, the page will state 'This page has been left intentionally blank'. All blank pages before the first and after the last question will contain no text.

The back page of the question booklet is blank. Additional blank pages are inserted between the final question and the end of the booklet if necessary, for pagination purposes, as the A4 booklet is produced from A3 sheets.

Part 1

For part 1, each question is presented on a separate page.

When a question takes up more than half of the page, an additional page will be inserted to include a box for rough working.

Part 2

For part 2, more than one question is presented on a page as space allows.

2.7 Question paper and resource pack paper colours

The question papers and resource packs will be printed as saddle stitched booklets.

Part 1 question papers will be printed on action mid-grey paper.

Part 2 question papers will be printed on action pale ivory paper.

Resource packs will be printed on white paper. All resources will be printed in coloured ink. The front of each resource pack will have a coloured strip around the spine, in the same colour as the related question paper.

2.8 Shading

Where a prescription extract is used, the top row of column headers will be shaded in both the question paper and resource pack. For example:

Date	Drug	Dose	Volume of infusion	Infusion rate	Prescriber signature
29/06/17	Tocilizumab	240 mg	50 mL	Over 60 minutes	A Doctor 29/06/2017

3. Style

3.1 Dates and times

The date is presented in the UK format of 'day, month, year', for example: **15 April 2017**. Numbers in dates are not followed by th or st, for example: **21 September 2018**, rather than 21st September 2018.

In a table, the format DD/MM/YY can be used. For example, within a summary care record or on an extract from a prescription.

Time is presented using the 24-hour clock, for example 13:00

3.2 Numbers

Where possible, numbers are not used at the start of a sentence. For example: **Side effects were reported by 15% of patients,** rather than: 15% of patients reported side effects.

A space is used to separate thousands (and not a comma). For example: **40 000 units** not 40,000 units. Write 1000 not 1 000

A space is used to separate numbers from units. For example, 40 mg not 40mg. The number and units must appear on the same line.

Do not use a space to separate a number from the %, <, >, ≥, or ≤ symbols. For example, 10% not 10 % and ≥10 not ≥ 10.

Courses of treatment are represented as 3-day not three day.

When stating medicine doses, the dose is represented by numbers and the number of dose units can be spelt out in words or in numbers. For example, clopidogrel 75 mg 1 tablet once daily or clopidogrel 75 mg one tablet once a day.

3.3 Units

Units are presented in the following formats:

%
% w/w
% w/v
% v/v
Accuhaler(s)
ampoule(s)
bottle(s)
box(es)
can(s)
capsule(s)
cartridge(s)
day(s)
device(s)
drops

drops/minute
g
g/kg
hour(s)
inhaler(s)
litre(s)
kilocalories
kg
kg/m^2
mg
mg/hour
mg/kg
mg/kg/day
mg/L
mg/mL
micrograms
micrograms/kg/minute
minutes
mL
mL/hour
mL/kg/hour
mL/minute
mmol
mmol/kg
mmol/kg/day
mmol/L
moles
nebules
other
pack(s)
patche(s)
patients
penfills
PhEur units
pounds
pump actuations
prefilled pens
respimat inhaler(s)
sachet(s)
syringe(s)
tablets
tests
tube(s)
Turbohaler(s)
units
vial(s)

This list is non-exhaustive.

Symbols for metric units are not pluralised. For example, 25 kg not 25 kgs.

Use micrograms not mcg or µg

3.4 Ages

Example: A 30-year-old man, a 3-month-old infant

3.5 Gender

'Man' and 'woman', or 'boy' and 'girl', not 'male' and 'female' or 'gentleman' and 'lady'

3.6 Patients

If it is necessary to refer to the patient by name (for example in a linked set of questions), a single initial is normally used and not full names, for example Mr P, not Mr Patmore. Where names are used in a paper they will start with Mr/Mrs/Child A and are listed in alphabetical order throughout a question paper.

The preference is to describe the patient by age and gender, rather than letter, and so an initial is only used when necessary for clarity.

3.7 Patients and their conditions

Outdated terms that stereotype or stigmatise are avoided when writing about disabilities, health conditions and mental illness. People should not be labelled according to their condition, by using terms such as 'the blind', 'diabetics' or 'addicts'. For example:

- visually impaired people (not blind people)
- people with learning difficulties, and people with learning disabilities (these are two different things)
- people with mental ill health
- people with diabetes. For example, a 56-year-old man who has type 2 diabetes not a 56-year-old diabetic man
- people with terminal conditions
- people with addiction or substance misuse problems

The phrase 'suffering from' (a condition) is not used, unless it is a direct quote from a patient. For example: 'A 43-year-old woman has hypertension', rather than 'A 43-year-old woman suffers from hypertension'.

