

University of Sussex Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree step 7 accreditation report



May and July 2020

Event summary and conclusions

Provider	University of Sussex
Course	Masters of Pharmacy degree (MPharm)
Event type	Initial accreditation Step 7
Event date	13-14 May and 1 July 2020
Accreditation period	Academic year 2019-20 to academic year 2021-2022
Outcome	The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the University of Sussex's Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree should be accredited fully, with two conditions
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Full accreditation applies to the three cohorts enrolled currently on the MPharm degree only and expires once all students have graduated or have left for other reasons and are no longer registered at the University of Sussex as MPharm students; and 2. Even though the MPharm degree is fully accredited, the GPhC will return for the next two academic years, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to evaluate the degree's teach out.
Standing conditions	Please refer to Appendix 1
Recommendations	None
Registrar decision	To accept the recommendation of the GPhC's accreditation team as above
Key contact (provider)	Professor Jane Portlock, Director of Pharmacy
Accreditation team	<p>Peter Curphey (team leader), Pharmacy consultant (Part 1 and Part 2)</p> <p>Professor Andy Husband (team member – academic), Professor of Clinical Pharmacy and Head of School, Newcastle University (Part 1)</p> <p>Sandra Hall (team member – academic), formerly Head of Pharmacy Practice, Leicester School of Pharmacy, De Montfort University (Part 1)</p> <p>Raminder Sihota (team member – pharmacist), Senior Professional Standards Manager, Boots (Part 1)</p> <p>Leonie Milliner (team member – lay), Senior Education Adviser, General Optical Council (Part 1, meetings 3-6 only)</p>
GPhC representative	Damian Day, Head of Education (Part 1 and Part 2)
Rapporteurs	<p>Ian Marshall, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde; Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services) (Part 1 report)</p> <p>Damian Day, Head of Education (final report – this report)</p>

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies in Great Britain (GB). Additionally, it is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in that jurisdiction. 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 (MPharm). This is the report of an accreditation event for an MPharm degree. This reaccreditation event was carried out in accordance with the GPhC's 2011 MPharm Accreditation Methodology and the degree 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' (accredit) 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

In 2013, the University of Sussex approached the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) with a view to the University entering the process for accrediting a new MPharm degree. Consequently, a Step 1 meeting took place on 7 January 2014, during which the University was advised that as it intended to develop both a four-year and five-year degree, a robust business plan to support both courses would be required, since the funding, staffing strategies and placements would be significantly different for each course. Only the four-year degree was taken forward.

The Step 2 event took place on 20-21 November 2014 at the University at which the business case was examined in depth, along with staff appointments made between step 1 and step 2, the philosophy of the integrated course, the learning, teaching and assessment strategy, plans for patient and public involvement in course design and delivery, the inter-professional learning strategy and the plan for practice activities. The accreditation team agreed to recommend that the University be permitted to move from Step 2 to Step 3 of the accreditation process. While no conditions were set initially, the accreditation team made a recommendation that the School achieve the right balance of science and practice experience in the staffing profile when recruiting new staff members, in order to support the development of an integrated curriculum and its associated assessments, and asked that the GPhC be informed of the staffing profile and their expertise as new members of staff were recruited. In response, the University made a commitment to bring forward 3 staff appointments during the 2015-16 academic year, providing a total staff complement of 12 new posts for 2015-2016. In a post-visit development relating to the initial rejection of the campus masterplan and the potential impact on planned pharmacy accommodation, two new conditions were set. These were that the University was required to keep the GPhC fully informed of all planning decisions relevant to pharmacy accommodation, including the outcome of an on-going appeal against the rejection of the University's masterplan for its campus redevelopment and any decisions relating to the accommodation for pharmacy in the short, medium or long term. Additionally, the University was required to present the GPhC with a revised business case and risk analysis in which the Life Sciences building, the planned permanent home of pharmacy, was delayed by one, two or more years or was not built at all.

Subsequently, the objections by Brighton and Hove Council to the campus masterplan proposals were fully withdrawn and the University's appeal was granted.

The Step 3 event took place 10-11 December 2015 at which the accreditation team examined the course in depth and deliberated on the development of the learning, teaching and assessment strategy; explored the plans for patient and public involvement in course design and delivery, the inter-professional learning strategy and the plan for practice activities. It also considered staff appointments made between Step 2 and Step 3. The accreditation team agreed to recommend that the proposed MPharm degree be permitted to move from Step 3 to Step 4 of the accreditation process, subject to one condition and one standing condition. The condition was that the University must have received approval of the fitness to practise procedures from the GPhC before the intake of the first cohort of students. Subsequently, the University received such formal approval and admitted its first pharmacy students in September 2016. The standing condition that the University must keep the GPhC fully informed of all planning decisions relevant to pharmacy accommodation remained. Further to the standing condition, a letter outlining the submission of the planning application to Brighton & Hove City Council for the new building was sent to the GPhC.

