

**University of Reading Master of Pharmacy degree
(MPharm) with preparatory year event report,
January 2021**



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	University of Reading
Course	Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree with preparatory year
Event type	Accreditation
Event date	27 January 2021
Current accreditation period	2020/21 - 2022/23
Relevant standards	Future pharmacists Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, May 2011
Outcome	Continued accreditation confirmed. The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the MPharm degree with preparatory year (MPharm with Foundation) provided by the University of Reading should be accredited until 2022/2023, at which point the provision will be reaccredited against the Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists 2021.
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 Katrina Bicknell, Head of School of Pharmacy Daniel Grant, Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy & Pharmacy Education
Accreditation team	Professor Andy Husband (Team Leader) Professor of Clinical Pharmacy and Head of School, Newcastle University Dr Ruth Edwards (Team member - academic) Head of Professional Experience, Aston University Mike Pettit (Team member - pharmacist) Retired Senior Lecturer, Pharmacy Practice and Hospital Pharmacy Manager Barbara Wensworth (Team member - pharmacist), Currently Freelance Pharmacy Lecturer, Standards Verifier, assessor and writer

	Dr Daniel Greenwood (Team member - recently registered pharmacist), Senior Lecturer in Clinical Pharmacy, Anglia Ruskin University School of Medicine Leonie Milliner (Team member - lay), Director of Education, General Optical Council
GPhC representative and rapporteur	Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC Professor Brian Furman (rapporteur) Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde
Observers	Liz Harlaar (observer – accreditation panel member in training) Independent Business Consultant Mira Jivraj (observer – accreditation panel member in training) Deputy Clinical Services Manager, Pharmacy Northwick Park Hospital

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 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/uksi/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 (often referred to as 'year 0') followed by four further taught years that mirror that of the accredited MPharm degree.

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 2-4, 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 will therefore focus 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 programme at the University of Reading is delivered by the Reading School of Pharmacy (RSOP), which is an autonomous department within the joint School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy (SCFP). The MPharm with Foundation (that is with a 'Preparatory Year'; the term 'Foundation Year' will be used throughout this report) was developed from a Foundation Year established for programmes in the life sciences and chemistry in 2017/18 and was first offered in 2018/19; it was designed to provide students with core knowledge in chemistry, biology, numeracy and academic study skills, and an understanding of healthcare and professionalism. The majority of the systems and processes applied to the MPharm are also relevant to the MPharm with Foundation. The Foundation Year comprises four modules, namely Biology (40 credits), Chemistry (40 credits), Pharmaceutical and Health Sciences (20 credits) and Academic Skills (20 credits); the Pharmaceutical and Health Sciences module is owned by the Department of Pharmacy. An event to accredit the MPharm with Foundation was conducted by videoconference on 27 January 2021; 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 13 January 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 Reading and the GPhC on 27 January 2021 and comprised meetings between the GPhC team and representatives of the University.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

27 January 2021

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|----|--|---------------|
| 1. | Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives | 10:00 – 13:00 |
| | Lunch break | 13:00 – 14:00 |
| 2. | Review of MPharm with preparatory year | 14:00 – 15:30 |
| 3. | Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives | 15:45 – 16:45 |

Attendees

Course provider

The team met with the following representatives of the University in meeting 2:

Name	Designation at the time of accreditation event
Amadesi, Dr Silvia	Associate Professor in Pharmacology (Pharmacy Director of Academic Tutoring)
Bentley, Eve*	Senior Quality Support Officer
Bicknell, Dr Katrina*	Associate Professor of Cardiovascular & Regenerative Medicine (Head of Pharmacy)
Cranwell, Dr Philippa	Associate Professor of Organic Chemistry (Director of University Foundation Programmes)
Grant, Dan*	Associate Professor of Clinical Pharmacy & Pharmacy Education (School Director of

	Teaching & Learning – Chemistry, Food & Pharmacy)
Green, Professor Rebecca	Professor of Biophysical Chemistry (Deputy Head of School – Chemistry, Food & Pharmacy, Past Head of Pharmacy)
Hall, Dr James	Lecturer in Pharmaceutical Chemistry (Deputy Pharmacy Admissions Officer)
Patel, Dr Nilesh	Associate Professor in Pharmacy (Programme Director)
Savania, Rav*	Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice (Pharmacy Director of Teaching & Learning)

*participated in the pre-event video-conference meeting on 13 January 2021

Key findings

Standard 1: Patient and public safety

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

The documentation described how students on the MPharm with Foundation programme are introduced to the General Pharmaceutical Council, the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals and Fitness to Practise. This was confirmed (meeting 2) where the team was told that the students were also informed about how these standards apply, the Department's expectations of behaviour, and about raising concerns; this introduction takes place in week 1, with reinforcement in the Spring Term. Concerns about a student's behaviour are managed using the same processes as those employed for the main MPharm programme. The team was told (meeting 2) that there had been a couple of incidents involving Foundation Year students that had required implementation of these processes, with one case being escalated to University level fitness to practise.

