

**Open Awards pharmacy support staff  
qualification(s) interim event report, July 2023**



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## Event summary and conclusions

<b>Awarding organisation</b>	Open Awards
<b>Qualification</b>	Support staff qualification(s)
<b>Names of qualifications</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (Apprenticeship Route) (RQF)</li> <li>• Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (RQF)</li> <li>• Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in Principles and Practices for Pharmaceutical Technical Support Services (RQF)</li> </ul>
<b>Event type</b>	Interim
<b>Event date</b>	18 July 2023
<b>Approval period</b>	February 2021 – February 2027
<b>Relevant requirements</b>	<a href="#">Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020</a>
<b>Framework used</b>	Apprenticeship Framework (England) and National Occupational Standards
<b>Outcome</b>	<p>Continued recognition</p> <p>The accreditation/recognition team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the support staff qualifications provided by Open Awards should continue to be recognised for the remainder of the recognition period, subject to one condition.</p>
<b>Conditions</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Open Awards must develop and implement a process to ensure that centre providers use equality and diversity data while designing and delivering courses. This is to ensure that centre providers policies and procedures are fair and do not discriminate against trainees or applicants, and may include analysis of the data to identify themes, trends, and actions based on protected characteristics. This must be monitored in a meaningful way by Open Awards. This is because although the team could see evidence that Open Awards encourage centre providers to collect equality and diversity data, it was unclear how that data was used by centre providers, and monitored by Open Awards, to ensure it was being utilised in delivery of the qualification. This is to meet criteria 1a and 5d.</li> </ol>

	Evidence of how the condition has been addressed must be sent to the GPhC, for approval by the recognition team. This must be done by 19 September 2023.
<b>Standing conditions</b>	A link to the standing conditions can be <b><u>found here</u></b> .
<b>Recommendations</b>	No recommendations were made.
<b>Registrar decision</b>	<p>The Registrar is satisfied that Open Awards has met the requirement of continued approval in accordance with Part 5 article 42 paragraph 4(a)(b) of the Pharmacy Order 2010, in line with the Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff October 2020.</p> <p>The Registrar confirms that Open Awards is approved to continue to offer the Support Staff qualifications for the remainder of the recognition period. The Registrar notes that the condition as outlined in the report has been met.</p>
<b>Key contact (provider)</b>	Nina Hinton, Director of Business and Development
<b>Awarding organisation representatives</b>	<p>Nina Hinton, Director of Business and Development, Open Awards</p> <p>Richard Spencer, Director of Quality and Standards, Open Awards</p> <p>Robin Jackson, Director of Assessment Services, Open Awards</p> <p>Helen Abbott, External Quality Assurer, Open Awards</p> <p>Dean Moriarty, External Quality Assurer, Open Awards</p> <p>Avinash Malhi, Head of Centre, Inspire Middlesex (centre provider)</p> <p>Satvinder Mahal, pharmacist, lead tutor, Inspire Middlesex (centre provider)</p>
<b>Recognition team</b>	<p>Rebecca Chamberlain (Team Leader - pharmacy technician), Training Pharmacy Technician Independent Consultant</p> <p>Sheetal Jogia (team member - pharmacy technician), Head of Education and Training at Bart's Health Pharmaceuticals (BHP), Bart's Health NHS Trust</p> <p>Joanne Bye (team member - pharmacy technician), Principal Pharmacy Technician, Suffolk and North East Essex Integrated Care Board (SNEEICB)</p> <p>Fiona Barber (team member - lay), Deputy Chair &amp; Independent Lay member, East Leicestershire &amp; Rutland CC</p>
<b>GPhC representative</b>	Rakesh Bhundia. Quality Assurance Officer (Education), General Pharmaceutical Council

**Rapporteur**

Ian Marshall, Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services); 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 is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain. The approval process is based on the Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020.

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

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

### Purpose of this event

The purpose of the interim event is to review the performance of the qualification against the education and training of pharmacy technicians to ensure that delivery is consistent with the GPhC education standards. The interim event utilises trainee feedback and evaluation together with a review of documentation and a meeting with the awarding organisation representatives and relevant stakeholders.

### 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 by videoconference on 10 July 2023. The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the provider to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

### The event

The event began with a private meeting of the recognition team and GPhC representatives on 17 July 2023. The remainder of the event took place by videoconference on 18 July 2023 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff involved in the design of the qualifications.

