

**University of Manchester Master of Pharmacy
(MPharm) degree with preparatory year -
accreditation event report, July 2021**



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	University of Manchester
Course	Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree with preparatory year
Event type	Accreditation
Event date	1 July 2021
Current accreditation period	2020/21 - 2022/23
Relevant standards	Future pharmacists Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, May 2011
Outcome	<p>The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the MPharm degree with preparatory year provided by the University of Manchester should be approved until the end of the 2022/23 academic year, at which point the provision will be reaccredited alongside the University's MPharm degree against the standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists 2021.</p> <p>Given the change to the name of the pre-registration year to foundation training, the University may wish to consider reviewing the course title of the MPharm degree with preparatory year, to ensure that the title is not misleading or confusing going forward. This is advisory at this stage, but it may be a requirement for all course providers going forward.</p>
Conditions	There were no conditions.
Standing conditions	The standing conditions of accreditation can be found here .
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 programme until 2022/23.
Key contact (provider)	Dr David Allison, Reader in Pharmacy Education; Programme Director of Pharmacy Foundation Year.
Accreditation team	Professor Antony D'Emanuele (Team Leader) Head of the Leicester School of Pharmacy, De Montfort University Professor Chris Langley (Team member - academic) Professor of Pharmacy Law & Practice and Head of the School of Pharmacy,

	<p>Aston University; Deputy Dean, College of Health and Life Sciences</p> <p>Dr Adam Todd (Team member-academic) Reader in Pharmaceutical Public Health, School of Pharmacy, Newcastle University</p> <p>Laura Doyle (Team member-pharmacist) Head of Undergraduate and Pre-reg Foundation Pharmacist, Health Education and Improvement Wales</p> <p>Christine Walker (Team member-pharmacist recently registered) Clinical Pharmacist</p> <p>Susan Bradford (Team member-lay) Adjudicator, Social Work England</p>
GPhC representative	Philippa McSimpson, Quality Assurance Manager, GPhC
Rapporteur	Professor Brian Furman (rapporteur) Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain (GB). The GPhC is responsible for setting standards and approving education and training courses which form part of the pathway towards registration for pharmacists. The GB qualification required as part of the pathway to registration as a pharmacist is a GPhC-accredited Master of Pharmacy degree course (MPharm).

This interim event was carried out in accordance with the GPhC's 2011 *MPharm Accreditation Methodology* and the course was reviewed against the GPhC's 2011 education standards *Future Pharmacists: Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists*.

The GPhC's right to check the standards of pharmacy qualifications leading to annotation and registration as a pharmacist is the *Pharmacy Order 2010* (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/231/contents/made>). It requires the GPhC to 'approve' courses by appointing 'visitors' (accreditors) to report to the GPhC's Council on the 'nature, content and quality' of education as well as 'any other matters' the Council may require.

Background

An MPharm degree with preparatory year is a single course that leads to a Master of Pharmacy award. It is recruited to separately from the accredited 4-year MPharm degree and is assigned a different UCAS code. For most schools this will be a 5-year course which includes a preparatory year followed by four further taught years that mirror that of the accredited MPharm degree. The University of Manchester programme is a 5-year course titled 'Pharmacy with a foundation year'. The preparatory year element is delivered separately to the 4-year MPharm and entry to the first year of the 4-year MPharm is contingent on students achieving a specific academic standard during the preparatory year.

An MPharm with preparatory year must meet all of the GPhC's initial education and training standards for pharmacists in all years of the course. All teaching and assessment of the learning outcomes is expected to take place in taught years 2-5, with the first taught year being set aside for foundation learning only. For the purpose of accreditation, it is assumed that the course content for the four taught years following the preparatory year will be identical for students on the MPharm degree and the MPharm degree with preparatory year.

