

Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers

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About the GPhC

We regulate pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacies in Great Britain.

We work to assure and improve standards of care for people using pharmacy services.

What we do

Our role is to protect the public and give them assurance that they will receive safe and effective care when using pharmacy services.

We set standards for pharmacy professionals and pharmacies to enter and remain on our register.

We ask pharmacy professionals and pharmacies for evidence that they are continuing to meet our standards, and this includes inspecting pharmacies.

We act to protect the public and to uphold public confidence in pharmacy if there are concerns about a pharmacy professional or pharmacy on our register.

Through our work we help to promote professionalism, support continuous improvement and assure the quality and safety of pharmacy.

Introduction


Pharmacists, as experts in medicines, play a vital role in delivering care and helping people to maintain and improve their health, safety and wellbeing. Patients and the public have a right to expect safe and effective care from pharmacists. We believe it is pharmacists' attitudes and behaviours in their day-to-day work which make the most significant contributions to the quality of care, of which safety is a vital part.

These standards set out the knowledge, skills and attributes that a pharmacist independent prescriber in training must demonstrate. We expect them to become proficient prescribers whose skills can be used to work with and support the wider, complex healthcare systems across Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The standards also set out our requirements for organisations providing their education and training.

From 2026, pharmacists joining the GPhC register will automatically be annotated as independent prescribers if they:

- have been fully trained to the 2021 initial education and training of pharmacists standards
- passed the GPhC registration assessment, and
- meet our criteria for registration

A large proportion of pharmacists who are already registered, as well as those due to join our register before 2026, will not automatically receive this annotation. They will need to



achieve a Practice Certificate in Independent Prescribing before they can apply for annotation as a prescriber. To be awarded the practice certificate they must successfully complete a GPhC-accredited pharmacist Independent Prescribing (IP) course.

Pharmacists must meet the learning outcomes specified in these standards before they can apply to the GPhC for annotation on the GPhC's register. The annotation is a public record that they can practise as an independent prescriber.

The prescribing role

Prescribing will be applied in different ways and in different contexts but at its core will be the following:

'the prescriber takes responsibility for the clinical assessment of the patient, establishing a diagnosis, and the clinical management required as well as the responsibility for prescribing and the appropriateness of any prescribing' (National Prescribing Centre, 2005)

The structure of the standards

The standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers are in two parts.

Part 1: Learning outcomes – these describe what a trainee pharmacist independent prescriber must be able to demonstrate when they successfully complete their independent prescribing education and training. The learning outcomes are presented in four domains:

- person-centred care
- professionalism
- professional knowledge and skills, and
- collaboration

Part 2: Standards – these describe the requirements for any independent prescribing course provider and also the entry requirements for a course. The standards are presented in nine domains:

- selection and entry requirements
- equality, diversity and inclusion
- management, resources and capacity
- monitoring, review and evaluation
- course design and delivery
- training in practice
- assessment
- support and the learning experience
- designated prescribing practitioners

There is a glossary at the end of this document that explains some of the terms used in it.

Part 1: Learning outcomes

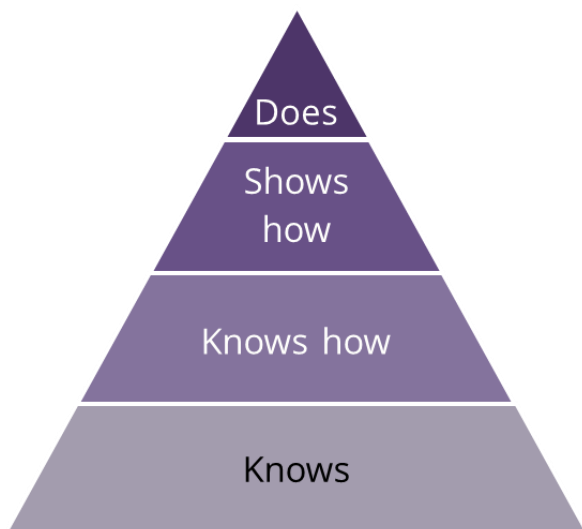
Standard: On successful completion of their independent prescribing education and training, the trainee pharmacist independent prescriber will have achieved the learning outcomes in these standards to the required level of competence.