### Declarations of interest

Rebecca Chamberlain declared that she had worked with Skills4pharmacy, one of Open Awards' centre training providers.

## Schedule

### Day 0

**13.30-16.00** Private meeting of the recognition team and GPhC representative

### Day 1

09.00-09.15 Private meeting of the recognition team and GPhC representative

**09.15-11.15 Recognition panel meet with awarding organisation representatives**

**11.30-12.30 Meeting with sample of centre providers and their associated IQA representatives**

**13.30-14.00 Meeting on internal and external quality assurance of the course**

**14.15-14.45 Meeting to discuss apprenticeship structure**

14.45-16.45 Private meeting of the accreditation team

**16.45- 17.00 Deliver outcome to provider**

## Key findings - Part 1 - Outcomes for all support staff

The outcomes were not reviewed at this interim event

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

### Criteria 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that two of the three criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion continue to be met with one criterion subject to a condition.**

The submission stated that External Quality Assurance (EQA) reviews annually equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) policies, including checks that EDI is embedded into assessment and course delivery. Open Awards requires each centre provider to review their own data to implement improvement. The team was told that EQA checks learner handbooks, guidance, and teaching materials for the inclusion of EDI. Learners are asked about EDI matters which are covered in the early teaching, including issues of behaviour and respect. The team learned that Open Awards requires each centre provider to review their own data to implement improvement. EQA monitors this, including reviewing evidence that the centre has analysed the data and identified any necessary actions. The team was told, and observed itself, that such reviews have been inconsistent across providers. The EQA interviewed agreed that such EDI data was acted upon by providers, but not in a systematic way, and that a similar conclusion had been reached at a recent Ofsted review. This was stated to be part of an improvement plan in which Open Awards may need to be clearer on the use of such data.

Open Awards has recently recruited a full-time data analyst to enhance its data monitoring and evaluation. This role has created visual dashboards to allow a review of demographic data. In addition, a new pharmacy quality assurer (see commentary to Standard 5 below) will review progression data in real time with all providers on a demographic basis, with a view to influencing course design and providing a timely analysis of EDI data. A report based on Student and Patient Voice includes a review of the demographic data (gender, age, ethnicity, ability status). However, the team agreed that it be a **condition** that Open Awards must develop and implement a process to ensure that centre providers use equality and diversity data while designing and delivering courses. This is to ensure that centre providers' policies and procedures are fair and do not discriminate against trainees or applicants, and may include analysis of the data to identify themes, trends, and actions based on protected characteristics. This must be monitored in a meaningful way by Open Awards. This is because although the team could see evidence that Open Awards encourages centre providers to collect equality and diversity data, it was unclear how that data was used by centre providers, and monitored by Open Awards, to ensure it was being utilised in delivery of the qualification. This is to meet criterion 1a.

The documentation stated that since the last GPhC event, Open Awards has completed a full review of the reasonable adjustment processes within its database. However, the team learned that Open Awards does not set assignments. Providers must design their own assignments, decide on adjustments and keep an appropriate log. EQA can suggest changing assessment methods and



timings. Providers can allow extensions to time allowed for assignments by up to 25 percent without permission from Open Awards. The provider interviewed told the team that it was lenient with timings which were considered on a case-by-case basis for trainees with special needs, although the team was aware that there was no standard operating procedure for this process.

A report based on Student and Patient Voice includes a review of the demographic data (gender, age, ethnicity, ability status).

The same requirements around delivery and assessment will be in place for the new Level 2 Principles and Practices for Pharmaceutical Technical Support Services, providing assurance that the Standard will continue to be met. The qualification guide mirrors the requirements of the existing Level 2 Pharmacy Support Staff qualifications.

## Criteria 2: Course curriculum

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to course curriculum continue to be met.**

The documentation confirmed that the Level 2 Pharmacy Support Staff qualifications have not changed since the last GPhC event, and the mapping that was submitted at the time still applies, with the principles of equality and diversity being mapped into units 2 and 4. All units are also mapped into the NOS for the standalone qualification, and into the NOS and Apprenticeship Standard for the apprenticeship qualification. A full review will begin in 2024 of the content taking into account stakeholder feedback.

