

# Peer discussion

## A guide for employers of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians

### Introduction

This document is for someone who employs pharmacists or pharmacy technicians and wants to know more about peer discussion or how to support an employee with their peer discussion. The document gives you information about:

- the GPhC and revalidation for pharmacy professionals
- what a peer discussion is and what it is for;
- how long it takes to have a peer discussion
- what employers should and should not do to support peer discussions
- the expectations on owners in the standards for registered pharmacies

In this document we use the following words in this way:

- 'we' or 'us' means the GPhC
- 'you' means someone employing pharmacists or pharmacy technicians
- 'they' or 'them' means a pharmacy professional seeking a peer discussion

### The GPhC and revalidation for pharmacy professionals

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies in England, Scotland and Wales.

We hold a list of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are registered with us. Every year they must renew and revalidate their registration.

To revalidate pharmacy professionals must undertake and record some activities each year and then submit those records to us. One of those records is of a peer discussion.

You can **[find out more information about revalidation for pharmacy professionals](#)** in the revalidation section of our website, **[www.pharmacyregulation.org](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org)**.

## What a peer discussion is and what it is for

Peer discussion is an activity that encourages someone to engage with others in reflection on learning and practice. Research shows that having another person's view can help pharmacy professionals to reflect on their practice and can reduce the potential for professional isolation.

As an employer of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians it is important to remember the purpose of the discussion is to help a pharmacy professional reflect on their learning and practice. Peer discussions are not assessments or intended to be used as a method to manage performance. Instead, they help people learn through a supportive relationship.

A pharmacy professional must record their peer discussion in an online recording tool. You can **see the format of a peer discussion record** in the revalidation section of our website, **[www.pharmacyregulation.org](http://www.pharmacyregulation.org)**.

## How long it will take to have a peer discussion

The amount of time it takes will vary. These estimates are based on how long it took pharmacy professionals to arrange, prepare for, undertake and follow up on their peer discussion during our pilot in 2016.

Typically the peer discussion itself will last one hour, but can be shorter or longer. More time will be needed (between two and five hours) to locate a suitable peer, arrange a mutually convenient time for the peer discussion to take place, prepare for the discussion and write it up.

More than one peer discussion each year is encouraged. But only one is required and only one can be submitted to us each year.

The discussion itself can take place in person, as part of a group or over the phone or video call.

## What employers should and should not do to support peer discussions

Supportive actions could include:

- helping your employees to think of and find suitable peers, of their own choosing, both from within and outside your organisation (This might include encouraging attendance at training events or conferences, and joining local or national networks)
- planning in time for pharmacists and technicians to arrange and conduct their peer discussion each year
- encouraging pharmacists and pharmacy technicians not to write down identifiable information about patients or specific events as part of their records
- supporting pharmacists and pharmacy technicians to keep the contents of their peer discussions confidential

- encouraging and supporting training for people acting as peers such as skills for coaching and mentoring

Avoid doing these things as they can undermine the purpose of the peer discussion:

1. Do not allocate a peer to one of your employees. A pharmacy professional must choose their own peer because they must trust and respect the relationship.
2. Do not merge annual appraisal with the peer discussion. These activities serve different purposes. Appraisal is partially about performance assessment and can undermine the learning from a peer discussion.

It is of course possible for a pharmacist and pharmacy technician to choose their line manager or appraiser as their peer, but they must be able to choose freely. And an appraisal and peer discussion can take place around the same time, but they should be treated as separate activities.

### **The expectations on owners in the standards for registered pharmacies**

If as an employer, you own a registered pharmacy then our standards for registered pharmacies set out an expectation that you must empower and support pharmacists and pharmacy meet revalidation requirements. Standard 2.3 of the standards for registered pharmacies states:

Staff can comply with their own professional and legal obligations and are empowered to exercise their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public

You will be expected to show us how you meet this standard when your registered pharmacy is inspected.