Describing and assessing outcomes

The outcome levels in this standard are based on an established competence and assessment hierarchy known as 'Miller's triangle':

1. 'knows' (has knowledge)
2. 'knows how' (applies knowledge)
3. 'shows how' (demonstrates competence in a limited way)
4. 'does' (demonstrates competence repeatedly and reliably)

Figure 1: Miller's triangle



Because what is being assessed at each of the four levels is different, the assessment methods needed are different too – although there will be some overlap.

The outcomes in these standards have been set at the right level for pharmacist independent prescribers in training.

Level of study

The level of study for independent prescribing education and training is master's level, as defined in UK national qualifications frameworks.

Domains of study

The learning outcomes are presented in four domains:

- person-centred care
- professionalism
- professional knowledge and skills, and
- collaboration

The domains and learning outcomes are all of equal importance.

To achieve them, curricula, teaching and learning strategies, and programmes and training plans to deliver these learning outcomes will provide:

- structured learning activities of at least 26 days, and
- a period of learning in practice of at least 90 hours

Domain: person-centred care

If they are to pass, trainees must be able to demonstrate the following at the end of each element of their pharmacist independent prescribing education and training:

Table 1: person-centred care

Learning outcome	Level
1. Recognise the psychological and physical impact of prescribing decisions on people	Knows how
2. Understand and meet their legal responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation and respect diversity and cultural differences	Does
3. Take responsibility for ensuring that person-centred care is not compromised because of personal values and beliefs	Does
4. Demonstrate appropriate history-taking techniques through effective consultation skills	Does
5. Demonstrate an understanding of the role of the prescriber in working in partnership with people who may not be able to make fully informed decisions about their health needs	Shows how
6. Support individuals to make informed choices that respect people's preferences	Does

Domain: professionalism

If they are to pass, trainees must be able to demonstrate the following at the end of each element of their pharmacist independent prescribing education and training:

Table 2: professionalism

Learning outcome	Level
7. Demonstrate a critical understanding of their own role and the role of others in multi-professional teams	Does
8. Recognise their own role as a responsible and accountable prescriber who understands legal and ethical implications	Does
9. Apply relevant legislation and ethical frameworks related to prescribing, including remote prescribing and the handling and sharing of confidential information	Shows how
10. Recognise and manage factors that may influence prescribing decisions	Does


11. Apply local, regional and national guidelines, policies and legislation related to healthcare	Does
12. Reflect on and develop their own prescribing practice to ensure it represents current best practice	Does
13. Apply an understanding of health economics when making prescribing decisions	Shows how
14. Understand the clinical governance of the prescriber, who may also be in a position to supply medicines to people	Knows how
15. Recognise other professionals' practice and raise concerns related to inappropriate or unsafe prescribing by other prescribers	Shows how

Domain: professional knowledge and skills

If they are to pass, trainees must be able to demonstrate the following at the end of each element of their pharmacist independent prescribing education and training:

Table 3: Professional knowledge and skills

Learning outcome	Level
16. Apply evidence-based decision-making in all aspects of prescribing	Does
17. Manage the risks and benefits associated with prescribing decisions	Does
18. Demonstrate the application of pharmacology in relation to their own prescribing practice	Does
19. Demonstrate clinical and diagnostic skills in clinical settings appropriate to their scope of practice	Does
20. Create and maintain appropriate records which ensure safe and effective care and align with relevant legislation	Does
21. Identify relevant investigations and interpret results and data in their prescribing practice	Does
22. Utilise current and emerging systems and technologies in safe prescribing	Does
23. Identify and respond to people's needs when prescribing remotely	Shows how
24. Apply the principles of effective monitoring and management to improve patient outcomes	Does