The Step 4 event took place on 19/20 April 2017 at which event the accreditation team agreed to recommend that the University should be permitted to move from Step 4 to Step 5 of the accreditation process for new MPharm degrees, subject to one condition, one recommendation, and one standing condition. The condition was that the University must provide the GPhC with formal confirmation that the MPharm degree is covered by academic regulations approved by the University Senate in June. This was to meet standard 5.9. The standing condition was that set previously. The recommendation was that the University must submit a risk analysis against the business plan in its evidence at Step 5. Given that the estimated due date to move the MPharm degree into the new building had been delayed another year from the original proposal presented at Step 1, this was to provide the GPhC with assurance that the University had a satisfactory contingency plan in place as the MPharm degree develops.

The Step 5 event took place on 28 February to 1 March 2018 at which event the accreditation team agreed to recommend that the University should be permitted to move from Step 5 to Step 6 of the accreditation process for new MPharm degrees subject to the previous standing condition. The accreditation team acknowledged that although the GPhC had been kept informed about the progress of the planning permission by the Director of Pharmacy, it was agreed that the University senior executive team will keep the GPhC informed about University decisions related to pharmacy as promised by the Pro-Vice Chancellor for Planning. This condition was imposed to ensure that the GPhC was in possession of all the facts relevant to the development of pharmacy at the University.

In 2018, the University Executive Group commissioned a review of the MPharm degree in order to assess its financial viability. While not challenging the quality of the provision, the review concluded that the degree was not financially viable and consulted affected staff and students about options for the future of the degree. Having considered the consultation responses, financial modelling and other evidence, it was concluded that the degree was not financially viable and had very little prospect of becoming so with the level of student recruitment seen since 2016. Consequently, it was recommended that the MPharm degree be closed to new entrants from September 2019.

As a result of the above, the purpose of the Step 6 event on 15 and 16 May 2020 was modified, to take decisions on: 1. the delivery of the University's MPharm degree in that academic year and whether the University was ready to teach Year 4 for the first time in 2019-2020; and 2. the University's plans for teaching out and then closing its MPharm degree. As a result of the Step 6 event, two conditions were imposed: 1. that the GPhC must receive a fully developed and agreed delivery plan for the 2019-2020 academic year, including the precise involvement of local delivery partners, and the agreed teach-out

plan, by a date to be agreed with the GPhC urgently. The date could be no later than the 31st August 2019. This was to ensure that the GPhC had a clear understanding how the MPharm degree would be delivered in 2019-2020 and how the teach-out would operate. The plans were to be supported by legally binding framework agreements or contracts where that was necessary. Once submitted, the GPhC would evaluate the plans and feed back to Sussex by an agreed date. The accreditation team wished to make it clear that should the feedback be negative, the University would have only a limited time between then and the start of the 2019-2020 academic year to address concerns. This condition was because the accreditation team heard that the University had been developing a plan for the delivery of the MPharm in 2019-2020 and a plan for its teach-out, both of which would be finalised before the end of the 2018-2019 academic year. In normal circumstances, the GPhC would not have set a condition related to agreed workstreams when they were underway. However, the circumstances at Sussex were unusual in that they were less prepared than is usual at a Step 6 visit for delivering Year 4 of an MPharm for the first time and, uniquely, were teaching-out a regulated degree; 2. that some members of the accreditation team would return to Sussex 1. shortly after the 13th December 2019 to evaluate the delivery of the first term and 2. shortly after the 27th March 2020 to evaluate the delivery of the bulk of the teaching in the second term. The formal Step 7 visits would take place after that.

The first such checking visit took place at the University on 4 December 2019 at which time the accreditation team heard from staff and students that modules had been delivered satisfactorily, with some unplanned changes, mainly to accommodate staff departures. Further, the accreditation team heard that plans were in place: 1. for the delivery of the second semester in 2019-2020 and 2. for teaching out subsequent years. While acknowledging that plans were subject to change, the accreditation team agreed that they were appropriate and agreed to recommend to the Registrar that the outcome of the Step 6 accreditation visit should stand and that no further conditions need be applied. The University was reminded that it must inform the GPhC of significant changes to either plan, and how important regular communication with students was as MPharm students still felt vulnerable, despite the reassurances they have received about the future of the course thus far. At that time, the University was told that a GPhC accreditation team would return to Sussex three further times in 2019-2020: to discuss the delivery of the second semester; for the step 7 accreditation event; and, finally, to attend the first finals examination board for 2019-2020 MPharm students in Year 4. The University was reminded that it would be successful completion of both parts of the step 7 event which would grant full accreditation to the MPharm course.