Avoid unnecessary words and phrases such as 'on examination' and 'has a previous medical history of'. For example, 'a man with hypertension has a BP today of 155/100 mmHg' and not 'a man has previous medical history of hypertension and on examination he has a BP of 155/100 mmHg.

3.8 Quotation marks

Double quotation marks used in questions indicate direct speech. For example, a patient's description of an adverse effect.

3.9 Patients and their medicines

When referring to a patient taking medicine the following examples are a guide to the style of wording used:

She was taking ramipril (or any other drug), not 'she was on ramipril'

He was advised to take, not 'he was prescribed'

He was treated with, not 'he received' or 'he was started on'

Directions will either be written in full or as the Latin abbreviation. The Latin abbreviations listed in the BNF are acceptable. Full stops are not used with Latin abbreviation. For example:

bd or **twice daily**

od or **once daily**

om or **every morning**

A mix of formats will be used throughout the assessment paper. For example, twice   daily, twice a day, once a week, once weekly.

3.10 Virus names

Do not italicize a virus name when used generically or when referring to a strain (e.g. herpes simplex virus, influenza A (H1N1) virus), and do not use capital letters unless the virus name includes a proper noun (e.g. West Nile virus, Ebola virus). Italicize species, genus, and family of a virus when used in a taxonomic sense. In this case, virus names should follow the rules of orthography of the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses (ICTV). The table below summarizes how to format virus names, but refer to ictvonline.org/virusorthography.asp for a full overview of ICTV recommendations. It is usually not necessary to mention the taxonomy of a virus if it is well known.

Formatting of virus names

Note: this information comes from http://ictvonline.org/virusorthography.asp where there are further examples of formatting rules and a full taxonomy index.

Type of term	Formatting	Examples
Virus order, family, subfamily, or genus	Italics with first letter of the name capitalized	*Herpesvirales* (order) *Herpesviridae* (family) *Alphaherpesvirinae* (subfamily) *Simplexvirus* (genus)

Type of term	Formatting	Examples
Species name	Italics with the first letter of the first name capitalized. Never abbreviate species names. Exceptions: proper nouns, parts of proper nouns, or alphabetical identifiers may be capitalized even if they occur as the second word.	*Human alphaherpesvirus 1* *Mumps virus* *West Nile virus* *Influenza A virus* *Enterovirus A*
Virus strain or generic name	Not italicised and the first letter of the first word is not capitalized, unless it is a proper noun or includes alphabetical identifiers	Ebola virus herpes simplex virus influenza A (H1N1) virus

3.11   Bacteria names

When the name of a microorganism is used in binary combination, the generic name is capitalised and the specific name is all in lower case, for example: ***Staphylococcus aureus****.* When referring to an infection more generally, all lower case is used, for example: ***staphylococcal infection****.*

3.12   Medicine names

Generic or non-proprietary medicine names are used unless there is a valid reason to use a brand name.
In accordance with the BNF, international non-proprietary names (rINNs) are used where available, or, in the absence of a rINNs, British Approved Names (BANs) are used. Exceptions are adrenaline and noradrenaline where the BAN is used.

Valid reasons for using a brand name may include a clinical need to specify the brand, for example with lithium preparations, or when use of the brand name is more appropriate, for example, when a patient requests a particular product or a non-prescription product with multiple constituents. All generic names are lower case unless at the beginning of a sentence. If using a brand name, then the generic name is usually included in brackets.
Trademark signs (™) are not used.
Use full names including salts where these appear in the BNF. For example, morphine sulfate and ulipristal acetate.

3.13   Services and departments

General names of departments are not capitalised, for example: emergency department, intensive care unit, outpatient clinic, or roles of clinicians, for example: microbiologist.

A mix of emergency department, and accident and emergency will be used in the assessment papers

The outpatient clinic is used and not 'outpatients'

3.14   Other settings

Use the term 'care home' or 'care home with nursing' as appropriate, rather than residential home, nursing home, old people's home etc.

3.15   Organisations, bodies and committees

Capitals are used when referring to a specific organisation or body, but not when referring generally to a type of organisation. For example: **General Pharmaceutical Council is an independent regulator.**

3.16   Spellings

Oxford English Dictionary spellings are used.