Approval was requested for an additional pathway at Level 2 to support pharmacy support staff working in aseptic-related roles. This has been mapped to the GPhC Standards. This new pathway has been developed in partnership with West Suffolk College, and their supporting employers. The pathway will be delivered as a standalone qualification with a separate Qualification Accreditation Number to enable differentiation. The majority of the core content overlaps to ensure that it fully meets the requirements of Pharmacy Support staff at level 2, with the exception of an additional NOS, PHARM52. The team was assured that the inclusion of this NOS was appropriate and driven by stakeholder need. The qualification is made up of eight mandatory units mapped to GPhC IET Standards and NOS. There are no optional pathways or units within the qualification. It was explained to the team that is an expectation of the new qualification that trainees will have knowledge of aseptic techniques.

Each centre is responsible for devising their own delivery and assessment plan, accounting for variables that are relevant to them. Open Awards completes pre-verification activities to ensure that delivery and assessment plans are in place before centres deliver the courses. The quality of these plans and their implementation is reviewed at least annually through EQA and compliance activities. Since the last GPhC event, standardisation activities and training has been delivered to enable providers to share their experiences and learn from each other. The team was told that the standardisation activities had offered support with respect to guidance documents and removed confusion where needed. Improvement has been seen in consistency with less use of MCQs and better sharing between providers. The difference between level 2 and level 3 in terms of the expectation of answers was stressed. Open Awards requires providers to have their own internal procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of their course delivery and assessment.

This is reviewed through EQA and compliance activities. For all pathways at Level 2, providers are required to complete a full induction with their learners/trainees to ensure that they are fully aware of the qualification they are taking, including the purpose of the course and the tasks and technical skills they will be required to undertake and demonstrate.

### Criteria 3: Assessment

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to assessment continue to be met.**

Providers are required to produce their own delivery and assessment plans. These are reviewed at pre-verification and checked at least annually through EQA. The Skills for Health Assessment Principles are being reviewed in 2023 and any changes will apply to the pharmacy-related qualifications; providers will be invited to a training webinar on the revised principles. As pharmacy-related qualifications are categorised as high-risk, assessments are subject to 100% sampling. Risk assessments in relation to patient safety are confirmed through EQA compliance checks, as well as an annual review of the provider's policy for managing risk. Risk assessments are confirmed through EQA checks, and in an annual review of the provider's policy for managing risk. An action has been identified to produce an example risk assessment for pharmacy support staff in the workplace to support increased standardisation across providers.

One-to-one support was given to providers in reviewing their assessments. This was to ensure that they met Open Awards criteria and would effectively assess students' knowledge and skills. A limited number of sample assessments was produced in 2021 to support the standardisation and training across providers, but it is recognised that there is a need to produce a full series of exemplar assessments and assignment briefs. EQA has identified that some providers are relying heavily on examinations and essay-style questions, and that assessment has remained linear, for example, unit by unit, rather than holistic. Student feedback suggests that this has led to the feeling of over-assessment. A subject expert has been commissioned to develop a full set of example assignments that cover all units holistically.

Since the last GPhC event, EQA activities have identified potential issues with the use of multiple-choice assessments for knowledge-based criteria. Thus, students can achieve a high mark overall but not meet all assessment criteria, hence failing overall. It has been suggested that certain providers either move away from MCQ assessments, or supplement the evidence with professional discussions and project-based assessments to ensure all criteria can be covered in full without creating additional assessment burden.

For both the apprenticeship and standalone qualification, EQA of assessment decisions is completed by subject specialists that meet the requirements of Open Awards, IfATE, GPhC, and Skills for Health. The type and quality of feedback to students is reviewed through EQA. There have been no significant concerns identified with this across providers. A student survey identified that some students felt that increased feedback at an earlier stage would be helpful in their preparation for assessments, and performance in the workplace. This is being addressed with specific providers and training will be provided in September 2023 on providing quality feedback. The submission stated that feedback from trainees is reviewed through EQA activities with providers to ensure the student voice is included in reviews of courses and used to identify improvements. EQAs told the team that there will be more standardisation of feedback to trainees in future as currently there is variation within and

across centres. It was stated that feedback needs to be clear, and more developmental and more support will be put in place to expedite this.