In the event, the second checking visit, scheduled for 20 March 2020, for which the University submitted an update document, was cancelled due to the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. The update document contained sections on staffing status, delivery and teach-out plans, the Framework Agreement with a partner institution, stakeholder engagement, student engagement, the external examiners' visit, and progression scenarios. The update document was evaluated by the accreditation team as part of the step 7 part 1 event.

Due to the nationwide lockdown resulting from the global coronavirus pandemic, both Step 7 events were conducted by videoconference. A step 7 part 1 event was run on the 13 and 14 May 2020 and a step 7 part 2 event on the 1 July 2020. This is the consolidated report of those two events.

Documentation

Prior to the events, the provider submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales.

Pre-visits and briefings

In advance of the Part 1 visit, there was an exchange of emails between the GPhC's Head of Education and Sussex's Director of Pharmacy, followed by a Skype meeting which took place on 19 April 2020 between the accreditation team leader, the GPhC's Head of Education and Sussex representatives. The purpose of the pre-visit 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 visit.

As the Sussex step 7 event was the first full MPharm one to be run by videoconference, the accreditation team convened virtually on the 29 April 2020 for a briefing and initial discussion.

In advance of the Part 2 visit, there was an exchange of emails between the GPhC's Head of Education and Sussex's Director of Pharmacy and between the Head of Education and the MPharm degree's external examiners. The day before the Part 2 visit, the accreditation team leader, GPhC's Head of Education and the MPharm degree external examiners met virtually to discuss the following day's Life Sciences Programme Examination Board.

The events

The part 1 event began with a virtual meeting with students and a virtual private meeting of the accreditation team and the GPhC representative on 13 May 2020. The remainder of the event took place by videoconference on 14 May 2020, and comprised a meeting with staff of the University and private meetings of the accreditation team and the GPhC representative.

The part 2 event on 1 July 2020 focused on the awarding of MPharm degree Year 4 marks at the School of Life Sciences Progression and Award Board and a meeting with the MPharm external examiners. The GPhC's representatives were the accreditation team leader and GPhC's Head of Education.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
Day 1 – 13 May 2020		
1.	Meeting with students, including student representatives	14:00 – 15:00
2.	Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives	15:00 – 15:30
Day 2 – 14 May 2020		
3.	Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives	09:30 – 10:30
4.	Meeting with course provider staff	11:00 – 12:00
5.	Private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives	13:00 – 14:00
6.	Feedback to University representatives	14:30

Day 3 – 1 July 2020

7.	School of Life Sciences Progression and Award Board (classification of marks for 4 th Year MPharm students, reports from external examiners and awarding of prizes)	10.00-10.30
8.	Private meeting between GPhC representatives and the MPharm external examiners	10.30-10.45
9.	Feedback from GPhC representatives to the School of Life Sciences Progression and Award Board	10.45-11.00

Attendees

The team met with the following representatives of the University and external examiners:

Name	Designation at the time of accreditation event	Meetings attended
<i>University of Sussex staff</i>		
Professor Kelly Coate	Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education & Students	4, 6
Professor Sarah Guthrie	Head of School	4, 6
Professor Jane Portlock	Director of Pharmacy	4, 6
Beth Phillips	Deputy Director of Pharmacy & Teaching Fellow in Pharmacy Practice	4, 6
Jill Merewood	Senior Academic Advisor & Clinical Preceptor in Pharmacy Practice	4, 6
Professor Stephen Denyer	Advisor	4, 6
Sarah Hinchcliffe	School Manager	4, 6
Allan Spencer	Director of Finance	4, 6
Jayne Aldridge	Director for Student Experience	4, 6
John Hallam	Assistant Director of Human Resources	4, 6
Dr Alex Ralston	Pharmacy Practice Experience Officer	6
Dr Geeta Hitch	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Professor Ali Nokhodchi	Professor of Pharmaceutics and Drug Delivery	6
Professor Brian Cox	Professor of Pharmaceutical Chemistry	6
Dr Tara Ghafourian	Senior Lecturer in Pharmaceutics and Drug Delivery	6
Dr Michael Leech	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Claire May	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Dr Sally-Anne Heasman	Mental health Pharmacist	6
Gillian Yates	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Jill Rutter	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Dr Ilse Pienaar	Lecturer in Pharmacology	6
Dr Jenna Macciochi	Lecturer in Immunology	6
Dr Matthew Lam	Lecturer in Pharmaceutics	6
Neera Soni	Clinical Preceptor	6
Maaya Modha	Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice	6
Dr Tracy Nissan	Lecturer in Molecular Biology	6
Dr Barny Greenland	Lecturer in Medicinal Chemistry	6
Tara Hadley	Senior Registered Pharmacy Technician	6
Jamie Wyatt	Pharmacy Course Coordinator	6
Jane Major	Project Manager	6