25. Recognise and manage prescribing and medication errors	Shows how
26. Recognise the public health issues in promoting health as part of their prescribing practice	Does

Domain: collaboration

If they are to pass, trainees must be able to demonstrate the following at the end of each element of their pharmacist independent prescribing education and training:

Table 4: collaboration

Learning outcome	Level
27. Work collaboratively with others to optimise individuals' care, understanding their roles in the prescribing process	Does
28. Recognise their own role and responsibilities, and those of others, in safeguarding children and vulnerable adults	Knows how
29. Recognise when and where to refer people appropriately	Shows how
30. Collaborate with people to encourage them to take responsibility for managing care	Does
31. Demonstrate appropriate consultation skills to get information from individuals who are either unaware of or guarded about their health needs, to inform safe prescribing	Does
32. Recognise when to seek guidance from another member of the healthcare team or an appropriate authority	Does

Part 2: Standards for pharmacist independent prescribing course providers

Part 2 is made up of the entry requirements for a pharmacist independent prescriber course, followed by nine standards and their associated criteria.

As a general principle, the standards and criteria apply to all organisations and environments that contribute to the delivery of the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers.


However, the emphasis placed on a standard or criterion will vary depending on the role played by the organisation. Everyone involved must, therefore, work together to deliver the standard.

Organisations providing or managing any aspect of pharmacist independent prescribing education and training must meet the relevant standards for all the activities they carry out.

Entry requirements

The entry requirements for a Pharmacist Independent Prescribing course (relating to criterion 1.1 below) assess an individual's suitability for independent prescribing practice. They are:

- a. Applicants are registered as a pharmacist with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) or, in Northern Ireland, with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI).
- b. Applicants are in good standing with the GPhC and/or PSNI and any other healthcare regulator with which they are registered.
- c. Applicants must have relevant experience in a UK pharmacy setting and be able to recognise, understand and articulate the skills and attributes required by a prescriber to act as the foundation of their prescribing practice whilst training.
- d. For the purposes of developing their independent prescribing practice applicants must identify an area of clinical or therapeutic practice on which to base their learning.
- e. Applicants must have a designated prescribing practitioner who has agreed to supervise their learning in practice. The applicant's designated prescribing practitioner must be a registered healthcare professional in Great Britain or Northern Ireland with legal independent prescribing rights, who is suitably experienced and qualified to carry out this supervisory role, and who has demonstrated CPD or revalidation relevant to this role. Although an applicant may be supervised by more than one



person, only one prescriber must be the designated prescribing practitioner. The designated prescribing practitioner is the person who will certify that successful pharmacists are competent to practise as independent prescribers.

Standard 1: selection and entry requirements

Selection processes must be clear, consistent and unbiased, comply with relevant legislation and ensure that applicants meet the course entry requirements.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 1.1 Selection criteria must be clear and must include meeting all the entry requirements in these standards.
- 1.2 Selectors must apply the selection criteria consistently, in an unbiased way and in a way that meets the requirements of relevant legislation.
- 1.3 Course providers must provide clear guidance on the type of experience a pharmacist should have before applying to the course. This guidance must be available to applicants before they make an application.
- 1.4 Course providers must check at the selection stage that they are satisfied each applicant has:
 - relevant experience in a UK pharmacy setting
 - the ability to recognise, understand and articulate the skills and attributes required by a prescriber, and
 - an identified area of clinical or therapeutic practice

The applicant must clearly demonstrate this in detail as part of the selection process.

- 1.5 A course provider must fully evaluate each application and decide if the applicant has sufficient and relevant experience to begin a course to train as an independent prescriber. If the course provider decides that there is insufficient relevant experience, they must reject the application, clearly setting out the reasons behind this decision.
- 1.6 Course providers must ensure that all the entry requirements have been met before the start date of a course on which an applicant is enrolled.

