Registration assessment regulations for sittings in 2019

These are the regulations for the General Pharmaceutical Council’s (GPhC’s) registration assessment (‘the assessment’).

These regulations apply to assessment sittings taking place in and from 2019. These regulations supersede the regulations in the 2018 Pre-registration manual and earlier versions.

1. General information

Overview

1.1 The assessment is set and moderated by the GPhC’s board of assessors (‘the board’). The board’s primary purpose is to protect patients and the public by ensuring the standard of the assessment is maintained. This will take precedence over all other considerations.

1.2 Purpose of the assessment: the primary purpose of the assessment is to ensure that candidates demonstrate an understanding of how to apply knowledge appropriately and in a timely manner when making professional judgements in pharmacy practice contexts. In addition, it ensures that candidates are appropriately numerate to practise as a pharmacist.

1.3 The assessment examines the contents of the Registration assessment framework (‘the framework’). The framework for the assessment is set by the board of assessors. Changes to the framework will be made available to all potential candidates at least six months before the sitting at which the new framework will be assessed.

1.4 Entry to the assessment constitutes an agreement to be bound by the terms of these regulations, schedules and other materials concerning the assessment published by the GPhC.

1.5 These regulations apply to every candidate entering the assessment, whether they have successfully completed an accredited MPharm degree or accredited Overseas Pharmacists’ Assessment Programme (OSPAP) postgraduate diploma, or are an EEA-qualified pharmacist taking the assessment as part of the route to registration.

1.6 In these regulations, “pre-registration training” means the period of training undertaken by a candidate prior to registration in accordance with the requirements of the GPhC’s Criteria for registration as a pharmacist.

1.7 In these regulations, "the Registrar" means the Registrar of the GPhC, appointed under the Pharmacy Order 2010.
1.8 These regulations must be read in conjunction with relevant sections of the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

1.9 The board’s interpretation of these regulations is final.

Applying for the registration assessment

1.10 In order to sit the assessment, candidates are required to submit a valid and complete and application, with all supporting documentation, by the specified date. If a valid and complete application is not received by the GPhC by the specified date, the candidate will not be permitted to sit the assessment.

1.11 It is the sole responsibility of each candidate to ensure that:

1.11.1 They have read and understood the requirements for applying for the assessment;

1.11.2 They have read and understood any associated processes they need to follow in order to register for the assessment;

1.11.3 They have submitted an application with all supported documentation, by the specified date;

1.11.4 They keep the GPhC updated and informed about their current email address, postal address and telephone number.

Failure to do so may result in GPhC communications not being received by the candidate.

1.12 Where these regulations stipulate that certain items must be submitted to, or received by, the GPhC, candidates must submit them in accordance with the specific instructions stipulated for the given process.

1.13 Dates for submitting documents – ‘the specified date’ - will be posted on the GPhC website.

1.14 Where documents are required to be submitted by post, candidates must ensure that they are sent to the GPhC securely and in such a way that posting dates can be verified and documents can be tracked. Documents that do not arrive by the specified date and cannot be tracked will be deemed to have not been sent. It is the responsibility of candidates to ensure that documents are received by the GPhC on the specified date.

1.15 Where the GPhC receives the required entry documents after the specified date for their receipt, the GPhC will only consider permitting a candidate to enter the assessment sitting in question where the candidate can prove that the required materials were received by the GPhC before the specified date for their receipt. Candidates who submit an incomplete application, late application, make no application or an application that cannot be validated and verified, will not be entered into the assessment and will not be able to sit the assessment.

The assessment

1.16 The assessment comprises two time-limited papers:

1.16.1 Part 1, a 2-hour calculations paper

1.16.2 Part 2, a 2.5-hour multiple choice paper

1.17 To pass the assessment, a candidate must pass Part 1 and Part 2 in the same sitting.
1.18 Marks from one sitting cannot be carried forward to another sitting.

1.19 No reference sources may be brought into the sitting by candidates. A resource pack containing artefacts such as extracts from BNFs, pictures, charts and Summaries of Product Characteristics, will be provided by the GPhC on the day of the sitting. This list is not exhaustive.