#### Criteria 4: Management, resources and capacity

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that all eight criteria relating to management, resources and capacity continue to be met.**

All providers must meet Open Awards policies and procedures for the delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance of the qualifications. Providers go through an approval process before they can request approval for specific qualifications. This includes EQA checking that key roles are covered by qualified staff, and that all required resources are in place. Since the last GPhC event, there has been an example of a provider not having the required staffing in place for Internal Quality Assurance due to staff turnover. This was identified through pre-verification activities and interim arrangements put in place by Open Awards to complete 100% EQA until they had recruited. EQA and compliance activities also check the implementation of a robust student support policy, which must include detailed information, advice and guidance (IAG), induction, supervision, personal and academic support, assessment deadlines and timescales, resits, and expectations around behaviour and professionalism. All training providers must have clear policies in place for plagiarism, malpractice and maladministration, and for complaints, grievances and appeals. The team was told that these are checked at pre-verification, and explained to trainees at several points, including on the student portal.

The team learned that the number of annual cohorts to be delivered annually is planned to increase from 22 to 29, but that this increase will be due to new providers coming on stream rather than an increase in the capacity of existing providers. The new pharmacy quality assurer will provide support for this increase, although the existing contracted EQAs will continue to be used. The provider interviewed told the team that all its teaching staff is pharmacy-qualified, with a pharmacist, a pharmacy foundation trainee, and pharmacy technicians.

Before a provider can begin delivering pharmacy-related qualifications, they must be both an approved provider for Open Awards generally, and have specific qualification approval. Since the last GPhC event, a Centre Assessment Standards Scrutiny strategy (CASS) has been introduced. This includes detail of how qualifications are risk-rated and how the rating informs the approval and pre-verification processes. Both the standalone and apprenticeship qualifications for the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff have been categorised as high-risk. The new qualification for the Principles and Practice for Pharmaceutical Technical Support Services has also been categorised as high-risk. Therefore, full pre-verification is required to ensure providers have robust management plans in place before they start delivering the qualification. Learner agreements are a requirement of all providers, and their use is checked at EQA activities. EQA checks that all aspects of course management are in place including risk management, ensuring staffing is suitable, and that contingencies are planned for.

All providers must have their own internal complaints and appeals policy, which reviewed through EQA. Students are required to exhaust their provider's complaints policy before escalating to Open Awards, but there have been no formal complaints received from students on pharmacy-related

qualifications to date. The team was told that whistleblowing policies are checked at pre-verification, including checking that the policies are included in trainee handbooks, and that learners understand their responsibilities with respect to the GPhC. The team was told by the provider interviewed that any student deemed to be a concern would have either a one-to-one meeting or a team meeting, potentially with their employer or parents, if under 18, to set objectives. Meetings would cover attendance which must be 90%, progression and outcome of assessments. Informal meetings could be escalated where necessary to Formal 1 and Formal 2 meetings

The submission noted that as these qualifications are delivered over 12 months and first registrations were in 2021, there has been minimal achievement and destination data to date. However, 80 students have now completed and a review of retention, completion and achievement data is scheduled for July 2023. The EQA checks the employer engagement throughout the learner journey, and that conversations are taking place with employers if concerns are noted. The EQA also checks that centres adjust the risk rating of employers where necessary and asks learners about support from employers and centre providers.

## Criteria 5: Quality management

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that three criteria relating to quality management continue to be met with one criterion subject to a condition.**

Open Awards operates a risk-based approach for the monitoring and management of courses at individual providers. Each provider is risk-rated in line with the CASS strategy and a pharmacy-specific risk rating is attached to providers. In line with the CASS strategy, all aspects of the provider's course are confirmed at pre-verification, compliance and EQA activities. Risk ratings are reviewed at each EQA activity including the completion of any identified action plans. As the Level 2 pharmacy qualifications are categorised as high-risk, they are subject to 100% sampling. This is managed through interim sampling and summative sampling. In addition, EQA and compliance activities include annual checks of provider policies; staffing and resources; and their processes for monitoring and evaluation effectiveness of their courses. The newly developed Level 2 Principles and Practice for Pharmaceutical Technical Support Services has also been categorised as high-risk and will, therefore, be subject to the same quality assurance and monitoring activities.

