

Open Awards support staff qualifications recognition event report – December 2020



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	Open Awards
Course	Support staff qualifications
Names of courses	Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (Apprenticeship) (RQF) Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (RQF)
Event type	Recognition
Event date	18 December 2020
Approval period	February 2021 - February 2027
Relevant requirements	Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020
Framework used	Apprenticeship Framework (England) and National Occupational Standards
Outcome	Approval The recognition team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the support staff qualifications provided by Open Awards should be recognised for a period of six years, with an interim event in three years.
Conditions	There were no conditions.
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be found here .
Recommendations	No recommendations were made
Registrar decision	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the recognition team's recommendation and approved the recognition of the support staff qualification and apprenticeship for a period of six years, with an interim event in three years.
Key contact (provider)	Nina Hinton, Head of Business and Development
Recognition team	Dr Ruth Edwards, (Event chair, Pharmacy Academic), Head of Professional Experience, Aston Pharmacy School Leonie Milliner (Lay Member), Director of Education, General Optical Council

	Catherine Davies, (Pharmacy Technician), Freelance Education and Training provider Donna Bartlett, (Pharmacy Technician), Dispensary Team Leader, Lancashire Teaching Hospitals
GPhC representative	Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC
Rapporteur	Dr 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.

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>

Background

This qualification to be recognised fits within Open Awards portfolio of qualifications within the health and social care sector. This includes its recently developed Level 3 Diploma in the Principles of Aseptic Pharmaceuticals Processing (RQF) and Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians. In addition, the organisation has been approved by ESFA to be an End-Point Assessment Organisation for the Level 2 Pharmacy apprenticeship Standard. Although Open Awards is not a specialist health awarding body, it has experience of working with subject specialists and sector experts to quality assure the qualifications offered. The Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (RQF) will be available as two versions: -Apprenticeship route (mapped to the Level 2 Pharmacy Services Assistant Standard and National Occupational Standards), and Non-apprenticeship route (mapped to the National Occupational Standards). As an awarding organisation, Open Awards will not be completing the delivery of training but rather the delivery of the qualification will be completed by approved training providers, following a robust centre recognition application process, and qualification approval process. Open Awards' role will be to manage the life cycle of the qualification ensuring its ongoing validity, and externally quality assuring the delivery of the qualification by the approved providers to ensure that all requirements of Ofqual, GPhC, IfATE (where applicable) and Open Awards are fully met in a standardised way.

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 video conference on 07 December 2020. 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 18 December 2020. The remainder of the event took place by video conference on 18 December 2020, and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff involved in the design of the qualification(s).

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Key findings - Part 1 - Outcomes for all support staff

Before the event the recognition team reviewed all 19 outcomes in the written submission for all support staff and was satisfied that **all 19 learning outcomes would be met** to the level required by the GPhC requirements.

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

Criteria 1: equality, diversity and inclusion

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

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

Open Awards will not be completing the delivery of training and the qualification will be

completed by approved training providers, following a centre recognition application and qualification approval processes. There is an Equality and Diversity Policy that is embedded throughout the Open Awards practice. Thus, all Open Awards staff members complete mandatory training on equality and diversity. The organisation has experience of working, through the training providers, with learners with disabilities and/or learning difficulties, and ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made as appropriate to ensure accessibility for all. The centre approval process includes a check of training providers' equality and diversity policies to ensure that they meet the requirements of regulators and relevant legislation. Open Awards collects learner registration data in line with its data retention policy to enable it to measure its impact as an awarding organisation and to review the practices of the training providers. There is a Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations Policy although all learning outcomes and assessment criteria must be met fully before a qualification can be awarded; some reasonable adjustments can be made by the centre without approval from Open Awards, others require the centre to request approval from OA in advance of agreeing the adjustment. Assessment criteria embed principles of respecting diversity and cultural differences.