<i>MPharm degree external examiners</i>	Dr Tarlochan Gill, Clinical Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, Medway School of Pharmacy	7, 8, 9
	Professor Gary Martin, Emeritus Professor of Pharmaceutics, King's College London	7, 8, 9
<i>School of Life Sciences Progression and Award Board members</i>	Dr Iain Day, Senior Lecturer in Chemistry & NMR Spectroscopy and Director of Teaching and Learning	7, 9
	Dr Tarlochan Gill, Clinical Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice, Medway School of Pharmacy	7, 8, 9
	Professor Gary Martin, Emeritus Professor of Pharmaceutics, King's College London	7, 8, 9
	Professor Daniel Orsorio, Deputy Head, School of Life Sciences, Professor of Neuroscience and Board chair	7, 9
	Dr Mark Paget, Reader in Molecular Genetics, and Director of Student Experience	7, 9
	Professor Jane Portlock, Director of Pharmacy	7, 9
	Dr Eddy Viseux, Senior Lecturer in Organic Chemistry and Board deputy chair	7, 9
	supported by	
	Jessica Hallett (Curriculum and Assessment Officer and Board Secretary)	7, 9
	Laura Owen (Curriculum and Assessment Officer and Board Secretary)	7, 9
	with	
Peter Curphey, GPhC accreditation team leader	7, 8, 9	
Damian Day, Head of Education, GPhC	7, 8, 9	
Dr Alex Ralston, Pharmacy Practice Experience Officer	7, 9	
Jamie Wyatt (Course Coordinator (Pharmacy))	7, 9	
in attendance		

During the Part 1 event, the accreditation team also met with a group of 10 students, comprising the Chair of the PharmaC Society, the Sussex BPSA representative, two Year 2 students, three Year 3 students, and three Year 4 students, including the undergraduate representatives from each of the three years.

Key findings

Standard 1: Patient and public safety

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met (See Appendix 2 for criteria)

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. As at previous steps, the current accreditation team noted from the documentation that systems have been put in place to ensure that students are aware of their individual and personal responsibility for assuring patient safety at all times. These include a culture of professionalism, fitness to practise, open days and other admissions and recruitment events, dissemination of information to applicants and students, teaching & assessments that ensure safe and effective practice, and experiential learning. Learning agreements are designed to reinforce the strict ethical standards expected of a pharmacy professional. The team learned that if a student misses an item in an OSCE which must be spotted for the safety of the patient, they will fail that station only. However, if the student causes potential patient harm by their own actions, unrelated to the red flag station, they will fail all stations and be required to re-sit the whole OSCE assessment. The accreditation team learned that due to the coronavirus outbreak it had proved impossible to have a meeting with the Stakeholder Group before the current lockdown began. However, staff will be in contact with new members of the group in the near future to gain their views on the plans for the next two years of delivery.

Standard 2: Monitoring, review and evaluation of initial education and training

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. The pharmacy provision sits within the School of Life Sciences. The Head of School is the line manager and responsible budget holder for the School, supported by a small executive team. The current accreditation team was told that there had been no changes in the leadership structure for the degree with a Governance Group, School Leadership Group, Pharmacy Executive, and MPharm Planning Group. However, since the Step 6 event the then Director of Pharmacy and Senior Academic Advisor had resigned and a new appointment had been made. The School of Life Sciences leadership structure has recently changed, with new members taking on the roles of Deputy Head of School (Education), interim Director of Teaching and Learning and Director of Student Experience; all are familiar with the MPharm and have provided valuable support for a range of activities. The Pharmacy Executive Team, comprising the Director, Deputy Director and Senior Academic Advisor will remain unchanged for the remainder of the teach-out period. The Governance Group, School Teach-out Group and Pharmacy Executive have continued to work closely despite the fact that face-to-face team meetings have been replaced currently by email communication and virtual meetings.

Standard 3: Equality, diversity and fairness

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. The documentation submitted indicated that the University is committed to ensuring that its Equality and Diversity policy is enacted throughout the institution. The University promotes equality and diversity, providing an inclusive and

supportive environment for all and has robust systems in place to support this commitment. The current accreditation team was told that the University was providing strong support for both students and staff during this unprecedented lockdown situation.

Standard 4: Selection of students *and* trainees

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

As the MPharm programme was closed to new entrants from September 2019, the accreditation team did not consider this criterion at the Step 7 event.