1.20 The assessment is set in English, because this is the principal language used in practice in Great Britain. For this reason, the assessment will not be set in any other language.

1.21 Both papers of a sitting must be sat on the same day. This is to ensure that candidates can apply a breadth of knowledge and depth of reasoning in a defined and limited period of time. For this reason, papers cannot be sat on separate days.

**Sitting attempts**

1.22 The registration assessment can be sat a maximum of three times within the time limit available to apply for registration as a pharmacist. For this reason, candidates are not guaranteed or entitled to three attempts at the registration assessment.

1.23 Where candidates have had a nullification request granted, appeal against a failed sitting upheld or have withdrawn from a sitting, this does not negate the timeframe to apply for registration as a pharmacist, and it does not qualify a candidate any further attempts at the registration assessment if they are outside of the time limit to apply for registration as a pharmacist.

1.24 **Eligibility to apply to sit the assessment:** to be eligible to apply to sit the assessment, candidates must have had their 39-week pre-registration tutor progress review marked as satisfactory, and have applied to sit by the specified date.

1.25 **Sitting the assessment for a second time:** candidates may sit the assessment for a second time within 18 months of their first sitting without undertaking any additional training. After 18 months have elapsed, candidates must satisfactorily complete an additional six months of supervised employment (“six-month placement”), before being eligible to sit the assessment for a second time. The requirements of this placement are detailed in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

1.26 **Sitting the assessment for a third time:** candidates may sit the assessment for a third time only after they have satisfactorily completed a six-month placement. The requirements of this placement are detailed in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

2. **Dates of assessment sittings**

2.1 There are two sittings of the assessment each year. The assessment is held at several venues, ‘centres’, on a single day in June, the ‘Summer sitting’, and a single day in September, the ‘Autumn sitting’. The specific date of each sitting will be announced on the GPhC website.

3. **Reasonable adjustments for specific needs**

3.1 The purpose of reasonable adjustments is to ensure that candidates are not disadvantaged by a permanent or temporary specific need.

3.2 Reasonable adjustments cannot alter the standard of the assessment or undermine its purpose, as described in 1.2.
3.3 A candidate who wishes to request reasonable adjustments to accommodate a permanent or temporary specific need must submit the request to the GPhC in the specified format and by the specified date.

3.4 To make a request for a reasonable adjustment(s), candidates must meet the requirements as stipulated in the adjustments guidance, found in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

3.5 Requests for reasonable adjustment, or appeals against decisions made by the adjustments panel, that are received after the deadline will only be heard if the requirements specified in the adjustments guidance are met, as detailed in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

3.6 If a candidate does not make a reasonable adjustment request in accordance with 3.3 and 3.4, makes a request which is not granted, or has their appeal rejected in accordance with 3.8 and still decides to sit, they will have deemed themselves fit to sit.

3.7 For the assessment to be conducted in an orderly manner for the benefit of all candidates, adjustments will not be retracted once granted. This may mean that a candidate needs to sit in the assessment room for candidates granted additional time and follow the assessment start and finish times in this room, even if they no longer wish to use this adjustment.

3.8 Candidates may appeal to the Registrar against a decision made by the adjustments panel by the specified date, on the following grounds only:

3.8.1 there are reasonable grounds to believe that there was a procedural error that affected the outcome of the decision, and/or;

3.8.2 there is credible evidence that could not have been obtained or known to the candidate at the time of the application that may have influenced on the decision of the adjustments panel.

3.9 Appeals must be submitted via the method specified in the adjustments guidance, found in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

3.10 There are two possible outcomes to an appeal against an adjustment request that is not granted:

3.10.1 the appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision of the adjustments panel stands and the request is not granted, or;

3.10.2 the appeal is upheld, in which case the request is granted or partially granted.

3.11 There are two possible outcomes to an appeal against a decision not to hear a late adjustment request:

3.11.1 the appeal is not upheld, in which case the original decision of the adjustments panel stands and the request is not heard, or;

3.11.2 the appeal is upheld, in which case the adjustments panel will hear the request. The candidate will be written to with the adjustments panel’s decision.

4. Admission to and conduct of the assessment

4.1 Final instructions, referred to as ‘assessment day guidance’ will be sent to candidates by the GPhC before the assessment sitting.