Criteria 2: course curriculum

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to course curriculum are or will be met

Subject experts and employers have been involved in the development of the qualification to ensure that it brings together knowledge, competence and work experience to provide a balance of knowledge-based and competency-based learning outcomes. The team learned that, due to the Covid 19 pandemic, there had been little opportunity for patients or public to have significant input into the design of the curriculum but that the EQAs would work with centres to develop this aspect. There are four mandatory units which cover all the GPhC learning outcomes, followed by two routes for completing the qualification. The apprenticeship route has two mandatory units to cover the outcomes in the apprenticeship standard linked to dispensing and stock management, while the non-apprenticeship route has a choice of two out of four optional units to cover the national occupational standards relevant to pharmacy support staff roles; they are; dispensing, stock management, over the counter sales, and manufacturing. The qualifications have been added to the Ofqual register of regulated qualifications at level 2. Learners must have a suitable role in a pharmacy setting to be able to complete the competency-based learning outcomes fully under correct supervision, and for assessment to be carried out in the workplace; the team learned that this will be monitored by Open Awards on an ongoing basis. Each training provider will design its own teaching and learning plan which will be checked and reviewed by Open Awards. Internal and external quality assurers will review plans and make recommendations for improvements. Open Awards' specialist External Quality Assurers will provide support to each provider to ensure that any initial gaps or areas of concern are addressed before delivery. Open Awards will deliver provider forums and standardisation activities to share experiences and discuss how the qualification is being delivered. Training providers must attend standardisation activities on an annual basis to ensure consistency across providers, and to share best practice. Open Awards has completed a

mapping exercise to ensure that the qualification content fully meets the NOS, the GPhC Standards for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacy Support Staff and the Apprenticeship Standard. Learners must complete an evidence tracking sheet on an ongoing basis to map the evidence they have collated for each assessment criterion for each unit. An Open Awards specialist EQA will review samples of evidence at each training provider on a regular basis, setting and reviewing progress. Approved centres will be required to complete an induction with their learners/trainees to ensure that they are fully aware of the qualification, including its purpose and the tasks and technical skills they will be required to undertake and demonstrate, along with the assessment requirements.

Criteria 3: assessment

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to assessment are or will be met

The qualifications have been designed to meet the GPhC requirements around working safely; patient safety and supporting the practice of pharmacy professionals, with specific assessment criteria relating to these requirements. Assessment strategies will be pre-verified by Open Awards before delivery commences to provide external quality assurance of the plans. The team learned that Open Awards is working with other awarding organisations on standardising assessment procedures. The primary method of assessment for the skills-based units is observation in the workplace by the assessor based on at least three observations which cover the required skills. Evidence should be generated over a period of time to show consistent performance and entered into the learner's portfolio. Expert witness testimony may be used where it is difficult for an assessor to observe aspects of practice. Learners may have more than one assessor or expert witness involved in the assessment process; in such cases, there must be a named assessor who is responsible for the overall co-ordination of the assessment for each learner. Learners must complete an evidence tracking sheet on an ongoing basis to map the evidence they have collated for each assessment criterion for each unit. Evidence must include expert witness testimonies as required. The overall method of assessment is a portfolio of evidence which allows centres to design assessments that best meet their learners' and employers' needs, and provides flexibility to cover knowledge and competency-based outcomes fully. Open Awards will provide sample assignments and assessment guidance for knowledge-based units which will be assessed using internally set, internally marked written assignments. Learners have a maximum of four weeks to complete each knowledge-based assignment; if the assignment is not passed on the first attempt, they will have a maximum of two further opportunities to re-take the assessment criteria. Learners are supported with advice and guidance on the requirements of the course, and progression routes, and must receive regular supervision and feedback, normally within five working days. The units (learning outcomes and assessment criteria) have been designed to support a standardised approach to assessment by the centres, including indicative content, where appropriate, to support a consistent approach to assessment. External verification of the award of credit will take place before a trainee is awarded the qualification. Assessors and Internal Quality Assurers (IQA) must hold a current GPhC registration as a pharmacy professional and be occupationally competent in the area of practice to which the unit being assessed applies as well as credible experience which is clearly

demonstrable through continuing learning and development. Training providers must have clear reporting procedures for any concerns, whether these are raised by the trainee, employer or staff.

