Guidance for students involved in accreditation/recognition events – 2019/20

1. Introduction

1.1 In Great Britain, some professions are regulated, and some are not. Most regulators set standards for the education and training which allows you to register, become a member and/or ‘annotate’ with a specialism. Collectively these organisations are known as PSRBs – Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies.

1.2 Healthcare professions are regulated by law and the main professions each have a statutory regulator. ‘Statutory’ means that the regulator has been set by government by making a law – a statute. Probably you will have heard of some of the healthcare regulators – the General Medical Council, General Dental Council, Nursing and Midwifery Council and the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

1.3 The purpose of these regulators is to protect the public by maintaining high standards of practice in the profession, including education and training. In pharmacy, the regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians is the GPhC.

2. Education and training

2.1 The GPhC sets education and training standards for:

- Pharmacists
- Pharmacy technicians
- Pharmacist independent prescribers
- Pharmacy support staff

As well as setting standards, the GPhC checks that courses are being delivered as they should be through its quality assurance processes, which are known as ‘accreditation’ and ‘recognition’.

3. Questions and answers

What is accreditation and/or recognition?

Accreditation/recognition means that all processes around a course/qualification have been reviewed for quality assurance purposes to ensure that the course of education or training meets the relevant GPhC standards and criteria.
Who is part of the accreditation/recognition team?
The team is made up of a number of members of the GPhC's accreditation/recognition panel. Each accreditation/recognition team will include pharmacists and lay members, and depending on the course being accredited, may include pharmacy academics, pharmacy technicians, and newly qualified pharmacists (accompanied by a GPhC staff member).

What is an accreditation/recognition event?
An accreditation/recognition event is a series of meetings between a GPhC accreditation/recognition team and the course provider which takes place over one or more days, in which the course provision is reviewed to check that it meets the GPhC education and training standards.

During the event the accreditation/recognition team will meet with staff and students, and if the event is on-site, they may also view teaching facilities and equipment and observe teaching sessions.

Before the event, the course provider will have submitted documentation to the GPhC to show how their course meets the standards. This will be reviewed by the accreditation/recognition team and discussed during the event.

The accreditation/recognition team will consider all they have seen and heard to help them to make an informed view on whether the course meets standards.

Why have I been asked to take part?
As part of the process for accrediting a course, we seek views of current and/or recent students to help inform the accreditation/recognition processes and allow the accreditation/recognition team to gain an overall view of the course provision. Course providers are asked to identify volunteers from students currently on the course, or those who have recently completed the course, to take part in the event.

Do I need to attend a meeting?
If you are currently studying on an MPharm degree, an OSPAP or a Pharmacy foundation degree you will be asked to attend a meeting at the university along with your fellow students who have also volunteered.

For other courses, the meeting will usually be held by telephone via teleconference. You will be given information on how to dial in to join the meeting. In order to organise the meeting, your education provider will ask you to provide a contact phone number and email address in order for the GPhC to organise the teleconference or individual call with you.

For how long will I be needed?
For MPharm degrees and OSPAP courses where students meet as a large group the meeting may last up to an hour. For other courses, including independent prescribing courses, please allow around 30-45 minutes. For individual phone calls with the accreditation/recognition team allow 10-15 minutes.
Do I need to prepare?

Before the meeting you may wish to reflect on the course and any areas that you found to be particularly good, or areas that you feel need improvement.

What sort of questions might I be asked?

The main things an accreditation/recognition team will want to know are your general views on:

- the course
- the student experience
- whether you think the course is preparing you for practise
- teaching
- support
- facilities
- resources
- opportunities to engage with the development of the new courses
- strengths of the course
- areas for improvement

The accreditation/recognition team won’t:

- quiz you about your pharmacy knowledge
- ask you specific questions, such as your assessment results
- ask you questions about specific members of staff

Will course staff be told about my views?

After the student meeting, the accreditation/recognition team may feed back the main points to staff in summary format, such as ‘students have told us xxx, what is your view?’. Feedback will not be linked to individuals in any way.

How will my views be recorded?

What is said in the meetings is confidential and that the GPhC doesn’t make a note of who says what. You won’t be mentioned by name in the accreditation/recognition report. The report will simply state that the accreditation/recognition team met with a group of students; and depending on the course you are studying, x number of students in year 1, x in year 2 etc.

The report will provide a summary of the views of you and your fellow students, for example: ‘the majority of students that met with the accreditation/recognition team reported that they had good access to online journals’.
Can I find out the outcome of the accreditation/recognition event?
Yes. Once the accreditation/recognition process is complete, the report of the event will be available to view on our website at: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/approved-providers-education-and-training

Where can I find more information about the GPhC’s accreditation/recognition processes?
You will find more information at http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/education/approval-courses

Where can I view the GPhC’s education and training standards?
You will find these at: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/education/education-standards