The team wished to know Open Awards' expectation of providers with respect to their internal quality assurance (IQA) and was told that there are provider handbooks and quality assurance requirements. The team was told that Open Awards expects providers to involve employers and track the progress of trainees to identify any gaps or trends, for example, slowing down between units. The team was told that Open Awards also relies on providers' IQA to identify any changes in course content needed as a result of developments in the practice of pharmacy, and expects teaching staff to be occupationally competent. Annual compliance activity is a minimum with high-risk providers being subject to more frequent checks. Centre providers had been used to having assignments and assessments provided but although Open Awards provides sample templates, providers are expected to devise their own assignments and assessments. EQAs can check any new approaches to these. The team noted an apparent high attrition rate for trainees that entered the programmes in 2020 and 2021 and was told that this had been due to confusion amongst providers on what was required. One provider had had a large staff turnover that had had an impact on students, although it was stated

that personal issues, including cost of living and mental health, were the main reasons for withdrawal. The progression rate is now close to 60-65 percent with an expected withdrawal rate of around eight percent.

As reported in the commentary to Standard 1 above, Open Awards has recently recruited a full-time data analyst to enhance its data monitoring and evaluation. This role has created visual dashboards to allow a review of demographic data for providers. In addition, a new pharmacy quality assurer will review progression data in real time with all providers on a demographic basis, with a view to influencing course design and providing a timely analysis of EDI data. The team was told that the role of the new appointee would be divided into 60 percent support for providers, and 40 percent reviewing EPA decisions; it was stressed that the appointee will not be conducting EPA assessments themselves. The provider interviewed told the team that all applicants were dealt with equally, that it had access to both its own and Open Awards data on EDI, and was in the process of analysing the data. However, the team agreed that it be a **condition** that Open Awards must develop and implement a process to ensure that centre providers use equality and diversity data while designing and delivering courses. This is to ensure that centre providers' policies and procedures are fair and do not discriminate against trainees or applicants, and may include analysis of the data to identify themes, trends, and actions based on protected characteristics. This must be monitored in a meaningful way by Open Awards. This is because although the team could see evidence that Open Awards encourages centre providers to collect equality and diversity data, it was unclear how that data was used by centre providers, and monitored by Open Awards, to ensure it was being utilised in delivery of the qualification. This is to meet criterion 5d.

Open Awards has an error-reporting process within its database that enables reporting of errors/incidents across providers, qualifications, and specific areas of delivery. There has been one error relating to these qualifications since the last GPhC event, involving a provider that was approved to deliver pharmacy qualifications without having the required IQA resource in place due to turnover of staff. This was identified and interim actions taken, with Open Awards completing additional external quality assurance activities, including 100% review of assessment decisions, whilst the provider recruited a new IQA.

A necessary area of improvement has been identified as the amount of feedback given to trainees throughout the course but particularly at the beginning of the course. EQA has identified that providers do give learners appropriate and timely feedback focused on summative assessments. A student survey identified that students would benefit from formal feedback throughout their formative assessments and teaching/learning to help them prepare for assessments, and the workplace. This is being addressed with specific providers but training will be provided in September 2023 to focus on providing quality developmental feedback. Open Awards has delivered training and standardisation events since the last GPhC event. This has included training on developing assessments and using observations/professional discussions. Further training is being planned for 2023/24 academic year, including: managing holistic observations, writing multiple-choice questions, and providing developmental feedback.

The provider interviewed told the team that feedback from learners is gathered from bi-yearly student surveys and at three-monthly tripartite reviews amongst the trainee, employer and provider. Feedback is included in a report to the monthly centre governance group. The quality of teaching is assessed by IQAs. The main issue raised by trainees has been the desire for more face-to-face teaching; this has led to an adjustment of the timetable.

## Criteria 6: Supporting learners and the learning experience

Criteria met/will be met? Yes  No

**The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to supporting learners and the learning experience continue to be met.**

The submission confirmed that each provider must have a student support policy in place. This must include information on information, advice and guidance, induction, supervision, personal and academic support, assessment deadlines and timescales, resits, and expectations around behaviour and professionalism.

Student feedback has identified that the majority of students felt supported by providers and employers, with particularly positive feedback received around employer support. Individual concerns are being addressed with the learners and their providers. Follow-up actions were identified around time management and communication between providers and employers on deadlines and busy periods in work, and developmental feedback. These themes will be shared with providers when the final report is published in August 2023. Since the last GPhC event, Open Awards has developed a range of online courses for students around study skills, time management, and mental health and wellbeing. Learning agreements must be in place for all trainee pharmacy support staff. The agreements ensure that all criteria within Standard 6 are covered. Students' understanding of their learner agreements and Individual Learning Plans will form part of a thematic review of student support and the learner agreement.