4.2 Candidates are required to provide identification documents, specified by the GPhC in the assessment day guidance, in order to verify their identity at the assessment. Only the specified documents will be accepted.
4.3 Candidates will be admitted to the sitting of an assessment paper at any time during the first 30 minutes after its start. After the first 30 minutes of a paper, candidates will not be admitted.

4.4 Candidates will not be permitted to leave the assessment room during the first 30 minutes or last 15 minutes of a paper, except in an emergency.

4.5 No extension to the normal finishing time of a paper will be given for candidates who arrive late.

4.6 During the assessment, only the permitted items detailed on the GPhC website and in the assessment day guidance may be present on a candidate’s person, or accessible to a candidate on, or within the vicinity of, the assessment desk, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process.

4.7 Candidates are responsible for providing the items detailed in the permitted items list on the GPhC website and in the assessment day guidance for use during the assessment. If a candidate fails to bring the required items, they must decide to sit the paper without them or withdraw. See section 5 ‘withdrawal from the assessment’.

4.8 No mobile phones, cameras, devices with communication functionality or smart technology, watches of any kind, or other electronic devices of any kind may be present on a candidate’s person, or accessible to the candidate on, or within the vicinity of, the assessment desk at any time during the assessment. The exception is electronic devices which have been permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process.

4.9 No books, documents, or printed or hand-written written materials of any kind other than the items provided by invigilators during the assessment may be present on a candidate’s person, or accessible to the candidate on, or within the vicinity of, the assessment desk at any time during the assessment. The exception is materials that have been permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process.

4.10 Any bag or other belongings brought to the assessment by a candidate must be left in a place specified by the invigilators. No liability for the loss of any item(s) will be accepted by invigilators or the GPhC.

4.11 Any mobile phones or other electronic or sound-emitting devices contained within bags or belongings must be switched off before entering the assessment room.

4.12 Assessment question papers, answer sheets, resource packs, and any other papers provided by the invigilators at the assessment centre must be returned by candidates to the invigilators at the end of each assessment paper and are the property of the GPhC.

4.13 Question papers and individual questions are the copyright property of the GPhC. Removing question papers from an assessment hall constitutes misconduct. If it is proven that a candidate has removed question papers, it will result in a candidate being failed. Questions may not be distributed or shared by candidates in any way, including by email or text message, or posted on social networking sites. This list is not exhaustive.

4.14 Candidates must follow all instructions given to them by the invigilators at their assessment centre.

4.15 Contravention of regulations 4.6 - 4.14 by a candidate may be considered as alleged misconduct. See section 8 ‘alleged misconduct’.
5. **Withdrawal from the assessment**

5.1 A candidate may withdraw from an assessment sitting at any point before the sitting, and up to five working days after the sitting if they choose not to sit, provided that they have not been present in the assessment room past the cut-off point announced by the Chief Invigilator before the start of the part 1 paper. The cut-off point will be announced to candidates before any assessment papers are handed out. If a candidate remains in the assessment room after the cut-off point they have deemed themselves to be fit to sit. A candidate should not sit the assessment if they consider that their performance is likely to be adversely affected by illness or other circumstance.

5.2 A candidate who chooses to withdraw and not sit the assessment, must inform the GPhC using the method specified in the current version of the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual, on or before the specified date. If a candidate withdraws from a sitting, that sitting is not counted as one of their sitting attempts.

5.3 Once a candidate has notified the GPhC of their decision to withdraw from a sitting in line with 5.2, the decision is final and cannot be reversed. Once a candidate has withdrawn from a sitting they will no longer be permitted to sit that sitting of the assessment, regardless of eligibility.

5.4 A candidate who applies to enter a sitting of the assessment, and has been approved, but does not sit, and does not notify the GPhC of their decision to withdraw in line with 5.2, will forfeit the sitting attempt through non-attendance. The sitting will be removed from the total number of remaining sitting attempts available to the candidate within their timeframe to apply for registration as a pharmacist.

5.5 Where a candidate has not complied with 5.2, by not notifying the GPhC of their withdrawal within the time stipulated, they will forfeit the assessment fee for that sitting.

