

## **Open Awards pharmacy technician qualification recognition event report – November 2019**



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## Event summary and conclusions

<b>Awarding organisation</b>	Open Awards
<b>Course</b>	Pharmacy technician qualification
<b>Event type</b>	Recognition
<b>Event date</b>	5 November 2019
<b>Recognition period</b>	January 2020 – January 2026
<b>Outcome</b>	<p>Approval with conditions</p> <p>The recognition team has agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that Open Awards should be recognised to deliver the L3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians (Qualification) for a period of six years with an interim visit in three years subject to one condition.</p>
<b>Conditions</b>	<p>The team recognised that in respect of the qualification delivery, substantive material will need to be developed by the centre providers. The team therefore requested a report on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of qualification support materials,</li> <li>• development of centre resource requirements,</li> <li>• development of assessment strategies,</li> <li>• development of indicative content,</li> </ul> <p>The GPhC must be sent a report responding to the above by no later than the end of December 2020. This is to meet criterion 5.1.</p>
<b>Standing conditions</b>	Please refer to Appendix 1
<b>Recommendations</b>	No recommendations were made
<b>Registrar decision</b>	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the recognition team's recommendation and approved the recognition of the qualification for a period of six years with an interim visit in three years subject to meeting one condition as described.
<b>Key contact (awarding organisation)</b>	Nina Hinton, Head of Business and Development
<b>Recognition team</b>	<p>Barbara Wensworth, team leader, Freelance Pharmacy Lecturer, Standards Verifier, assessor and writer</p> <p>Gail Holmes, Pharmacy Programmes Manager, Bradford College</p>

	Laura McEwen-Smith, Strategic Project Lead, Pharmacy and Primary Care Development, Health Education England Susan Bradford, lay member, Adjudicator, Social Work England, Solicitor (non-practising)
<b>GPhC representative</b>	Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Ian Marshall, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde; Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services)

## Introduction

### Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales (the countries of Great Britain). In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be registered with the GPhC and have satisfied us that they meet our detailed requirements. If you are a training provider or awarding body, you will need to follow the process set out **Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017** to have your pharmacy technician competency and knowledge-based course/qualification approved by us.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the recognition of pharmacy education are legislated in the Pharmacy Order 2010. For more information, visit:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/231/contents/made>

### Background

Open Awards approached the GPhC with an application for recognition of a qualification to train pharmacy technicians. Open Awards has worked as part of a group of awarding organisations, facilitated by Skills for Health, and supported by Health Education England, throughout the development of this qualification. The development process included working closely with pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to design the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and indicative content, underpinned by an external consultation. A recognition event (Stage 1) relating to the GPhC learning outcomes was held on 11 April 2019. In line with the GPhC's standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians October 2017 (integrated knowledge and competency), a further event (Stage 2) was scheduled for 5 November 2019 to review the Open Awards qualification's suitability for recognition; this event concentrated on the fulfilment of the GPhC accreditation and recognition standards and criteria and the awarding organisation's ability to deliver the qualification through their centre providers. In line with the GPhC's methodology for recognising awarding organisations delivering pharmacy technician qualifications, the event was held on site at the provider's head office to allow for the GPhC's recognition team to view the resources available.

## Documentation

Prior to the event, the awarding organisation submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales. The documentation was reviewed by the recognition team and it was deemed to be satisfactory to provide a basis for discussion.

## Pre-visit

In advance of the main event, a pre-visit meeting took place via teleconference on 29 October 2020. The purpose of the pre-visit meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the awarding organisation to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

## The event

The event was held onsite at the Open Awards head office on 5 November 2019 and comprised a number of meetings between the GPhC recognition team and representatives of Open Awards awarding organisation in relation to the pharmacy technician programme.

## Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## Schedule

### The event

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
<b>5 November 2019</b>		
1.	Private meeting of recognition team and GPhC representative	09:00 – 11:45
2.	Recognition team meet with programme representatives	12:00 – 13:30
3.	Private meeting of recognition team	14:15 – 15:30
4.	Extra meeting to discuss outstanding issues	15:30 – 15:35
5.	Private meeting of recognition team	15:35 – 15:45
6.	Feedback to the programme representatives	15:45 – 16:00

## Key findings - Part 1: learning outcomes

During the Stage 1 event referred to above, the team reviewed all 53 learning outcomes relating to the pharmacy technician qualification. The report to the Stage 1 event can be [found here](#).

To gain additional assurance, the team will test a sample of learning outcomes during the interim event with the awarding organisation when the qualification is operational.