The team wished to know how Open Awards ensured that providers notified employers about the time and opportunities required by trainees to achieve the requirements of the qualification, and was told that EQA will check that the GPhC requirements for the supervision of pharmacy professionals are being adhered to. The requirements of the apprenticeship are discussed. This is detailed in the qualification specification but needs to be shared with employers; this will be done from September 2023. Thus, the team learned that Open Awards is putting new processes in place to communicate with employers, and to enable them to share qualification specifications and employer guidance directly.

The team also wished to know how providers have engaged with patients, public and employers since the start of the delivery of the qualification. The provider interviewed told it that the system of workplace supervision is highlighted to employers.

Mentors selected are all pharmacists that are aware of the GPhC standards. If employers are struggling, the provider would act as an intermediate between the employer and the trainee. The example was given of the use of a sign-in sheet to verify attendance. There is observation of interaction with patients during counselling and dispensing, but the team was told that there is no access to patients at the provider centre.

The team noted that Open Awards is pro-active in its intention to provide trainees with a positive learning experience and wished to know how it ensured that providers were achieving this. The team was told that providers look at the whole learner journey; they collect feedback from both trainees and employers, and have regular meetings with trainees. Apprenticeship reviews are conducted on a tripartite basis among the trainee, provider and employer. Outcomes of reviews and feedback include

adjusting assessment methodologies, and reduced assessment burden. The provider interviewed told the team that support for its teachers and tutors was based on a small group approach, with the IQA providing feedback. It stated that its teachers should be educated to a minimum of level 3, which it was hoping to increase to level 5.

## Apprenticeship pathway and End Point Assessment (EPA)

Since the last GPhC event, Open Awards has fully developed the End-Point Assessment for ST0299 Pharmacy Services Assistant. As the qualification and End-Point Assessment are not integrated, not all providers that use Open Awards for the Level 2 qualification also use Open Awards as the End-Point Assessment Organisation (EPAO) and visa versa.

Open Awards has invested in its EPA services since the last GPhC event. There are now assessment development and delivery teams that are responsible for EPA, maintaining a separation between the delivery, assessment and quality assurance of the qualifications, and the End-point Assessments. Apprentices are required to be registered to the EPA separately from the qualification so that the two elements can be managed independently, and resources can be planned to deliver the EPA. The registration process includes capturing the employer location and anticipated Gateway date.

The assessment delivery team is responsible for managing the Gateway process. Providers are required to hold a Gateway meeting with the employer and apprentice, and to complete the Gateway documentation. This is allocated to the delivery team for review, and to liaise with providers over any incomplete or outstanding evidence. Achievement of the L2 qualification is not stipulated within the assessment plan. Therefore, this is not checked at Gateway. However, it is included in the EPA Handbook and providers are signposted to GPhC regulatory requirements. Once Gateway has been confirmed the apprentice is scheduled for a multiple-choice knowledge test, invigilated remotely by Open Awards invigilators. Resits are capped at a pass. Once the knowledge component has been passed, apprentices are scheduled for an observation and professional discussion. These are two separate assessment components held usually on the same day. Apprentices can attempt both assessment components up to three times within the EPA window, using different versions of the assessment. Resits are capped at a pass. Following successful achievement of all three assessment components, the grades are aggregated and a final grade issued. A results transcript is issued to apprentices and the certificate is claimed from the ESFA via the apprenticeship service.

There is an annual review of the apprenticeship provision, including a review of the data and outcomes by the Lead Independent EPA Assessor. This was last completed in September 2022, with the next review scheduled for September 2023. The team wished to know how the identified areas for development were processed. It was told that there is no capacity to make any requirement for changes, but that issues can be highlighted if in the best interest of the apprentices. The team was told that there is a 60-page EPA handbook for the use of the apprentice, employer and provider.

When asked about challenges relating to the apprenticeship route, the team was told that at Level 2

there has been a challenge around aseptic dispensation which is applied differently in different places. However, the team was assured that all challenges have been addressed.

### **Key findings - Part 3 - Role-specific learning outcomes**

Please see the individual qualification(s) part 3 report for commentary.