Medical terminology is used where appropriate, for example, hypertension rather than high blood pressure.

The following spellings should be used:

> adviser (not advisor)
> ageing
> alongside (one word, no hyphen)
> although (not though)
> baseline (one word, no hyphen)
> beta-blocker
> breastfeeding (one word)
> case-control study (with an en dash)
> childcare (one word, no hyphen)
> comorbidity (no hyphen)
> contraindication (not contra-indication)
> cooperate (no hyphen)
> co-opt, co-optees
> dietitian
> pharmacy-patient interaction
> dose-effect response

dose-response study
first-line (not first line)
healthcare (not health care or health-care)
healthcare professional
homeopathy (not homoeopathy)
inpatient (no hyphen)
no one (two words, no hyphen)
premenopausal
pre-registration
preventive (not preventative)
re-administer, re-administration
regimen (not regime, for a drug or treatment regimen)
side effect (but hyphenate when used before a noun [thing], as in 'side-effect profile')

3.17 Abbreviations

Recognised abbreviations will be used throughout the registration assessment, for example NKDA, NSAID or AF. Abbreviations should not be used in a question in order to confuse candidates but when the abbreviation is likely to be used in practice in the scenario described. The use of an abbreviation in a question will be taken into consideration by the standard setting panel when it may affect a candidate's response.

Latin abbreviations such as od will be in lower case.

3.18 Symbols

Use the degree symbol in 37.5°C not superscript ^{0}

Use the symbol × not lower-case x. For example, 350 × 10^9/L

Trademark signs (™) are not used.

Question format

Part 1 – Calculations paper

The part 1 paper comprises 40 'free-text' calculation questions.

Each question in the Part 1 paper comprises a stem, a question, and a box for rough working. For example:

1.	A 6-year-old child is taking Gaviscon suspension 10 mL four times a day. Gaviscon suspension contains 3.1 mmol Na^+/5 mL.
	The recommended daily allowance (RDA) of salt for a 6-year-old child is 3 g (equivalent to 1.2 g sodium) per day.
	The atomic mass of sodium is 23.

What percentage of this child's recommended daily salt allowance is contained in the total daily dose of Gaviscon suspension? Give your answer to the nearest whole number.

You may use this space for your rough working. Transfer your answer to your answer sheet.

The box will follow after the question and will fill the remainder of the page.

Part 2 – MCQ Paper

Part 2, MCQ paper consists of 90 single best answer (SBA) questions (questions 1 to 90), and 30 extended matching questions (EMQ) (questions 91 to 120).

SBA questions

Before question 1 the following information is provided:

Directions for questions 1 to 90. Each of the questions in this section is followed by five suggested answers. Select the single best answer in each case.

Single Best Answer questions comprise of a stem, a question and 5 options (A-E). For example:

1.	A 68-year-old man has an acute attack of gout. He had a MI three years ago and has mild osteoarthritis but is otherwise well. He is taking the following medication: • aspirin 75 mg once daily • atorvastatin 40 mg once daily • ramipril 10 mg once daily • co-codamol 30/500 mg two tablets up to four times a day as required He has no known drug allergies.
	What is the most suitable drug treatment for his acute attack of gout?
A	allopurinol
B	colchicine
C	diclofenac sodium
D	etoricoxib
E	febuxostat

Usually options are provided in alphabetical or numerical order.

Multiple SBA questions may be combined to create a 'patient journey' set, or questions surrounding the same topic.

EMQ questions

Before question 91 the following information is provided:

Directions for question 91 to 120. For each question in this section select one answer from the list of eight options above it. Each option may be used once, more than once, or not at all.

Extended Matching Questions comprise of a list of 8 possible answers (A-H), directions for the question and one or more scenarios. The list of possible answers will contain a topic heading. For example:

Theme: Analgesics

A	codeine phosphate liquid
B	diclofenac sodium suppositories
C	ibuprofen liquid
D	morphine sulfate liquid
E	oxycodone hydrochloride injection
F	paracetamol tablets
G	pethidine hydrochloride injection
H	tramadol hydrochloride tablets

For the patients described, select the most suitable analgesic from the list above. Each option may be used once, more than once, or not at all.

1.	A 4-year-old boy who has no long-term medical conditions has sprained his ankle earlier in the day and is experiencing mild pain. An ice pack was used immediately after the injury and the ankle is slightly swollen. The boy is allergic to penicillin.
2.	A 66-year-old woman has chronic pain from ovarian cancer. She is taking levothyroxine sodium for hypothyroidism and solifenacin succinate for urge incontinence. She has no known allergies. She has been using co-codamol 30/500 mg tablets at the maximum recommended dose, but these are no longer controlling her pain.