Standard 2: quality, diversity and inclusion

All aspects of pharmacist independent prescribing education and training must be based on and promote principles of equality and diversity and comply with all relevant legislation.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 2.1 The principles of equality and diversity must be embedded in, and promoted through, course design and delivery.
- 2.2 Equality and diversity data must be used when designing and delivering courses and the learning experience.
- 2.3 Reasonable adjustments must be made to course delivery to help pharmacist independent prescribers in training with specific needs to meet the learning outcomes.
- 2.4 Teaching, learning and assessment can be modified to meet 2.3 but learning outcomes cannot.
- 2.5 Course design and delivery must ensure pharmacist independent prescribers in training understand their legal responsibilities under equality and human rights legislation.

Standard 3: management, resources and capacity

Courses must be planned and maintained through transparent processes which must show who is accountable for what. The education and training facilities, infrastructure, leadership, staffing and staff support must be sufficient to deliver the course.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 3.1 All courses must be supported by a defined management plan which must include:
 - a schedule of roles and responsibilities in learning, teaching and practice environments
 - lines of accountability in the learning, teaching and practice environments
 - defined structures and processes to manage delivery, and
 - processes for identifying and managing risk
- 3.2 There must be agreements in place outlining the roles and responsibilities of everyone involved in delivering a course.
- 3.3 Learning agreements must be in place with the pharmacist independent prescriber in training covering all learning, teaching and practice environments outlining roles and responsibilities and lines of accountability.

- 3.4 In all learning, teaching and practice environments, there must be:
- appropriately qualified and experienced professionals
 - enough staff from relevant professions to deliver the course and support the learning of pharmacist independent prescribers in training
 - sufficient resources available to deliver the course
 - facilities that are fit for purpose, and
 - access to appropriate learning resources
- 3.5 Everyone involved in managing and delivering the course must understand their role and must be supported to carry out their work effectively.
- 3.6 Each pharmacist independent prescriber in training must be supported as a learner in learning and practice environments. There must be mechanisms in place for designated prescribing practitioners to liaise with course providers regularly about the progress of a pharmacist independent prescriber in training in learning and practice environments.

Standard 4: monitoring, review and evaluation

The quality of a course must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated in a systematic and developmental way.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 4.1 All relevant aspects of a course must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated systematically. When issues are identified they must be documented and addressed within agreed timescales.
- 4.2 There must be a quality management structure in place that sets out procedures for monitoring and evaluation, with timescales, including who is responsible for reporting, review and taking action where appropriate.
- 4.3 There must be procedures in place to monitor and evaluate the standard of teaching, learning and assessment to ensure that quality is maintained across all learning environments.
- 4.4 Course monitoring and review must take into account the health and care environment to ensure that courses remain up to date and reflect current practice.
- 4.5 Feedback from pharmacist independent prescribers in training must be embedded in monitoring, review and evaluation processes.
- 4.6 The providing institution must have validated the course before applying for GPhC accreditation.

Standard 5: course design and delivery

Courses must develop the behaviours, required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards through a coherent teaching and learning strategy.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 5.1 There must be a course teaching and learning strategy which sets out how pharmacist independent prescribers in training will achieve the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards.
- 5.2 Courses must be designed and delivered in a way which integrates and builds on the pre-existing knowledge, skills and practice of pharmacists in training as pharmacist independent prescribers.
- 5.3 All course providers must have pharmacy professionals, including pharmacist independent prescribers, involved in the design and the delivery of the course.
- 5.4 Course providers must engage with a range of stakeholders, including patients, the public, course commissioners and employers, to refine the design and delivery of the course.
- 5.5 Courses must be updated when there are significant changes in practice, to ensure they are current.
- 5.6 Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must only undertake tasks in which they are competent, or are learning under supervision to be competent, so that patient safety is not compromised.
- 5.7 Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must be supervised using agreed mechanisms in all clinical practice environments to ensure safe, person-centred care is delivered at all times.
- 5.8 Course regulations must be appropriate for a course that leads to professional annotation. That is, they must prioritise patient safety, safe and effective practice and clinical skills.
- 5.9 There must be systems in place to ensure that pharmacist independent prescribers in training understand what fitness to practise mechanisms apply to them. All course providers and employers must have procedures to deal with fitness to practise concerns.
- 5.10 Causes for concern about a pharmacist independent prescriber in training, a designated prescribing practitioner or the learning environment must be addressed as soon as possible and in such a way that the cause for concern is dealt with.