Standard 5: Curriculum delivery and student experience

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met at that time in relation to the then provisional accreditation. The MPharm curriculum is integrated around selected body systems, and underpinned by core clinical conditions and core medicines lists. The approach employs both team- & case-based learning techniques. The model of integration moves from multidisciplinary to inter-disciplinary, with students taking more responsibility for the integration of their knowledge and skills to solve clinical problems. The current accreditation team was told that despite the current coronavirus pandemic, 95% of the programme had been delivered according to the timetable. A variety of assessment methods is used, including short answer questions (SAQ), single best answer questions (SBA), extended matching questions (EMQ), essays and OSCEs. The accreditation team was told that clear plans had been drawn up for assessments during the current lockdown situation, mirroring those used elsewhere in the sector. Thus, all coursework assessments have been/will be completed as normal, with submission via email to a dedicated address. Examinations have also been moved online. Students will undertake MCQs via InteDashBoard, a team-based learning assessment software, on Canvas and SAQs/LAQs via Turnitin on Canvas. The University and School have provided regular updates to students on the delivery of teaching, communication with advisees, coursework and online examination assessment. However, students interviewed told the accreditation team that initial information about assessments had been vague and that they had learned of the definitive plans only the day before this accreditation event, but also had been told that examinations had been put back by two weeks and that any material that had been missed would not be included in the assessments. Students also told the accreditation team that they considered that they had not missed a lot due to the current lockdown although there had been some complications with newly-appointed staff having to use lectures from the previous year recorded by staff members that had left. In particular, Year 2 students told the accreditation team that the course had been disorganised due to staff leaving and with a reduction in live teaching sessions leading to a lack of motivation. Students recognised that Pharmacy was doing its best in difficult circumstances but Year 4 students indicated that the lack of practical workshops in the second semester had led to them missing out on the essence of the module Advanced Pharmaceutical Care (PHA408). The accreditation team was told that the material in this important module had been front-loaded with learning documents and glossary; students had produced excellent portfolios and had had a formative OSCE before the lockdown. The accreditation team was told that in the current academic year open-book online examinations would be used but that in the event of lockdown continuing the University would be looking into developing a more controlled invigilation system including invigilation software. In the case of students in the last cohort to pass through the programme failing or missing part of the course through illness, the accreditation team was told that there was the safety net of the agreement with the University of Brighton whose final year was a close mirror of the Sussex final year; the accreditation team leader stressed the importance of informing the GPhC should this eventuality occur. The accreditation team was told that the University was well-advanced with its contingency planning for the first term of the 2020-21 academic year with Pharmacy planning seminar groups, post-lecture discussion groups and an element

of gameification of elements of the programme to help to maintain student interest. The accreditation team appreciated that details of delivery in 2020-2021 were not fully worked through at this time but urged the School and University to be as communicative as possible with its students as plans for 2020-2021 develop.

Inter-professional education has taken place with the Brighton and Sussex Medical School (BSMS), and with nursing students at London South Bank University. Students have been provided with formative practice opportunities focused on patient and public safety throughout the curriculum; patient encounters have been embedded into the programme from the first term of the first year, to enable students learn from volunteer 'expert' patients, under supervision by appropriately qualified teaching staff. Students undertake placements, of up to 5 days in duration, in hospital pharmacy in each year of the programme, in community pharmacy in Years 1-3, in industrial pharmacy in Year 2 and in hospital/general practice/primary care in final year, all under the supervision of pharmacists. The accreditation team was told that due to the current pandemic it is the intention to develop placement simulations after receiving guidance from the GPhC.

Due to the outbreak of the coronavirus epidemic, online teaching started on 21 March for all three years of the MPharm course. All but a couple of the intended teaching sessions have been delivered, initially by means of Panopto and are now moving to some live Zoom sessions. The University has purchased the full Zoom educational and communication licence which has provided the opportunity to deliver the "live" sessions. The accreditation team learned that module convenors are in the process of planning for the four 2020/2021 modules that remain to be delivered up to 2022. In PHA305 (Neurology and Psychiatry) lectures will be supplemented by an increase in the number of workshops containing case studies which will provide more active learning, as requested by the students. The Research Pharmacist module (PHA407) has been modified in the light of experience and as a result of feedback from the external examiners. It was planned that students would have a choice of a laboratory-based or a practice-based project, with literature review no longer being an option. However, contingency plans such as alternatives to laboratory-based projects are also being developed, if laboratory access is a problem due to the current circumstances. The delivery of Oncology (PHA306) and Advanced Pharmaceutical Care (PHA408) is being reviewed and developed currently, ready for January 2021. Oncology, delivered with the support of the Royal Marsden Hospital, had been successful in the current academic year, while more opportunities for students to develop communication skills were being explored for Advanced Pharmaceutical Care. The Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students told the accreditation team that the University had set up a contingency group to deal with the coronavirus situation but that it had only recently turned its attention to planning for 2020-2021. It was presumed that not all students would be returning in September 2020 so planning was for online teaching and plans for social distancing for those attending the campus, along with the possibility of switching practical teaching to later dates in the pharmacy programme, for example, to summer 2021. The sharing of good practice with other institutions in the sector was emphasised in what the accreditation team interpreted as a mixture of proactive and reactive approaches. In this respect, the accreditation team understood that plans for delivery of the MPharm degree in 2020-2021 will be determined in part by government advice/requirements and the University's view on whether the campus can be opened or not. The accreditation team's advice about practical sessions including placements was to not rely too heavily on delay and deferral because neither the accreditation team nor the University was in a position to know how feasible that may be as a strategy in the short to medium term and the student experience must be the priority.