Wishing to learn when health and good character checks are undertaken for the preparatory year, the team was told (meeting 2) that these take place only when students progress to Part 1; there are no plans to change this unless the new standards require it. In view of a lack of clarity on how applicants to this programme are informed of these particular requirements, the staff agreed to update the website to state that applicants will be asked to complete a series of self-declarations relating to their suitability to join the programme, in particular regarding any health issues or criminal offences that might affect their ability to study, or that may pose a risk to other students, staff or patients; the website clearly informs applicants that a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be completed in Part 1 of the MPharm programme. If issues are raised concerning health and good character issues, then fitness to practise or fitness to study procedures may be invoked, depending on the case. The Department would then consider any support that the student may require, such as referral to the University's Counselling & Wellbeing Service; the support may involve the development of a study plan, along with regular review meetings. In some cases, suspension of the student may be required.

The team was told (meeting 2) that there are no plans to include placements or any other patient contact in the Foundation Year. However, in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, virtual tours of hospital and community pharmacy had been developed for the MPharm and these will be included in the Foundation Year from September 2021 to introduce students to pharmacy.

Standard 4: Selection of students

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

The documentation described how selection for the MPharm with Foundation follows the same processes as the MPharm, although, currently, they do not undertake a values-based assessment or calculations test, these taking place as a criterion for progression to part 1. However, the team learned (meeting 2) of the intention to make these part of the admission process for MPharm with Foundation.

All applicants must have a grade C in GCSE (or equivalent) Mathematics and English, and are made offers according to the subjects studied at A-level (or equivalent). In meeting 2, the team was told that overseas applicants whose first language is not English must have an average IELTS score of 6.5, with no component less than 5.5. Applicants with a wide variety of backgrounds are accepted, including those who would not be considered for direct entry to the MPharm. Confirming the documentation, the team was informed that applicants who have studied chemistry and one other science subject are made an offer of CCC at A-level, while those without chemistry and one other science subject receive offers of BBB. The Department ensures that no students who are eligible for direct entry to the MPharm are admitted to the MPharm with Foundation; those who are made offers for entry to the MPharm with Foundation who subsequently achieve appropriate grades are offered direct entry to Part 1, subject to passing the admissions test. Similarly, steps are taken to ensure that those whose qualifications make them unsuitable for direct entry to Part 1 of the MPharm are considered for admission to the preparatory year. Students apply for the programme with which they would be most comfortable, and some apply for both; in practice, applicants for either programme are directed to the most appropriate entry route. Seeking clarification of the differences in grade requirements for direct entry to the MPharm and entry to the MPharm with Foundation, as well as how these are applied during clearing, the team was told that the grades for admission to Part 1 are set each year and candidates are never admitted at clearing with grades lower than CCC; those with lower grades are directed to the MPharm with Foundation.

The team was told (meeting 2) that in order to progress to Part 1, students must gain an average mark of 60% across the year; this must include a minimum of 60% in each of the biology and chemistry modules, and a minimum of 40% in the 'Foundation in Pharmaceutical and Health Sciences' module, in which they must achieve at least 40% in the calculations assessment and at least 70% in the values-based assessment. Students must also pass key assessments throughout the year and progression is guaranteed if the criteria are met, this being independent of the grades with which they were admitted; progression to Part 1 is also subject to DBS and health checks. Wishing to know how it is ensured that applicants are aware of all of these progression requirements, the team was informed that this is highlighted through the marketing of the programme, as well as on 'Visit Days', which are separate from those for the MPharm. In response to the team's concern about the clarity of the progression information on the website, the staff explained that the website was checked regularly by the Marketing Officer and the

Admissions Tutor and updated as necessary. The team noted that the website should be checked for accuracy of the information currently displayed.

Noting that a review is being undertaken of the progression requirements for all programmes with a Foundation Year, and seeking clarification of how this might affect numbers progressing from Part 0 to Part 1 of the MPharm, the team was told that the MPharm will be unaffected because of the link with accreditation and the importance of ensuring success on the MPharm for those progressing to Part 1. The Department expects the same proportion of MPharm with Foundation students to progress as previously, although the programme has not been running for sufficiently long to provide a firm basis for this expectation.

In response to the team's wish to learn if prior learning might be recognised for students admitted to the MPharm with Foundation, the staff stated that to date this had not happened. However, it may be considered in circumstances where, for example, an applicant had a high grade in biology; in that case, the student may be granted an exemption from the biology module but would be directed to take a different module such as 'psychology' to make up the total credit load to 120. Recognition of prior learning would be considered on a case-by-case basis and would require the approval of the School Director of Teaching and Learning.

Standard 6: Support and development for students

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

The documentation described how students undertaking the MPharm with Foundation have access to the same University- and School-level support as those on the MPharm. As the module covering pharmaceutical and health sciences is owned and run by the Department of Pharmacy, students taking the preparatory year become familiar with members of the Pharmacy staff before they progress to Part 1 of the MPharm.

Seeking information on the support, including peer-support, that is available for students on the MPharm with Foundation subsequent to joining Part 1, the team was told that on progression these students will attend the Welcome Week along with those students entering directly to Part 1. Here they will meet their STaR ('Student Transitions at Reading') mentors, who are likely to be pharmacy students, although this depends on the number of students volunteering for this role; the STaR mentorship scheme is organised by the University, which provides the relevant training. Students can communicate with their StaR mentors, for example, via e-mail. Discussions are in progress to extend the STaR mentorship scheme. As described in the documentation, the MPharm with Foundation students already have an Academic Tutor who will continue to support these students as they progress through the programme; this support from Part 1 onwards includes individual, rather than group, meetings.