The accreditation team will take assurance that the MPharm with preparatory year MPharm meets seven of the ten standards through its detailed review of these standards in relation to the current accredited MPharm provision. The review of the MPharm with preparatory year focuses on the following:

- Standard 1: Patient and public safety
- Standard 4: Selection of students and trainees
- Standard 6: Support and development for students and trainees

The MPharm at the University of Manchester is delivered by the Division of Pharmacy and Optometry, one of six divisions in the School of Health Sciences located in the Faculty of Biology, Medicine and Health. In 2009, as part of a widening participation programme, the University launched a Foundation Year programme for entry to the MPharm programme in formal partnership with Xaverian 6th Form College; the programme primarily targets applicants who have experienced educational and other disadvantage measured geo-demographically and by prior educational context. All students who enrol on the Foundation Year programme are registered as full time University of Manchester students. An event was arranged on July 1 2021 to accredit the Manchester MPharm with Preparatory Year programme that incorporates this established Foundation Year; the following is a report of that event.

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-event

In advance of the main event, a pre-event meeting took place via videoconference on 11 June 2021. The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the University to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the GPhC modified the structure of the event so that it could be held remotely. The event was held via videoconference between the University of Manchester and the GPhC accreditation team on 1 July 2021 and comprised meetings between the GPhC accreditation team and representatives of the MPharm with preparatory year programme. On July 2, when considering the continuing accreditation of the MPharm programme, the accreditation team met a group of MPharm students that also included students on the MPharm with Preparatory Year (Foundation Year).

Declarations of interest

Professor D'Emanuele worked at the University of Manchester between 1990 and 2006. The accreditation team agreed that this did not constitute a conflict of interest.

Schedule

1 July 2021

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
1.	Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representative	10:00 – 13:00
	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
2.	Review of MPharm with preparatory year	14:00 – 15:30
3.	Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representative	15:30 – 16:30

Attendees

Course provider

The team met with the following representatives of the University:

Name	Designation at the time of accreditation event
Allison, David	Reader in Pharmacy Education, Director, Pharmacy Foundation Year Programme
Hall, Jason	Professor of Pharmacy Education, Director, Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, School of Health Sciences, Faculty Lead, Student Fitness to Practise
Humphries, Sandra	Undergraduate Programmes Manager (Pharmacy and Optometry)
Lawrence, Jayne	Professor of Pharmacy Head, Division of Pharmacy and Optometry
Lewis, Penny	Clinical Lecturer, Lead, Admissions Pharmacy Foundation Year Programme
Skwierzynski, Ray	Head of Science, Xaverian 6th Form College

Key findings

Standard 1: Patient and public safety

Standard is met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

Noting that the University delays undertaking DBS checks until year 1 of the MPharm, the accreditation team, 'the team', wished to learn about the process that is in place for providing feedback and guidance to students regarding any health issues or convictions that they might report in their self-declaration. The course representatives (meeting 2) confirmed that no DBS checks were undertaken in the Foundation Year, these being done when students enter the MPharm, making the process no different from that used for students who enter the MPharm directly. Anything of note in the students' self-declarations, such as convictions or matters about which there is uncertainty, would be discussed with the course team and referred to the appropriate committee for guidance. Details of any positive declaration would be sought from the student, who may be brought in for interview, with the final decision depending on the nature of the declaration and the student's responses. Failure of a student to declare something at the point of undertaking the DBS would raise concerns. Any health concerns are reported to the Concern Review Panel, which may refer the student to the Disability Advisory Support Service (DASS) or to Occupational Health; the case may progress to fitness to practise procedures if necessary. The team was told that there have been no instances requiring actions across the last 12 years. Students are now told that the GPhC will conduct its own character checks prior to registration when discussing fitness to practise in the Foundation Year, where students also cover the GPhC's standards for pharmacy professionals. Students should also be aware of these matters from the website and from the admissions process, during which they

receive a talk about the standards and fitness to practise; these aspects are reinforced throughout the year.

Wishing to learn about any numeracy requirements for progression into year 1 of the MPharm, the team was told that the GCSE mathematics requirement for entry to the Foundation Year is the same as that for direct entry to the MPharm, neither programme requiring A-level mathematics. Calculations with examples relevant to pharmacy and medicine are embedded in the course; for example, the biology module incorporates calculations relating to prescribed drugs. Moreover, the Orientation to Pharmacy module includes classes in pharmaceutical calculations; these provide students with an indication of the academic requirements for pharmacy. While there is no specific numeracy assessment, similarly to A-level biology and chemistry papers, the Foundation Year examinations, which are of the same standard as A-level, incorporate at least 10% and 20% respectively of questions on calculations. 20% of the module marks are derived from formative in-course assessment, with 80% coming from the module examinations.