Standard 6: Support and development for students *and* trainees

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. Students are allocated an Academic Advisor whom they meet during induction and regularly throughout the programme. A Student

Reps scheme ensures that student concerns, views and opinions are heard and acted upon, offering students the chance to have an impact within the University. The current accreditation team learned that student feedback had indicated that students were missing the opportunity to participate in live lectures due to the Covid-19 lockdown and found the recorded Panopto sessions less useful for their learning. Participation in the live Zoom sessions had not been as high as expected, but the availability of the recordings meant that the students are able to gain access to the teaching material. In addition, workshops have been converted into case studies with a discussion forum, but again participation rates were found to be low. Student preferences are being investigated currently in order to plan for online teaching next term. Students interviewed told the accreditation team that staff members were readily available by email or videoconferencing to offer support, although it was commented that some new staff members were working elsewhere and were more difficult to contact. Students also confirmed that central University support remains available via online sessions. It is possible for staff to monitor engagement with the VLE and contact students whose engagement is sporadic. In addition, the School Student Experience Coordinator identifies concerns about student absence from online learning and also contacts the student to check on their wellbeing. All advisors have regular group or one-to-one Zoom meetings with their advisees, and are monitoring the wellbeing of students, following up on those who do not respond to emails or fail to log on for Zoom tutorials. It was emphasised that the small cohort sizes on the programme facilitated contact with individual students, including those who have currently returned to their home countries. The accreditation team learned that Year 3 students are being supported currently in preparing Oriel applications for their pre-registration training year, by means of live Zoom sessions, which are also recorded. The accreditation team was told that there has been valuable input to these from Year 4 students who have described their experience of the process to third-year students. Another session has been used to help students to do their preferencing for locations and sectors. A Sussex Abroad scheme previously offered undergraduate students the opportunity to spend one full academic year studying at a partner institution in countries all around the world. However, during the teach-out period students have been advised not to take a year out but to consider alternative summer abroad plans.

Standard 7: Support and development for academic staff and pre-registration tutors

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. The Head of the School of Life Sciences is responsible for all staff involved in the delivery of the MPharm. The current accreditation team learned that from now on any newly appointed staff members will be employed on fixed-term contracts. Non-pharmacist staff members are introduced to the GPhC standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, to the School Fitness to Practise policy and procedures, and the GPhC Standards for Pharmacy Professionals. The School operates an appraisal scheme that involves an on-going process of review, support and development. Annual appraisals are the responsibility of the Head of the School of Life Sciences who delegates this role to the Subject Chairs.

Standard 8: Management of initial education and training

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation. The MPharm programme is delivered from within the School of Life Sciences, with the day-to-day management of the programme under the responsibility of the MPharm Management Committee, led by the Director of Pharmacy.

Standard 9: Resources and capacity

The accreditation team was satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard are met

At the Step 6 accreditation visit the accreditation team had been satisfied that all criteria relating to this standard would be met in relation to the then provisional accreditation, but with two conditions relating to the teach-out plan. The current accreditation team learned from the presentation that it was anticipated that MPharm students would likely be among the first groups to return to attendance at the University when the lockdown period is relaxed; this is due to the requirements for laboratory work. Pharmacy is working currently on the potential requirements for such a return and will stay aligned with practice in other schools in the sector. The accreditation team was told that, given the current difficult financial situation for universities, the University would require to make some savings. However, Pharmacy had been reassured by the University that the Pharmacy financial plan would be supported particularly in terms of maintaining appropriate staffing levels; this was confirmed at the event by the University Director of Finance. Although the previous Director, Academic Advisor and a pharmaceuticals lecturer had left in the summer of 2019, four new members of staff joined Pharmacy at the beginning of January and were provided with induction on the MPharm structure, ethos and teaching, learning and assessment strategy. Induction of non-pharmacists and regular team meetings had been to ensure that staff expertise was continually being related to pharmacy and the professional context, and that content was made relevant to pharmacy. The accreditation team was told that the staff status was healthy with a favourable staff:student ratio and a sufficient staff FTE level to cope in the current difficult circumstances. At the Step 6 event the accreditation team had learned of a plan to replace preceptors necessary for the experiential learning, entailing the University employing preceptors and then releasing them back for part of their time, free of charge, to the relevant trust or community pharmacy. However, the process for recruiting replacement preceptors had been delayed due to staff constraints at two local trusts and the recruitment of clinical preceptors was described as having been challenging. Now, contracts have been set up for student placement support from UCLH, Royal Surrey County Hospital, Salisbury NHS Foundation Trust, Frimley Health NHS Foundation Trust and the Royal Marsden Hospital which had enabled the placement programme to continue in the same format, under the supervision of placement supervisors from the trusts, rather than preceptors. The placements were stated to have run well. In terms of support staffing, the accreditation team learned that the pharmacy advisor, the project manager and the school manager will complete their roles in July 2020 but that the roles of the latter two will be taken over by others. The accreditation team also learned that there have been some changes to teaching staff hours including an increase in hours to provide additional workshops. It was stressed that it will still be possible to recruit new staff for the remaining six terms, with a pool of suitable, prospective Associate Tutors if there are further staff departures. In this respect, the accreditation team was aware that a voluntary redundancy scheme was due to be rolled out in the University but was told that the staff retention scheme in place in Pharmacy was likely to prove more attractive to staff involved in the teach-out of the final two cohorts.