A detailed list of learning outcomes can be found in the [Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017](#)

## Key findings - Part 2: Standards for the initial education and training

### Standard 1: Selection and entry requirements

**The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to the selection and entry requirements will be met**

The documentation submitted explained that entry requirements for this qualification are included within the Qualification Guide/Specification to ensure consistency across all OA training providers approved to deliver the qualification. This will include both previous qualifications and experience, and the appropriate characteristics, attitudes and qualities necessary to act professionally, provide person-centred care and prioritise patient safety. There is a requirement to submit a delivery and assessment plan to include plans for induction, training and entry requirement checks. This will be used to check that the provider has procedures in place to ensure their selection processes, prior to enrolment, are fair, legal and that they identify suitable applicants who will be fit to practise as trainees. Training providers are normally required to register their learners within 60 days of the start date of their course (for long courses). However, due to the nature of this qualification, this will be reduced to six weeks (30 working days). The application of a centre's policy around selection and enrolment will be quality assured as part of their annual quality compliance activity. This will include Information given to the learner before they are enrolled about entry requirements, evidence of the application of any initial assessments or screening activities, and that learner/centre agreements are in place. Annual quality compliance activities include interviewing learners to get their feedback on their experience of the training delivery. This will include questions on the enrolment procedures and initial screening/assessment to ensure that each centre is following their written procedures in practice. Prior qualifications would include as a minimum GCSE English and Maths at Grade C (or equivalent). It is also recommended that learners have a Level

2 Science qualification (e.g. GCSE Science at Grade C); or a Level 2 vocational qualification at level 2 or above (preferably related to pharmacy); or that an action plan be put in place to support the learner up-skilling to meet the demands of the science elements of this qualification. Additional mandatory entry requirements will include good character checks, and health checks to seek information about conditions that may affect an applicant's fitness to practise as a trainee and how any such conditions will be managed. The entry requirements include that learners must have secured a placement as a trainee in a pharmacy environment and be registered for a course recognised or accredited by the GPhC within three months of commencing their contracted role as a trainee, be supervised by a pharmacy professional, be given tasks within their area of competence as a trainee, and be given tasks that allow them to develop and evidence the knowledge, skills and behaviour within the qualification specification. If a centre fails to complete these entry requirement checks fully, this would potentially lead to an amendment to their risk rating, increased monitoring or sanctions.

### Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

**The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to the equality, diversity and inclusion will be met**

The documentation stated that all Open Awards staff members complete mandatory training on equality and diversity policies to ensure this is implemented throughout all policies and procedures. The awarding body has experience of working, through its training providers, with learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, and ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made to ensure accessibility for all, including learners with mental health difficulties; childcare or other caring responsibilities; and those with disabilities. The organisation will review achievement rate against relevant demographic factors to feed into improvements relating to course design, delivery and learner experience. There is a Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy in place, although learning outcomes cannot be modified through a reasonable adjustment; that is, all learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met fully before a qualification can be awarded. This is assured through external verification and moderation activities. The centre approval process requires training providers to submit a copy of their own Reasonable Adjustments and Special Consideration policies/procedures for review.

### Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity

**The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to management, resources and capacity will be met**

Within the management team overall responsibility lies with the Chief Executive, who is also the Responsible Officer for Ofqual-regulated qualifications. The Business and Development team is led by a Head reporting into the Chief Executive Officer. Day-to-day responsibility for the management of the qualification and its ongoing validity sits with the Product Development Manager. The Quality Assurance team is led by the Head of Quality and Standards, reporting into the Chief Executive Officer. The awarding body has recruited recently a subject specialist External Quality Assurer to lead this piece of work, who will be supported by an existing team of Lead Quality Reviewers. In addition, there is a Customer Service team with responsibility for supporting approved providers with the registration of learners, and the claim of awards. There is a Risk Registers & Business Continuity Plan which is managed by the

CEO & overseen by the Board of Trustees. Risks are assessed by the management team and an appropriate pool of people performing operational activity, allowing examination of risk from a number of perspectives. Approved training providers responsible for delivering and assessing the qualification are subject to a Centre Recognition process which ensures that each centre has the infrastructure and governance arrangements to manage the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the qualification. Training providers are required to sign a Centre Agreement before they are approved to deliver qualifications, including a clear break-down of roles and responsibilities between Open Awards as the awarding body, and the approved training provider. The approved training providers will be responsible for ensuring that roles and responsibilities of the key stakeholders involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification are clear and documented, including the assurance that there are learning agreements in place between the training provider, the employer and the learner. Open Awards has an Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures in place to review complaints from learners once they have gone through their training providers' procedure for complaints and appeals.