Criteria 4: management, resources and capacity

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all eight criteria relating to management, resources and capacity are or will be met

The team learned that subject to successful recognition Open Awards intended to commence the programme in February/March 2021. Centres must have occupationally competent staff with relevant sector experience for their role in the delivery of the units/qualifications being offered; this is checked on an annual basis as part of the annual compliance activity. Internal Quality Assessors (IQAs) must understand the nature and context of the assessors' work and that of their candidates including having a working knowledge of the learner's working environment. IQAs are expected to verify the assessment process and not reassess the evidence provided but it is expected that IQAs will have undertaken an appropriate assessor qualification and practised as an assessor prior to undertaking the internal quality assessor role. Centres are responsible for ensuring that all expert witnesses are familiar with the standards for the relevant units and understand the centre's recording requirements. 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. External Quality Assurers (EQAs) will monitor the centre's processes and practice to ensure that they meet the Awarding Organisation, qualification and regulatory requirements, and will provide support to centre staff, giving advice and guidance to facilitate improvements. To enable pre-verification of the requirements at centre level, centres must provide details of who is going to be responsible for all aspects of delivery, including assessment and internal quality assurance. Robust supervision systems must be in place to ensure patient safety. There must be a learning agreement in place before the course starts between the training provider, the learner and the employer to ensure that roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and that the full requirements of the qualification can be met. Open Awards will provide a qualification certificate for trainees that achieve the full qualification, either Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (Apprenticeship) (RQF), or Open Awards Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (RQF), along with a unit transcript certificate. All training providers have clear policies in place for plagiarism, malpractice and maladministration, and complaints, grievances and appeals. Failure by a centre to report suspected or actual cases of malpractice or maladministration, or a failure to have in place effective arrangements to prevent such cases, may lead to sanctions being imposed on the centre. In addition, Open Awards has an Enquiries, Complaints and Appeals Policy and Procedures.

Criteria 5: quality management

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to quality management are or will be met

Open Awards has a robust Quality Assurance strategy that will be utilised for the management of the qualification with approved training providers. This will involve working with each approved centre to ensure that there are robust quality assurance systems which are followed. The centre's processes and practices are monitored to ensure compliance with qualification-specific and regulatory requirements. Centre staff members are supported on matters relating to assessment and quality assurance, with each centre being allocated a Lead Quality Reviewer (LQR) who has overarching responsibility for ensuring the centre's ongoing compliance through their quality assurance policies and practices, along with an External Quality Assurer (EQA). Open Awards has two subject-specialist EQAs in place to support the delivery of its L3 Pharmacy Technician qualification who will also act in this capacity for the L2 qualifications. As this is a new qualification for Open Awards, all 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 strict approval criteria in order to become an approved centre. This generally includes a review of policies rather than delivery, assessment and internal quality assurance practices. An Annual Quality Assurance Review will provide the LQR with an up to date record of specific areas of compliance with the centre agreement. For assessments, the verifier must familiarise themselves with the assessment strategy prescribed in the qualification guide to ensure that where assessment methods are mandated in the qualification guide, these have been followed effectively. EQAs sample the assessment evidence that learners have produced from a representative sample for the course to ensure that the evidence is valid, authentic, current, reliable, and sufficient. Where a training provider has demonstrated robust internal quality systems in delivering the qualifications over a period of time, and whose IQAs meet minimum requirements for the role, named individuals may apply to be an Authorised Internal Verifier (AIV) who is authorised to make verify assessment decisions and directly claim credit certificates for learners from Open Awards. Open Awards collects and collates feedback relating to the delivery and assessment of its qualifications, including from surveys to capture feedback from subject experts. Open Awards expects its training providers to remain up to date with legislation, best practice and regulatory requirements; this is checked as part of the annual quality compliance activities. Open Awards collects learner registration data in line with its data retention policy. Each provider reviews its own data to implement improvement activity; this will be monitored through the annual quality compliance activity, including a review of evidence from the centre that this data analysis has taken place, and any actions they have identified to improve practice.

Criteria 6: supporting learners and the learning experience

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to supporting learners and the learning experience are or will be met

Training providers are required to have a Student Support Policy including information, advice

and guidance on; 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 clarify roles/responsibilities; this includes trainees having the opportunity to interact with workplace colleagues to support their development, including professional role models and other healthcare professionals or pharmacy professionals who work in different teams. Each training provider should complete assessment planning sheets to map their delivery and assessments to the assessment criteria. A qualification guide outlines specific requirements for the qualification being delivered; it is an expectation that this information is made available to all individuals involved in supporting, supervising and teaching the course. The team was told that centres must request allowances for recognised prior learning to Open Awards for approval along with evidence of prior achievements; this will only be approved for up to 50% of the programme.

Part 3 - Role-specific learning outcomes

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