The accreditation team noted that Sussex had produced its projected delivery plan for 2020-2021 based on the best available information about how the MPharm degree (and all other courses at Sussex) might be taught next academic year, as GB emerges from its coronavirus lock-down. The accreditation team acknowledged that this would be subject to change, as governmental advice changed and as Sussex developed its thinking on teaching, learning and assessment in 2020-2021.

Standard 10: Outcomes

The accreditation team was satisfied that all 58 outcomes relating to Standard 10 will be delivered at the appropriate level.

Based on an interrogation of a sample of the GPhC outcomes at the Step 5 visit in 2018, the accreditation team agreed that the outcomes are likely to be met and did not further test the meeting of the outcomes at this Step 7 visit.

Indicative syllabus

The accreditation team was satisfied with the School's use of the Indicative Syllabus to inform its curriculum.

The accreditation team agreed that the MPharm degree would deliver the learning outcomes in Standard 10 of Future Pharmacists, Standards for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists and would meet the requirements of Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the recognition of professional qualifications for the initial education and training of pharmacists. Although the United Kingdom (UK) has now left the European Union (EU), the Directive remains in force until the outcome of current negotiations on the future relationship between the UK and the EU is agreed.

Feedback and final outcome

Accreditation decisions and conditions – Step 7 Part 1

At the end of Part 1 of the Step 7 accreditation in May 2020, the accreditation team made two recommendations to the GPhC's Registrar: 1. on the delivery of the MPharm in 2019-2020 and 2. on the MPharm teach-out in 2020-2021.

Decisions

First, the accreditation team agreed to recommend to the GPhC's Registrar that the MPharm degree at the University of Sussex had been delivered successfully in 2019-2020, within the limitations of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, and should be granted full accreditation, subject to a successful Part 2 event on 1 July 2020. This decision applies to students enrolled currently on the University's MPharm degree and expires once those students have graduated or have left for other reasons and are no longer registered at Sussex as MPharm students.

Second, the accreditation team agreed to recommend to the GPhC that the University has draft plans in place to deliver the MPharm degree in 2020-2021 and that they are as developed as they can be in the circumstances, so should be accepted as an interim position. The University has articulated a strategy for delivering the MPharm degree, which the accreditation team accepted in good faith, while recognising that plans may change. In this respect, the same is true of other schools of pharmacy, although others are not teaching out a course.

Note: The GPhC will be contacting all schools before Christmas 2020 for an update on the delivery of their MPharm degree but will be asking them for an earlier, proactive update if their financial and/or staffing position has changed significantly once the 2020 admissions picture is clearer.

Condition

There is one condition:

As agreed at step 6, the GPhC will continue to visit the University until the teach-out is complete. As a minimum, this will mean visits of a small accreditation team in December and May in 2020-2021 and 2021-2022. Visits may be face-to-face or virtual, depending on whether the Sussex campus is open or not. Whether further visits are required will be determined as the teach-out progresses and will be dependent, mainly, on resit requirements after 2021-2022.

Accreditation decisions and conditions – Step 7 Part 2

Part 2 requires an accreditation team leader and a GPhC representative to attend the mark awarding component of a school's examination board for the first graduating cohort of MPharm degree students. In this case the board was Sussex's School of Life Sciences Progression and Award Board for the 2019-2020 academic year.

This section is the feedback on Part 2, which took place on 1 July 2020.

Prior to the step event the two GPhC representatives met the degree's external examiners to brief them on the process.