Wishing to know how professional standards are introduced to the students, the team was told that a pharmacy-specific, three-hour class is held every second week at the University; this class, which is an orientation to pharmacy, addresses professional behaviour and fitness to practise, with the standards for pharmacy professionals being covered in an interactive workshop. The standards are also introduced through links on the website, as well as during interview and on admission to the course, when students confirm that they will adhere to these. The pharmacy-specific classes also deal with minor ailments, addressing consultation and interaction with patients, and dispensing, which also incorporates professionalism and communication; community, hospital and industrial pharmacy are all considered. The students confirmed their early introduction to the standards and were fully aware of the GPhC's expectations concerning their behaviour.

In response to the team's wish to learn how fitness to practise procedures are applied to those undertaking the Foundation Year, the course representatives explained that any concerns about student behaviour or health are fed back from the College to the Division at the University. No such concerns have ever arisen, apart from the case of one student who was eventually excluded from the course because of very poor attendance, despite numerous attempts to encourage them to engage. Noting that the Fitness to Practise Lead at the level of the Division also holds the same responsibility at Faculty level, the team was reassured to learn that any fitness to practise cases referred from the Division would be handled by one of the other three members of the Faculty staff who deal with fitness to practise.

Standard 4: Selection of students

Standard is met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The submission stated that there are around 400 applications for the course each year, but only a small number of these applicants meet the entry requirements. In response to the team's wish to understand which aspects of the entry requirements applicants tend not to meet, the course representatives explained that many applicants do not have the appropriate academic qualifications; moreover, huge numbers fail to meet the widening participation criteria,

probably because they do not read these requirements on the website properly. The majority of students taken onto the programme must meet the widening participation criteria based on postcodes or the performances of their schools or colleges; they may be sound academically but are not accepted because of failure to meet the widening participation requirements. On the other hand, some applicants receive better grades than predicted and go elsewhere via clearing. The course representatives agreed that the information available to applicants could be reviewed, including the usability of the website, although most people think that this is quite clear.

Wishing to learn more about the process used for selecting applicants to progress to the interview stage, the team was told that the applications are scrutinised to check for the appropriate contextual data, as well as to ensure that the applicants have the correct subjects, including the correct level of GCSE English and mathematics. References and personal statements are reviewed, and where motivation is unclear applicants are asked to write a pharmacy-specific personal statement. If applicants meet all the requirements, they are invited to attend for interview on one of two interview days; a large number are invited for interview, the format of which is similar to that used for direct entry to the MPharm. Students at the top end sometimes do not need the Foundation Year and could go to another school of pharmacy. The team was told that interviews are normally held face-to-face and are accompanied by a presentation from the Foundation Year Admissions Lead that provides information about pharmacy, the GPhC standards, the University itself and student support, as well as about the course, including teaching methods; applicants' families and carers also attend and ask many questions. While applicants themselves are frequently shy, their ability to ask questions is facilitated by the participation of students who have completed the course and who act as Foundation Year ambassadors. The interview process is very similar to that used for direct entrants, because applicants are ultimately being considered for the MPharm and the interviewers are those staff members who also interview for the MPharm itself. Thus, the interview employs the same questions as those used for direct applicants to the MPharm, although with slightly fewer questions selected by the interviewers to cover motivation, knowledge of pharmacy, and ethical dilemmas, as well as applicants' strengths and weaknesses. The interviewers, who are all trained in equality, diversity and inclusion, including unconscious bias, have the UCAS forms in advance so that they can read the personal statements.