5.6 Candidates will need to ensure they comply with any eligibility requirements before they sit a further attempt at the assessment, as specified in sections 1.24-1.26.

6. **Being fit to sit the assessment**

6.1 It is the sole responsibility of every candidate to ensure that they only sit the assessment if they are fit to do so. Being ‘fit to sit’ means that a candidate knows of no reason why their performance would be adversely affected during the assessment. A candidate who is affected by illness or other adverse circumstance before the day of the assessment, or at the point of the Chief Invigilators speech when a candidate has the last opportunity to declare themselves fit to sit before the start of the part 1 paper, but decides to sit the assessment, will be treated as being fit to sit by the board. For further information on making a decision to sit the assessment see Making a decision to sit the registration assessment in the GPhC’s Pre-registration manual.

6.2 If, on or before the day of an assessment, a candidate knows of an illness or adverse circumstance that might affect their performance, they should not sit. An illness or adverse circumstance known to a candidate on or before the day of an assessment cannot be used as grounds for nullification of the sitting attempt, or as grounds for an appeal or as evidence in an appeal.

6.3 A candidate who is taken ill or experiences other adverse circumstances during the assessment such that they cannot continue with the assessment, must draw this to the attention of an invigilator immediately, in order for the invigilator to assist with the indisposition and to prepare a written report to be signed by the candidate. One copy of the report will be given to the candidate and one will be forwarded to the board. If the candidate wishes their circumstances to be considered by the board under the provision of
6.4, they must then submit a written request to the board, via the GPhC, for their illness or adverse circumstances to be considered under the provisions of 6.4 below.

6.4 **Request for an assessment attempt to be nullified:** A candidate who considers that their performance has been affected by illness or other circumstance during the assessment, may request in writing to the board that they be deemed not to have sat the assessment on this occasion, and that their assessment attempt be nullified. The candidate must send appropriate supporting evidence with their request and where possible should include a completed invigilator’s report signed by both the invigilator and the candidate, as per 6.3. The request must be received on the specified date after the assessment, to ensure that it can be considered by the board at its post-assessment meeting.

6.5 The lack of specified items of stationery or equipment which are to be supplied by the candidate, as specified on the GPhC’s website and in the assessment day guidance, cannot be used as grounds for nullification; this includes failure to bring a functioning calculator that conforms to one of the makes and models specified.

6.6 When considering a candidate’s request for their assessment attempt to be nullified, the board will do so before undertaking the process of awarding results and without knowing the candidate’s provisional marks.

6.7 The board will consider nullification requests without knowing the candidate’s identity, the number of their assessment attempt, or whether or not they have been granted an adjustment.

6.8 If the board grant the candidate’s request, the candidate will not be informed about any marks they might have obtained and they will be deemed not to have sat. The candidate must ensure they meet the eligibility requirements to sit another attempt, detailed in section 1.24-1.26, if they have any further sitting attempts remaining within the time limit to apply for registration as a pharmacist. For such a further sitting, the candidate will be required to pay a new fee.

6.9 If a candidate’s request for their assessment attempt to be nullified is not granted, the board will go on to consider their marks with those of other candidates within the process of awarding results. The board will not pay further regard to the candidate's reported illness or other adverse circumstance.

7. **Notification of results**

7.1 Candidates will be notified of their individual results normally within four weeks of the sitting. Candidates will be provided with the mark required for each paper in order to pass the assessment, along with the mark they achieved for each paper, and their overall pass or fail result.

7.2 Individual candidate results will not be provided to anyone other than the candidate, in any circumstances.

8. **Alleged misconduct**

8.1 The GPhC reserves the right to withhold notification of an assessment result to a candidate if misconduct by the candidate in the assessment, or pertaining to the assessment, is alleged. Notification of the candidate’s result will be withheld while the alleged misconduct is investigated.

8.2 Cases of alleged misconduct will be heard in accordance with the process for investigating and hearing Allegations of misconduct in the registration assessment.

8.3 Cases will be judged on balance of probabilities.
8.4 If it is concluded that misconduct has taken place, the candidate will be deemed to have failed that sitting of the assessment, irrespective of the marks they obtained. If a candidate is failed as a result of misconduct being determined, their marks will not be released. The candidate will be required to declare the finding of misconduct at application for registration and this will be considered alongside their application.