Where an EMQ set does not fit on one page, the next question appears on the following page so that the questions appear in booklet style.

Question paper format

Question 1 will start on page 1 of the question booklet.

Where resource pack information is provided as a reference for a particular question, that question will have a resource pack book icon next to it accompanied by a sentence stating the particular resource that is available.

For example:

A·photograph·of·the·child's·rash·is·provided·in·your·resource·pack.·

Each question paper has a rubric on the front cover. Examples of the **part 1 rubric** and the **part 2 rubric** can be found in the pre-registration manual.

Resource pack

5.1. Format of the resource pack

- the resource pack will have a contents list on page 1, including the corresponding question number, the type of information and the page number(s)
- each separate resource will include a title with the question number it is for use with, and a description of the artefact in bold, alongside the resource pack book icon
- each new resource will start on a new page
- where BNF/BNFC content is used, text will be copied directly from the online BNF/BNFC
- SmPCs or an extract from one will be produced verbatim and will appear how they do when printed from the electronic Medicines Compendium website (emc). We will state the date we accessed the SmPC
- images will be a minimum of 5 cm x 8 cm with a resolution of minimum 250 dpi
- the resource pack will feature coloured print where appropriate
- each resource will reference the original material where possible
- **a template for the layout of the resource pack** can be found in the pre-registration manual
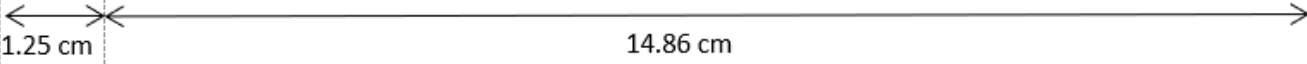
5.2. Referencing resources used

All resources used in the resource pack will be referenced where possible, using the Harvard referencing system.

Appendix

Calculation question spacing

X.

1.25 cm

14.86 cm

0.55 cm

What is the correct..........?

0.55 cm
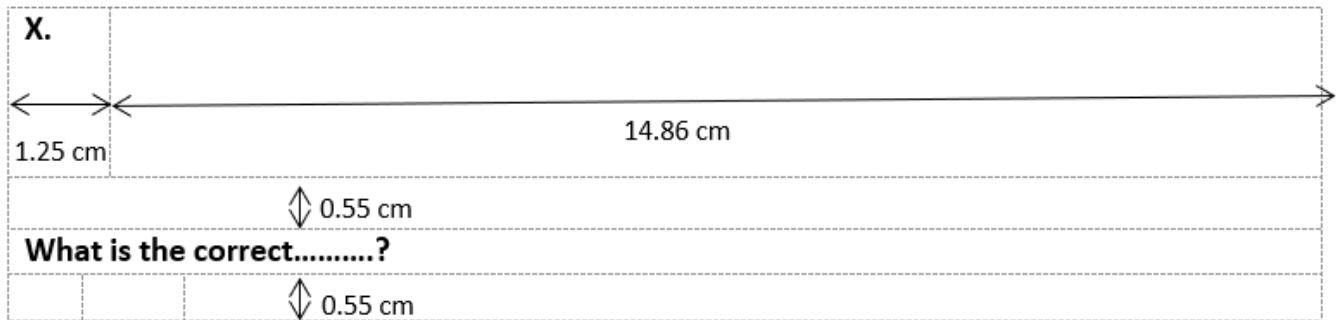
SBA question spacing

X.	A man comes into your pharmacy.
←→ 1.25 cm	←——————————— 14.86 cm ———————————→
	What is the....?
	A ↕ 0.55 cm
	B
	C
	D
	E

↕ 0.55 cm

EMQ question spacing

Theme: Prescription review

A	clinically significant interaction ⇕ 0.55 cm
B	contraindication
C	dosage too high
D	dosage too low
E	duplication of therapy
F	incorrect dosing interval
G	incorrect drug
H	incorrect strength

You are clinically reviewing prescriptions that have been collected from the local surgery for dispensing in your pharmacy. Each option may be used once, more than once, or not at all.

←————————————— 16.11 cm —————————————→

X.	
	↕ 1.10 cm
Y.	

Resource pack contents page spacing and format

For use with question(s)	Resource	Page number(s)
↑ 1.30 cm ↓	← 10.30 cm →	
← 2.69 cm →		3.50 cm ← →