Standard 6: learning in practice

Courses must enable the pharmacist independent prescriber in training to develop the behaviours and the required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards in learning in practice settings.

- 6.5 The designated prescribing practitioner is responsible for signing off a pharmacist independent prescriber in training as being competent as a pharmacist independent prescriber.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 6.1 Part of the course for pharmacist independent prescribers in training must take place in clinical settings with direct access to patients – these are ‘learning in practice’ settings.
- 6.2 In the learning in practice settings identified in 6.1, pharmacist independent prescribers in training will prescribe under the supervision of a designated prescribing practitioner.
- 6.3 If more than one person is involved in supervising a pharmacist independent prescriber in training, one independent prescriber must assume primary responsibility for their supervision. That person will be the designated prescribing practitioner for the pharmacist independent prescriber in training.
- 6.4 Course providers must approve the designated prescribing practitioner and agree that they have the core competencies to carry out the role effectively.

Standard 7: assessment

Courses must have an assessment strategy which assesses the professional behaviours and the required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards. The assessment strategy must assess whether the practice of a pharmacist independent prescriber in training is safe and clinically appropriate.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 7.1 Courses must have an assessment strategy which ensures that assessment is robust, reliable and valid.
- 7.2 Course providers are responsible for ensuring that all learning outcomes are assessed fully, using appropriate methods, and that teaching and learning are aligned with assessment.
- 7.3 Patient safety must be paramount at all times, and the assessment strategy must assess whether a pharmacist independent prescriber in training is practising safely.
- 7.4 Monitoring systems must be in place in all learning environments. The systems must assess the progress of a pharmacist independent prescriber in training toward meeting the learning outcomes in Part 1 of these standards. They must ensure that the practice of a pharmacist independent prescriber in training is safe at all times.
- 7.5 Agreements must be in place between course providers and designated prescribing practitioners that describe the roles and responsibilities in the assessment of pharmacist independent prescribers in training.
- 7.6 Assessments must be carried out by appropriately trained and qualified people who are competent to assess the performance of pharmacist independent prescribers in training.
- 7.7 Irrespective of their location, all assessments must be quality assured by course providers.
- 7.8 Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must receive regular, appropriate and timely feedback on their performance to support their development as learners.
- 7.9 Assessment regulations must be appropriate for a course that leads to professional annotation. On completion of the course, pharmacist independent prescribers must demonstrate that their practice is safe and prioritises patient safety.
- 7.10 Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must pass all summative assessments before being signed off.
- 7.11 As a result of 7.10, and on patient safety grounds, compensation or condonation are not allowed on courses for pharmacist independent prescribers in training.

Standard 8: support and the learning experience

Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must be supported in all learning environments to develop as learners during their training.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 8.1 A range of mechanisms must be in place to support trainees to achieve the learning outcomes in Part 1 of these standards, including:
 - induction
 - effective supervision
 - an appropriate and realistic workload
 - personal and academic support, and
 - access to resources
- 8.2 There must be mechanisms in place for pharmacist independent prescribers in training to meet regularly with their designated prescribing practitioner and others to discuss and document their progress as learners.
- 8.3 There must be clear procedures for pharmacist independent prescribers in training to raise concerns. Any concerns must be dealt with promptly, with documented action taken where appropriate.
- 8.4 Everyone supporting pharmacist independent prescribers in training must take into account the GPhC's guidance on tutoring for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in their work as appropriate.