Standard 6: Support and development for students *and* trainees

Standard is met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

In response to the team's wish to know how they are assured that students undertaking the preparatory year are adequately supported by Xaverian College staff in relation to pharmacy-specific issues, the course representatives described how both academic and pastoral matters are addressed through each student having two, one-hour tutorials each semester with the personal tutor. For academic support, students can also contact any of the four staff members who teach on the programme. The College operates an open-door policy and, in normal times, it is very easy for students to speak to members of the science staff, who are all very close together on the same floor. Because of the pandemic, all conversations are currently online via MS Teams or e-mail. The team was told that students are provided with all notes and Powerpoint presentations, as well as a range of other materials online, and free textbooks are provided at the beginning of the course; because of the pandemic, notes were hand delivered

during the semester to those students who were unable to print them. There are regular, interactive, online assessments using multiple choice questions via Microsoft Forms, where students can see the answers along with feedback; there appears to be a positive correlation between the number of these tests completed by students and their success. The whole course builds from GCSE, making no assumptions about students' backgrounds. The students confirmed that they received extensive support from the staff both in the College and at the University; one-to-one support was available from their tutor. They told the team that classes at the University every two weeks familiarised them with pharmacy and they felt well prepared for progression to the MPharm, with everybody being brought to the same level in chemistry and biology; peer support on the MPharm was provided by others who had also joined through the Foundation Year.

Where required, students can be signposted to counselling services either at the College or at the University. Students on the Foundation Year are full-time University of Manchester students with 95% of the programme being delivered at the College but with the University having overall responsibility for their development and progress. The students have informal conversations with the Director of the Foundation Year programme ahead of classes and, if there are any issues, students can e-mail the Director directly or come to see him in person, as the College is only a short distance from the University. The Director operates an open-door policy and students may also contact the Foundation Year Administrator, as well as the Faculty's Director of Undergraduate Teaching and Learning, who provides much of the pharmacy-specific teaching. During the pandemic, the University was very thorough in coordinating with the College, with the three foundation programmes working very closely together, sharing advice, support services, and a hardship fund, to ensure that arrangements were appropriate for Foundation Year students. The Director of the programme informs students of the support that is available and there is a handbook that covers all services for students, including medical, counselling, and chaplaincy services. It is acknowledged that the Foundation Year cohort comprises a very diverse group of students, where a large range of support can be needed; the programme always receives positive feedback from students for the support that is provided.

The College keeps accurate attendance records and provides weekly attendance reports to the University. A minimum of 80% attendance is required and warning e-mails are sent out if attendance is low or is declining, as there may be background issues; in most cases, support can be identified to restore attendance.

In response to the team's wish to learn about how the College managed support for the students during the pandemic, and about any additional support and training for College staff in addressing student wellbeing issues, the course representatives explained that the University always shared information with students, working closely with other Foundation Year programmes in the Faculty. Students received e-mails to see if they needed more explanation. During the lockdown, members of staff were not onsite at the College, so the development of blended learning was essential, and staff received a week of intensive training on MS Teams. They also received health and wellbeing training using Educare programmes, and specialist staff provided training in mental health issues; University services were also used. There was a return to face-to-face teaching between September and December, when a blended approach was adopted. The University ensured that Foundation Year students received the assessment pledge used across the whole institution; thus, if students had health issues, they did not need to

provide medical evidence for extenuating circumstances, and coursework submission deadlines were extended by one to two weeks.

Wishing to know the involvement of the University in developing alternative assessment methods during the pandemic, and how it was ensured that students met the requirements to progress into year 1 of the MPharm, the team was told that formal assessments for all Foundation Year programmes are almost entirely undertaken through the College; the College changed to online assessments for all its Foundation Year courses with changes being discussed and shared with the University and with the teaching, learning and assessment staff. Students were given practice papers and were well prepared for the final examinations. It was ensured that the online assessment process was secure and fair and that there could be no collusion, while trying to maintain the same standard and spread of marks. End of semester examinations normally comprise a two-hour paper in each unit and this was maintained, using 50% multiple completion questions, as employed in A-level chemistry; MS teams allowed the order of questions to be shuffled and papers were modified, as students could search online for past examples. The assessments were time limited, and students were monitored to see how long they took; there was coordination with the disability service to provide extra time where needed. Some technical difficulties occurred and these were taken into consideration. The process worked well with both Pharmacy and Bioscience, and the assessment team agreed that the system was robust, this being endorsed by the external examiners; marks at the Examination Boards were very similar to those obtained in previous years, and students' performances were in line with predictions. In-semester tests adopted a similar approach, using MCQs with a shuffled question order. Coursework in biology required students to search abstracts to find information on drug metabolism; plagiarism software was employed effectively, although students had needed more help, for example, in learning how to search abstracts.

