

Skills4Pharmacy support staff course accreditation event report, parts 1 and 2, November 2020



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	Skills4Pharmacy
Course	Support staff course
Name of course(s)	Level 2 Apprenticeship Standard Course for Pharmacy Support Workers (PSW)
Event type	Accreditation
Event date	20 November 2020
Approval period	January 2021 – January 2024
Relevant requirements	Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020
Framework used	Apprenticeship Framework (England) and National Occupational Standards
Outcome	<p>Approval with conditions.</p> <p>The accreditation team has agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the Support Staff Apprenticeship course provided by Skills4Pharmacy should be accredited for a period of three years, subject to one condition.</p>
Conditions	<p>While acknowledging the apprenticeship agreement, the team agrees that this does not meet criterion 4.c. Therefore, the provider must develop a formal learning agreement for all trainees which must describe the range of roles and responsibilities, including those of the trainee, employer, and course provider. Copies of this agreement must be provided to all involved.</p> <p>Evidence of how this condition has been addressed must be sent to the GPhC, for approval by the accreditation team; this must be done by 31 December 2020.</p>
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 accreditation team's recommendation and approved the accreditation of the support staff apprenticeship offered by Skills4Pharmacy for a

	period of three years. The registrar noted that the condition set at the event has now been met.
Key contact (provider)	Catherine Davies, Head of Quality, Skills4Pharmacy.
Accreditation team	<p>Barbara Wensworth (event chair) Currently Freelance Pharmacy Lecturer, Standards Verifier, assessor and writer</p> <p>Donna Bartlett (Pharmacy Technician) Dispensary Team Leader Lancashire Teaching Hospitals</p> <p>Laura McEwen-Smith (Pharmacy Technician) Strategic Project lead, Pharmacy and Primary Care Development, Health Education England</p> <p>Fiona Barber (Lay) Independent Member, Leicester City Council</p>
Observers	Rachael Mendel (observer in training) Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC
GPhC representative	Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC
Rapporteur	Professor Brian Furman, 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/uksi/2010/231/contents/made>

Background

Skills4Pharmacy was established in 2015 as a distance learning provider of apprenticeships for the pharmacy profession. As a result of the General Pharmaceutical Council's review and update of the level 2 Requirements for Initial Education and Training of Pharmacy Support Staff, effective from October 2020, Skills4Pharmacy has developed and seeks accreditation for a Level 2 Apprenticeship Standard Course for Pharmacy Support Workers (PSW). Skills4Pharmacy also continues to offer training and assessment for learners who supply non-prescribed medicines and products; as this is not included in the apprenticeship standard, Skills4Pharmacy has also developed an optional unit based on the National Occupational Standard Pharm04.2016 ('Provide advice on non-prescribed medicines and products'. An accreditation event was scheduled for November 20 2020 and the following is a record 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 by videoconference on 13 November 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 (held by videoconference) of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives on 20 November 2020. The remainder of the event took place by videoconference on 20 November 2020 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff involved in the design of the course.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Key findings - Part 1 - Outcomes for all support staff

During the event the accreditation team reviewed all 19 outcomes for all support staff. To gain additional assurance the accreditation team also explored a sample of **three** learning outcomes (as well as two ‘role-specific’ outcomes from the apprenticeship standard) during a separate meeting with the provider, 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 will be met.

Skills4Pharmacy has policies for ‘Equality, Diversity and Inclusion’ and for ‘Equality and Diversity Monitoring’; equality and diversity data are collected and are used to enable adjustments to be made where necessary, for example, to accommodate specific educational needs. The course content incorporates equality, diversity and inclusion throughout. Learners have access to the Skills4Pharmacy Welfare Officer to whom they are introduced early in the course and who acts as their advocate when needed.

Criteria 2: course curriculum

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

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

This level 2 course was written to meet the ‘Institute of Apprenticeships and Technical Education, Apprenticeship Standard for Pharmacy Services Assistants’ which was mapped to the GPhC’s requirements for the initial education and training of pharmacy support workers. A ‘Functional Skills’ course is available to ensure that all learners achieve a minimum standard in English and mathematics, with these skills also being integrated into other areas of the programme. To meet the needs of pharmacy employers, an additional module concerning the provision of advice on non-prescription medicines has been provided, as this topic is not covered in the apprenticeship standard. The teaching and learning resources are reviewed prior to each cycle of delivery to check for updates and changes in practice, and resources are updated accordingly. To ensure comprehensive coverage, the course is structured in the same order as the apprenticeship standard. Delivery uses a rolling programme where learners can join the course at specific times throughout the year, at the start of a new topic or module. This means that certain principles, such as safeguarding, and health and safety, must be introduced during the induction period. Assessors work with learners on an individual basis and assessments are planned in cooperation with employers, thus ensuring that learners attain the appropriate work-based experience to prepare them for assessment.