Standard 9: designated prescribing practitioners

Designated prescribing practitioners must be fit to undertake that role and must have appropriate training and experience.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 9.1 Course providers must have appropriate mechanisms for ensuring that designated prescribing practitioners are fit to be the supervisors of pharmacist independent prescribers in training.
- 9.2 Prospective designated prescribing practitioners must have:
 - active prescribing competence applicable to the areas in which they will be supervising
 - appropriate patient-facing clinical and diagnostic skills
 - supported or supervised other healthcare professionals, and
 - the ability to assess patient-facing clinical and diagnostic skills
- 9.3 Course providers must provide training for designated prescribing practitioners on:
 - the pharmacist independent prescribing role
 - the course for pharmacist independent prescribers in training on which they will be working, including its learning outcomes



- the role of designated prescribing practitioners in the course
- assessing the performance of pharmacist independent prescribers in training
- giving feedback to pharmacist independent prescribers in training
- supporting pharmacist independent prescribers in training, and
- raising concerns


9.4 Course providers must support designated prescribing practitioners when they are acting in that role.

9.5 Course providers must provide designated prescribing practitioners with feedback about their performance as prescribing supervisors and arrange extra training, support and development as necessary.

Glossary

Table 5: A glossary of terms used in this document

Term	Definition
Accreditation	The processes by which a pharmacist independent prescribing course is reviewed for quality assurance purposes to ensure that the course of education or training meets the relevant GPhC education and training standards, or training requirements.
Applicant	A person applying to enrol onto a pharmacist independent prescribing course.
Compensation	Allowing failure by a small margin in a limited number of assessments on the basis of a satisfactory overall performance.
Condonation	When a 'pass' is awarded even though the standard for a pass has not been reached, usually when the margin of failure is small.
Course provider	An institution with the ability to award qualifications at master's level that is eligible to apply for accreditation of a pharmacist independent prescribing course.
Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP)	A healthcare professional with an annotation or automatic right to prescribe – for example a medical practitioner, pharmacist, nurse, physiotherapist, or paramedic – who will mentor and supervise the pharmacist during the period of learning in practice. The DPP will provide a formal confirmation once they are satisfied of the trainee's competence in prescribing.
Employer	A person or an organisation who directly employs the trainee.
Health professional/care professional	A person who is approved to practise in a health or social care speciality or discipline by the relevant regulatory body in the UK.
Learning activities	These are defined by course providers. They can include in-class work, directed study, self-directed study and distance learning activities.



Term	Definition
Learning environment	Any environment where a trainee pharmacist independent prescriber is undertaking training activities as part of an independent prescribing course.
Learning in practice	A period of at least 90 hours when trainee pharmacist independent prescribers practise and develop their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills under the supervision of other health or care professionals. This includes their DPP □ who is responsible for signing off a pharmacist independent prescriber in training as being a competent prescriber.
Person-centred care	Person-centred care is delivered when pharmacy professionals understand what is important to the individual and then adapt the care to meet their needs – making the care of the person their first priority. All pharmacy professionals can demonstrate ‘person-centredness’, whether or not they provide care directly, by thinking about the impact their decisions have on people.
Pharmacist independent prescriber in training Trainee pharmacist independent prescriber	A pharmacist who is undertaking a GPhC-accredited pharmacist IP course in the UK.
Reasonable adjustments	Arrangements put in place to change the environment in order to avoid disadvantaging a person or group of people due to a specific need, which could be temporary or permanent. The Equality Act 2010 sets out the duty to make such adjustments for people with protected characteristics. Legislation in Northern Ireland is different and is principally from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.
Remote prescribing	Prescribing for a patient via telephone, video link or online, without seeing the patient face to face.
Sign-off	Formal confirmation by the course provider that the pharmacist has passed the course and achieved a practice certificate in independent prescribing.

Term	Definition
Supervision	Overseeing trainee pharmacist independent prescribers, using agreed systems, in all practice environments to ensure that safe, person-centred care is delivered. The DPP is responsible for ensuring safety during a trainee's course.
Summative assessment	A form of assessment used to measure whether the trainee pharmacist independent prescriber has achieved one or more learning outcomes.



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