The purposes of attending the board are:

1. to reassure the GPhC that the meeting is conducted in accordance with agreed procedures;
2. to seek reassurances from the MPharm degree's external examiners about the delivery of the MPharm degree and about the maintenance of standards; and
3. to inform the university whether its MPharm degree can be fully accredited.

External examiner feedback

GPhC representatives met with the MPharm degree's external examiners before the board to orientate them in the Step 7 event and to discuss their views of the MPharm degree. Specifically, the external examiners were asked whether the school:

1. had delivered its MPharm degree as planned, while taking into account modifications in teaching, learning and assessment made due to the Covid-19 pandemic?; and
2. was likely to be able to deliver the final two teach-out years of its MPharm degree, while accepting that delivery plans for 2020-2021 were not yet finalised and would be influenced by the progress of the Covid-19 pandemic and its effect on Sussex as an institution and the school?

In answering the questions, the external examiners noted that, wholly exceptionally and without precedent, the students had had to cope with their degree being closed, being taught and assessed during a global pandemic and, prior to that, being taught during an academic strike. In the circumstances, the external examiners congratulated students on their tenacity and loyalty to Sussex.

Regarding the first question, the external examiners agreed that the MPharm had been delivered as planned, subject to Covid-related modifications. They noted that the modifications had been made with very little notice but that this was not the fault of the school.

Regarding the second question, the external examiners agreed that the degree was likely to continue to deliver the GPhC's learning outcomes until it is closed finally, based on the evidence available to them. They told the GPhC that for continuity they would remain as external examiners until the degree closed and further, they noted that the GPhC would continue to monitor the degree as well.

Concluding their oral remarks, the externals told the Board that the MPharm degree at Sussex was a high-quality offering, including some excellent practice. In light of that, and while they understood why the difficult decision to close the course had been taken, they regretted that the course would not have a more permanent future.

The external examiners told the board that they would expand on their remarks in their annual report.

Decisions

Returning to the three purposes of attending the board:

Regarding the first purpose, GPhC representatives agreed that the meeting had been conducted in accordance with agreed procedures.

Regarding the second purpose, the degree's external examiners told GPhC representatives that the degree had been delivered appropriately and that standards had been maintained. The external examiners and GPhC representatives noted that this was in the context of delivering the degree during a global pandemic, which had, inevitably, required Sussex to redesign teaching, learning and assessment for the end of the 2019-2020 academic year and for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Regarding the third purpose, GPhC representatives agreed that all the requirements for full accreditation had been met, therefore they recommended to the GPhC's Registrar that full accreditation should be granted.

Mindful that a delay in considering the GPhC accreditation team's recommendation would delay Sussex MPharm graduate entry to pre-registration training, the GPhC's Registrar delegated ratification to the Head of Education in advance of the Part 2 event. The recommendation was ratified as part of the Part 2 event and came in to force with immediate effect.

Conditions

There were two conditions (agreed by the full accreditation team in May 2020):

1. Full accreditation applies to the three cohorts enrolled currently on the MPharm degree only and expires once all students have graduated or have left for other reasons and are no longer registered with the University of Surrey as MPharm students; and
2. Even though the MPharm degree is fully accredited, the GPhC will return for the next two academic years, 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 to evaluate the degree's teach out.

Appendix 1 - Standing conditions

The following are standing conditions of accreditation and apply to all providers:

1. The record and report include other comments from the accreditation team, and providers are required to take all comments into account as part of the accreditation process. The provider must confirm to the GPhC that required amendments have been made.
2. The provider must respond to the definitive version of the report within three months of receipt. The summary report, along with the provider's response, will be published on the GPhC's website for the duration of the accreditation period.
3. The provider must seek approval from the GPhC for any substantial change (or proposed change) which is, or has the potential to be, material to the delivery of an accredited course. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. the content, structure or delivery of the accredited programme;
 - b. ownership or management structure of the institution;
 - c. resources and/or funding;
 - d. student numbers and/or admissions policy;
 - e. any existing partnership, licensing or franchise agreement;
 - f. staff associated with the programme.
4. The provider must produce and submit to the GPhC on an annual basis:
 - a. requested data on student numbers and progression and degree awards;
 - b. requested information about the extent of human and physical resources it enjoys for the delivery and support of the degree course.
5. The provider must make students and potential students aware that successful completion of an accredited course is not a guarantee of a placement for a pre-registration year or of future employment as a pharmacist.
6. The provider must make students and potential students aware of the existence and website address where they can view the GPhC's accreditation reports and the timescales for future accreditations.
7. Whenever required to do so by the GPhC, providers must give such information and assistance as the GPhC may reasonably require in connection with the exercise of its functions. Any information in relation to fulfilment of these standing conditions must be provided in a proactive and timely manner.

