

GPhC contribution to the Inclusive Pharmacy Practice Bulletin: Tackling differential attainment together

National pharmacy organisations work together within the Inclusive Pharmacy Practice (IPP) principles and framework to share and promote inclusive practice and learning for improvement with frontline pharmacy professionals. In this edition, Duncan Rudkin, GPhC Chief Executive, shares an update on differential attainment in the registration assessment.

I recently had the opportunity to update the Inclusive Pharmacy Practice Board about our work on differential attainment in the registration assessment, to hear what others are doing and to discuss how everyone in the sector can work together on this important issue. Following on from that useful discussion, I wanted to take the opportunity to share an update with others more widely as part of this edition of the IPP bulletin.

Initial education and training standards

As an important starting point, we updated our initial education and training standards for pharmacists in 2021 to include enhanced requirements relating to equality, diversity and fairness, to help combat health inequalities and discrimination.

The standards now include important learning outcomes about treating people as equals, with dignity and respect, meeting legal responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation, and respecting diversity and cultural differences. There are also important learning outcomes about taking responsibility for ensuring that personal values and beliefs do not compromise person-centred care, and considering the factors that affect people's behaviours in relation to health and wellbeing.

Alongside the learning outcomes, we also published strengthened requirements for education providers. This includes requirements that education providers build the principles of equality, diversity and fairness into selection processes and that these processes must give all applicants an opportunity to demonstrate their ability and suitability, taking into account their background (such as protected characteristics and socioeconomic and education background). There is also an important requirement for providers to identify and reduce discrimination in selection and admission processes, including analysing MPharm degree admissions by protected characteristics and taking action if the process may be disadvantaging students.

In addition, MPharm degrees must be based on, and promote, the principles of equality, diversity and fairness; meet all relevant legal requirements; and be delivered in such a way that the diverse needs of all students are met. There are also specific requirements relating to policies, systems and training; understanding student experiences and the implications for support and development; and reviewing student performance by characteristic and taking action.

What's next

Linked to our wider EDI strategy and approach, we are taking a number of actions in this context.

We are aware of differential attainment in the registration assessment and we have required action plans from a number of schools of pharmacy, whose graduates have performed poorly. In particular, we have required the schools to identify their own improvement metrics. We will be examining the action plans in more detail through our reaccreditation process.

Through our new quality assurance methodology (due for consultation in late 2023/early 2024) we will be emphasising the importance of regular data analysis to identify concerns and attainment gaps. We're also working to develop our own understanding of attainment through the stages of education and training.

Finally, a key development is the accreditation of pharmacist Foundation training by the GPhC, which is new. This will be implemented in advance of the 2025/2026 training year, when independent prescribing will be introduced. Monitoring attainment will be a key part of the process and we will report to our Council about this on an annual basis.

A collaborative approach

As highlighted by the Professional Standards Authority in its recent '[Safer Care for All](#)' report:

"There are a number of points at which inequalities can affect a professional's career as a direct or indirect result of regulation. Evidence shows different levels of academic and career attainment amongst certain groups of students, particularly women and those from ethnic minority backgrounds"

"Professional regulation and registration alone will not be able to solve the problem of inequalities. However, regulators and registers are in an influential position as they oversee professional or practitioner pathways, from training through to registration and practice".

It's therefore vitally important that we all continue to work together, and to use the different levers and influence that we have, to tackle these issues and identify targeted interventions that make a difference.

Duncan Rudkin, Chief Executive