8.5 Appeals against outcomes of hearings of alleged misconduct may be made to the Registrar.

8.6 Examples of misconduct include:

a. disturbing other candidates with inappropriate behaviour (this includes mobile phones ringing in a hall and disturbing candidates because they have not been switched off);

b. being in possession of, or writing on papers other than those provided by invigilators;

c. being in possession of an item of stationery or equipment that is not listed as a permitted item on the GPhC’s website and the assessment day guidance, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process. This includes items being present on a candidate’s person, or accessible to the candidate on, or within the vicinity of, the candidate’s assessment desk;

d. being in possession of any form of reference source, revision material, written material or document other than those that have been provided by invigilators, unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;

e. being in possession of an electronic device including mobile phone, camera, device with communication functionality or smart technology unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;

f. being in possession of a watch unless permitted by the adjustments panel in advance of the sitting through the reasonable adjustment process;

g. being in possession of a calculator during the part 2 paper, in which calculators are not permitted;

h. concealing reference texts/revision material, including handwritten reference sources/revision material, in the environs of the assessment centre;

i. leaving the assessment hall when prohibited by these regulations;

j. allowing oneself to be misrepresented during a sitting of the assessment, for example having someone sit the assessment on one’s behalf;

k. attempting to cheat, for example attempting to see and/or copy answers written by other candidates;

l. sharing answers with other candidates during a sitting;

m. communicating or attempting to communicate with others during a sitting, for example with a mobile phone, smartwatch, or other communications device;

n. removing a question paper, or sharing of questions or any other items provided from an assessment hall.
This list is not exhaustive.

9. Quality assurance of candidates' marks

9.1 Processes for the checking of candidates’ answers and marks awarded are in place for assurance of accuracy. Processes are reviewed by the board of assessors and the GPhC on an annual basis.

9.2 Results are final; no further review of individual marks will be undertaken.

10. Appeals

10.1 A candidate who fails an attempt at the registration assessment may appeal against the fail result on one or more of the following grounds only:

10.1.1 procedural grounds, that is where a procedure was not correctly applied; and/or
10.1.2 where there are exceptional circumstances unique to a candidate that may have affected a candidate’s performance during a sitting but were not known and could not have been known to a candidate before or during a sitting.

10.2 To ensure that an appeal is heard, a candidate must set out the grounds of the appeal in writing and ensure it is received by the GPhC on the specified date, via the method specified.

10.3 Exceptional circumstances which could have formed the basis of a request for nullification under 6.4 cannot be used as the basis of an appeal or as evidence in an appeal.

10.4 There are only two permissible outcomes to an appeal against a fail result:

10.4.1 the appeal is not upheld, in which case the fail mark stands and the candidate fails that attempt at the Registration Assessment; or
10.4.2 the appeal is upheld, in which case the candidate’s sitting attempt is nullified.

10.5 The lack of specified items of stationery or equipment which is supplied by the candidate, as specified in 4.6 cannot be used as grounds for appeal; this includes failure to bring a functioning calculator that conforms to one of the makes and models specified.

10.6 Appeals will be considered by the Registrar.

10.7 Appeals will be heard before the next sitting of the assessment, if received by the published deadline date and no further information is required. Candidates will be notified of the outcome of their appeal before the next sitting.

10.8 Candidates who have appealed against a result for the June sitting and who wish to sit again in the September sitting of the same year, must apply before the deadline for applying to sit in the September, whilst they await the outcome of their appeal. Late applications for entry to the exam will not be considered even if a candidate is in the process of appealing a sitting.

10.9 Appeals received after the specified date will only be heard when;

10.9.1 appropriate supporting evidence is provided to support the reason for late submission, and;
10.9.2 the reason for lateness relates to unforeseeable circumstance(s) beyond the candidate’s control that meant they were mentally or physically incapable of submitting by the deadline, and;
10.9.3 it is agreed that there are valid and evidenced reasons to explain why the candidate did not submit prior to the deadline.

Documents referred to in these regulations can be found in section five of the pre-registration manual at: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/the-registration-assessment