The documentation explained that Open Awards has worked as part of a group of awarding organisations, facilitated by Skills for Health, and supported by Health Education England, throughout the development of this qualification. The development process included working closely with pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to design the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and indicative content, underpinned by an external consultation. Open Awards is committed to continue working closely with the group of awarding organisations throughout the life-cycle of this qualification and will be entering into a Memorandum of Understanding to formalise this arrangement. The group of awarding organisations agreed the assessment strategy to include minimum requirements for staff involved in the delivery and assessment of the qualification. Thus, assessors, internal quality assurers and expert witnesses, along with external quality assurers must be pharmacists or pharmacy technicians who are occupationally competent in the area of practice to which the unit being assessed applies. Where more than one assessor is involved in the qualification there must be a named assessor who is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the assessment for each candidate, including integrating, planning and directing the assessment for the whole qualification. External quality assurers will monitor the centre's processes and practice to ensure they meet the awarding organisation, qualification and regulatory requirements. Monitoring a learner's progress will be the responsibility of the training provider and employer, and will be included in their Learning Agreement.

#### **Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation**

##### **The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to the monitoring, review and evaluation will be met**

The quality assurance strategy is managed by the Head of Quality and Standards, reporting into the Chief Executive Officer. Open Awards is, in turn, regulated by Ofqual for its qualifications and complies with the General Conditions of Recognition. The documentation stated that Open Awards works closely with each approved centre to ensure that appropriate quality assurance systems are in place and followed. A centre's processes and practices are monitored to ensure they meet all Open Awards, qualification-specific and regulatory requirements. Centre staff members are supported on assessment and quality assurance issues with advice and guidance.

Open Awards will work closely with all training providers delivering the qualification to stay up to date with any changes in practice, legislation, best practice and regulatory requirement. Each centre is allocated a lead quality reviewer who has overarching responsibility for ensuring the centre's ongoing compliance through their quality assurance policies and practices, along with an external quality assurer. The level of external quality assurance intervention a centre receives is determined by the centre's quality risk rating. As this a new qualification for Open Awards, all approved training providers will be rated as high risk for at least the first year to ensure that the new qualification is monitored effectively. Each new centre is subject to approval criteria including a review of policies rather than delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance practices. An annual quality assurance review will provide Open Awards with an up-to-date record of specific areas of compliance with the centre agreement. Where a training provider is giving cause for concern, additional visits by the lead quality reviewer may be deemed necessary, and the provider's risk rating may be increased. In cases where a training provider is giving serious cause for concern, or actions are not completed within agreed timescales, sanctions may be imposed on the provider or on a named individual at the training provider in line with the Open Awards Sanctions Policy. All approved training providers are allowed to offer specific Open Awards qualifications based on their track record, availability of resources to support assessment, competence of delivery and assessment staff and the rigour of systems and procedures in place. The process of external verification is to ensure that assessments meet nationally agreed standards by reviewing whether assessment decisions made by assessors and the checks carried out by the internal quality assurer are valid. Open Awards runs a calendar of standardisation events which are half day events held across the UK. As well as being responsible for arranging their own internal standardisation events, all approved training providers are required to participate in external standardisation. Where a training provider has demonstrated appropriate internal quality systems in delivering Open Awards qualifications over a period of time, and whose internal quality assurers meet minimum requirements for the role, named individuals may apply to be an authorised internal verifier who is authorised to verify assessment decisions and directly claim credit certificates for learners from Open Awards. It is a requirement for all Open Awards training centres to provide regular and full feedback to their learners/trainees and to provide evidence of this in a learner's portfolio. Portfolios are checked through external verification and moderation activities and feedback provided to training providers on the quantity and quality of feedback to learners. In addition, as part of the annual compliance activities, Open Awards speaks to learners directly to get feedback about their experience.

### Standard 5: Course design and delivery

**The team was satisfied that nine of the ten criteria relating to the course design and delivery will be met with one criterion subject to a condition.**

The documentation explained that Open Awards has worked closely with Skills for Health, Health Education England, other awarding organisations, and industry experts in the development of the qualification to bring together knowledge, competence and work experience; this involved a public consultation, facilitated by Skills for Health, to collate wider feedback from external stakeholders. The learning outcomes and the assessment criteria include a balance of knowledge-based and competency-based learning outcomes. All 21 units are mandatory and it will be the responsibility of the training providers to design their own teaching

and learning plan. This will be checked and reviewed, and Open Awards will complete pre-verification activities to ensure this is the case. To ensure that work experience is embedded throughout the programme, it is a requirement that learners have a suitable role in a pharmacy setting to be able to complete the competency-based learning outcomes fully and with the correct supervision. Open Awards collects and collates feedback relating to the delivery and assessment, including undertaking feedback surveys to capture feedback from subject experts. In addition, it is a requirement of the training provider to engage with pharmacy professionals and collate feedback throughout the delivery and assessment of the qualification, including feedback from patients where appropriate. Learners will be given maximum of four weeks to complete each assignment. If the learner does not pass the assignment on the first attempt, they will be given a maximum of two further opportunities to re-take the assessment criteria that they failed on the first attempt. The internal reporting procedure includes categories for errors or incidents that are reportable to regulators and external quality assurers to ensure that all staff members are clear on how to escalate these incidents if they occur. The team recognised that the programmes to deliver the qualification are not running currently. The team considered that in respect of the qualification delivery, substantive material will need to be developed by the centre providers. Accordingly, it will be a **condition of recognition** of the qualification that Open Awards provide a report on the following: development of qualification support materials, development of centre resource requirements, development of assessment strategies, and development of indicative content. The GPhC must be sent a report responding to the above by no later than the end of December 2020.