Criteria 3: assessment

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

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

As well as oral knowledge tests comprising multiple-choice questions and short-answer questions, assessment includes the production of a portfolio of evidence of workplace activity containing observations of practice by an assessor or expert witness, accuracy logs to demonstrate both competence and consistency of practice, and additional relevant evidence of competence, such as learner narratives and self-reflective accounts. Assessments are mapped to learning outcomes. Each learner has an educational supervisor and/or an expert witness in the workplace who acts as a mentor; this person works with the Skills4Pharmacy assessor to triangulate decisions relating to a learner’s competence. Expert witnesses, who are all registered pharmacy professionals, play a key role in providing evidence to demonstrate that learners meet the programme outcomes; they receive appropriate training and support from Skills4Pharmacy. Assessors must ensure that there is sufficient evidence to demonstrate safe practice. Feedback includes a progress review, which all learners undergo every 8-12 weeks. All assessment staff must hold a recognised assessor qualification which demonstrates training and competence in feedback skills.

Criteria 4: management, resources and capacity

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

The team was satisfied that seven of the eight criteria relating to management, resources and capacity will be met with criterion 4.c subject to a condition.

Skills4Pharmacy is an online virtual college and as such the need for physical resources is reduced. While there is a Preston-based equipped office, staff members mainly work from home and communicate via the video-conferencing system, telephone or email. The Skills4Pharmacy team includes an appropriate number of tutors, assessors, mentors and administrators and is supported by a network of workplace-based educational supervisors and expert witnesses. Learners must have access to suitable IT hardware, as well as the ability to access the online video-conference tutorials and the e-portfolio system, which both can be used on laptops, tablets or smart phones through a free-of-charge app. In line with apprenticeship regulations, each learner has a learner agreement, and the roles and responsibilities of learners and all assessors, QA staff, educational supervisors and expert witnesses, together with those of other relevant staff, for example, the welfare officer, are set out in the 'Course Handbook', the 'Expert Witness Manual' and the 'Learner Manual'; these documents also emphasise the standards expected of learners and describe disciplinary and malpractice procedures. Noting that the 'apprenticeship agreement' does not fulfil the requirement of criterion 4.c that there must be formal agreement defining the roles and responsibilities of the learner, employer and course provider, **the team imposed a condition** that the provider must develop a formal learning agreement for all trainees; this must describe the range of roles and responsibilities, including those of the trainee, the employer, and the course provider, with copies of the agreement being provided to all involved.

There are processes in place for learners to provide feedback on the course, including voicing complaints, and for them to raise concerns about suspected misconduct, illegal acts or failure to act within the workplace.

Criteria 5: quality management

Criteria met? Yes No (accreditation team use only)

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

A 'Quality Assurance Strategy' is in place in which the roles and responsibilities of all staff involved in the quality assurance processes and procedures are defined. The internal quality assurance process includes interviewing learners and expert witnesses, as well as sampling evidence that demonstrates the meeting of the learning outcomes. An independent external quality assurer (EQA) will probe the quality of provision through observing practice and interviewing staff, learners and expert witnesses; the EQA will also sample evidence. Feedback from internal and external quality assurers will be used to create an action plan for improvements, the outcomes of which will be checked at the next sampling activity. Learners have many opportunities to provide feedback, for example, during group feedback sessions, surveys and progress reviews. Skills4Pharmacy is subject to external quality assurance from awarding organisations (City & Guilds; Open Awards), as well as from OFSTED. Updating of all teaching and learning resources is undertaken by course tutors prior to delivery. All members of the delivery team are registered pharmacy professionals and have a responsibility to maintain their currency of practice. Data about the trainees and their progression on the course, including equality and diversity characteristics, are collected, reviewed and used to inform the management of the course.

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 will be met.

Clear information about the course requirements, including appeals, malpractice and disciplinary procedures, as well as information about welfare arrangements and safeguarding, is provided to all learners through the 'Learner Handbook'. Information for educational supervisors and expert witnesses, including GPhC guidance is provided through an 'Expert Witness Pack' and the Course Handbook'. All policies and procedures are available on the Skills4Pharmacy website. Learners each have a dedicated assessor who guides them through the course, as well as assessing evidence for the meeting of learning outcomes. Other staff members, including the Welfare Officer are also available to provide support for learners throughout the course. The internal quality assurers monitor the learners' progress and intervene where required. Each week the administration team produces information about learners' progress, thus enabling the identification of those learners who are not progressing so that appropriate action can be taken.

Part 3 - Role-specific learning outcomes

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