In response to the team's wish to know how the student voice was heard during the pandemic, the course representatives explained that most pharmacy students were present from September to December and the Head of Science, who acts as the students' personal tutor, offered one-to-one tutorials as usual. While the use of student representatives has been tried when the size of the student cohort increased from the normal 12-14, this was not as effective as the Head of Science collecting information from all students and passing it on to the University; the effectiveness of this approach was exemplified by the change of a member of staff during the course as a result of student feedback. As well as information gathered during tutorials, end-of-course reviews are employed to obtain feedback on the programme. During the lockdown, communication was by e-mail and tutorials continued online using MS Teams and Zoom sessions. As the cohort is small, the University regards the Foundation Year students as an extended family, facilitating productive, informal discussions which are more valuable than using a formal SSLC. The Head of Science at the College works well with the Director of the programme at the University and sends regular reports to the University's Senior Management Team; these reports include feedback from students and their statements on the quality of teaching. The College Principal sometimes meets students from across the College. The students confirmed the responsiveness of the College to feedback on the course provided by student representatives. The team was told that key themes arising from student feedback during 2019-20 and 2020-21 were hardship issues relating to availability of wi-fi, laptops, and study space. The University offered help through its hardship fund, as well as providing quiet study areas by

making better use of space. Students were given both generic and specific advice, while being reassured that they would not be disadvantaged as a result of the pandemic. Very few other issues were raised and once initial technical issues relating to online delivery and assessment had been resolved, few problems recurred and student feedback was positive. Minor matters such as students wanting recording of online practical demonstrations and a problem concerned with a separate practical examination paper were all addressed.

Wishing to know what mechanisms are in place to monitor students who progress to the MPharm from the Foundation Year and identify those who may be struggling, the team was told that all Foundation Year students are tracked through to completion. In the early days of the Foundation Year, it was found that those BTEC students who had no science background failed and such students are no longer accepted onto the programme. When students are allocated their academic advisers, they are coded so that staff members are aware of those who have progressed from the Foundation Year; however, advisers do not single them out for special attention. The team was told that those students coming from the Foundation Year form a coherent group and support each other throughout the course, with some doing very well.

The team noted that around 30% of students undertaking the MPharm with Foundation Year do not achieve a Manchester MPharm, this was due to either not achieving the requirements to progress to the MPharm, failing to achieve on the MPharm or transferring to an MPharm at another institution after completing their preparatory year. The team wishes to understand more about the characteristics of that group of students who did not achieve and was told that some of the students in the data set were repeated a year without attendance and would graduate this year, and so the numbers achieving an MPharm will actually be higher than is apparent from the data. The data have been analysed to determine if there is a commonality among those who fail, for example, whether this relates to qualifications on entry such as BTEC versus A-level or to having non-science A-level, or if those who fail are the students who barely achieve the minimum requirement of 24 points in the College examinations; however, there is no clear pattern. Some students have not failed outright but have been awarded a BSc rather than an MPharm. It was emphasised to the team that the Foundation Year provides an open door to students from a disadvantaged background who would not otherwise have had the opportunity to undertake a pharmacy degree.

The team noted from the submission that those students who do not meet the progression requirements to enter year 1 of the MPharm leave with nothing, and wished to learn about the support or guidance that is offered to such students in relation to alternative pathways that they could consider. Confirming that there is no exit award, the course representatives explained that it is made very clear from the beginning, for example from the website and at open days, as well as throughout the course, that the Foundation Year is a stand-alone year, which provides a large academic hurdle to be overcome in order to progress to the MPharm, and that such progression is not automatic unless they achieve the minimum marks required. Some students use the Foundation Year as a stepping stone to transfer to other University of Manchester programmes or to MPharm programmes or other courses at other universities. When students have completed their examinations at the end of semester 1, those who are likely struggle are identified and discussions are held with them on their realistic chances of progression to the MPharm and whether they should consider other courses. The College has an excellent careers department that can offer advice. When students obtain their final results those who have not

done well are referred to the careers department, with UCAS references provided by the Head of Science.