#### Standard 6: Course assessment

##### **The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course assessment will be met**

The documentation explained that assessment principles have been developed in partnership with Skills for Health, Health Education England and a group of other awarding bodies. Each training provider must comply with these principles in their individual teaching and learning strategies, including ensuring they have clear marking criteria in place. This will be quality assured by pre-verification activities. Assessors, internal quality assurers and expert witnesses, along with external quality assurers must be pharmacists or pharmacy technicians who are occupationally competent in the area of practice to which the unit being assessed applies. The primary method of assessment for the skills-based units is observation in the workplace by the assessor. Across the qualification's skills-based units there must be at least three observations which cover the required skills. Evidence should be generated over a period of time to show consistent performance. Expert witness testimony may be used where it is difficult for an assessor to observe aspects of practice. Learners will be expected to achieve all learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Where learners are not able to achieve the skills-based learning outcomes in their usual place of employment, the training provider and employer must ensure that the learner is given opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes in a work placement or another suitable setting; this may include simulation. For knowledge-based units, evidence will be assessed using internally set, internally marked written assignments. Monitoring a learner's progress will be the responsibility of the training provider and employer, and will be included in their Learning Agreement. All training providers must have clear systems in place for providing feedback to learners, including feedback on their overall progress as well as feedback for individual assessments and tasks. The expectations in relation to health and

safety include the requirement for risk assessments to cover risks to patients and the public. Providers will be required to have stakeholder agreements in place to cover training provider, employer, and learner, including a breakdown of individual roles and responsibilities to ensure that employers are clear on the expectations around supervision and providing feedback to trainees.

### **Standard 7: Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience**

#### **The team was satisfied all seven criteria relating to the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and learning will be met**

Each training provider is required to have a Student Support Policy including details of information, advice and guidance, induction, supervision, personal and academic support, assessment deadlines and timescales, resits, and expectations around behaviour and professionalism. Open Awards requires formal agreements between the course provider and the employer to ensure that both parties are clear on their role/responsibilities; and are aware of what support they are required to provide to the trainee. This includes the requirement for trainees to have the opportunity to interact regularly with workplace colleagues to support their development. Open Awards has an enquiries, complaints and appeals policy and procedures in place. Providers must also have internal enquires, complaints and appeals arrangements which learners can access if they wish to appeal against a decision taken by the provider. Complaints are only accepted from learners once they have gone through their training providers' procedure for complaints and appeals to ensure that the training provider has the opportunity to fulfil its own policy and procedure before it is escalated.

## Appendix 1 - Standing conditions

The following are standing conditions of recognition and apply to all awarding organisations:

1. The record and report include other comments from the team and the provider/awarding body are required to take all comments into account as part of the accreditation/recognition process. The provider/awarding body must confirm to the GPhC that required amendments have been made.
2. The provider/awarding body must respond to the definitive version of the record and report within three months of receipt. The summary report, along with the provider's response, will be published on the GPhC's website for the duration of the accreditation/recognition period.
3. The provider/awarding body must seek approval from the GPhC for any substantial change (or proposed change) which is, or has the potential to be, material to the delivery of an accredited/recognised course/qualification. This includes, but is not limited to:
  - a. the content, structure or delivery of the accredited/recognised course/qualification;
  - b. ownership or management structure of the institution;
  - c. resources and/or funding;
  - d. trainee numbers and/or admissions policy;
  - e. changes/conditions imposed by qualification regulators;
  - f. any existing partnership, licensing or franchise agreement;
  - g. staff associated with the course.
4. The provider/awarding body must make trainees and potential trainees aware that successful completion of an accredited course or recognised qualification is not a guarantee of future employment as a pharmacy technician.
5. The provider/awarding body must make trainees and potential trainees aware of the existence and website address where they can view the GPhC's accreditation/recognition reports and the timescales for future accreditation/recognition events.
6. Whenever required to do so by the GPhC, providers/awarding bodies must give such information and assistance as the GPhC may reasonably require in connection with the exercise of its functions. Any information in relation to fulfilment of these standing conditions must be provided in a proactive and timely manner.



