

**Ulster University Master of Pharmacy (MPharm)  
degree with preparatory year - accreditation  
report, September 2021**



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## Event summary and conclusions

<b>Provider</b>	Ulster University
<b>Course</b>	Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree with preparatory year
<b>Event type</b>	Accreditation
<b>Event date</b>	Desk-top review between July and September 2021
<b>Accreditation period</b>	2020/21 - 2022/23
<b>Relevant standards</b>	<a href="#">Future pharmacists Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists, May 2011</a>
<b>Outcome</b>	The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and the Council of the Pharmaceutical of Northern Ireland (PSNI) that the MPharm degree with preparatory year provided by Ulster University should be approved until 2022-23, at which point the provision will be reaccredited alongside the University's MPharm degree against the Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists 2021.
<b>Conditions</b>	There were no conditions.
<b>Standing conditions</b>	The standing conditions of accreditation can be found <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Recommendations</b>	There were no conditions.
<b>Registrar decision</b>	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the accreditation of the programme until 2022/23. Going forward, this programme will be reviewed in parallel to the 4-year MPharm degree provision.
<b>Key contact (provider)</b>	Professor Kathryn Burnett, Professor of Pharmacy Education
<b>Accreditation team</b>	<p>Professor Antony D'Emanuele (Team Leader) Head of the Leicester School of Pharmacy, De Montfort University</p> <p>Dr Adam Todd (team member - academic) Reader in Pharmaceutical Public Health, School of Pharmacy, Newcastle University</p> <p>Barbara Wensworth (team member - pharmacist) Currently Freelance Pharmacy Lecturer, Standards Verifier, assessor and writer</p>

	Fiona Barber (team member - lay) Independent Member, Leicester City Council
<b>GPhC representative</b>	Philippa McSimpson, Quality Assurance Manager
<b>Rapporteur</b>	Philippa McSimpson, Quality Assurance Manager

## Introduction

### Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain (GB). The GPhC is responsible for setting standards and approving education and training courses which form part of the pathway towards registration for pharmacists. The GB qualification required as part of the pathway to registration as a pharmacist is a GPhC-accredited Master of Pharmacy degree course (MPharm).

The GPhC's right to check the standards of pharmacy qualifications leading to annotation and registration as a pharmacist is the *Pharmacy Order 2010* (<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/231/contents/made>). It requires the GPhC to 'approve' courses by appointing 'visitors' (accreditors) to report to the GPhC's Council on the 'nature, content and quality' of education as well as 'any other matters' the Council may require.

### Background

An MPharm degree with preparatory year is a single course that leads to a Master of Pharmacy award. It is recruited to separately from the accredited 4-year MPharm degree and is assigned a different UCAS code. For most schools this will be a 5-year course which includes a preparatory year (often referred to as 'year 0') followed by four further taught years that mirror that of the accredited MPharm degree.

An MPharm with preparatory year must meet all of the GPhC's initial education and training standards for pharmacists in all years of the course. All teaching and assessment of the learning outcomes is expected to take place in taught years 2-5, with the first taught year being set aside for foundation learning only. No GPhC learning outcomes are taught or assessed in the first year of the MPharm degree with preparatory year. For the purpose of accreditation, it is assumed that the course content for the four taught years following the preparatory year will be identical for students on the MPharm degree and the MPharm degree with preparatory year.

The accreditation team will take assurance that the MPharm with preparatory year MPharm meets seven of the ten standards through its detailed review of these standards in relation to the current accredited MPharm provision. The review of the MPharm with preparatory year focuses on the following:

- Standard 1: Patient and public safety
- Standard 4: Selection of students and trainees
- Standard 6: Support and development for students and trainees

The Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree offered by Ulster University received an interim event in April 2021. Following this event, the accreditation team recommended the programme for continued accreditation until 2022-23 with no conditions or recommendations.

The GPhC was approached by Ulster University in May 2021 to confirm its intention to offer an MPharm degree with preparatory year. As an interim event had taken place during April 2021 for the MPharm degree, it was agreed that the review of this new MPharm variant would be undertaken by a small accreditation team, drawn from members of the team from the interim event and that the accreditation process would be carried out by desk-top review.

Ulster University has developed the preparatory year provision as an international entry route, as part of its strategic vision to increase its position globally. The MPharm with preparatory year route is intended to be offered to international students only and applications will be received through the University's international admissions office rather than UCAS. The first taught year of the University's MPharm with preparatory year ('Year 0') is referred to as an International Foundation Year (IFY).

## Documentation

Ulster University 'the provider' submitted documentation to the GPhC which was reviewed by the accreditation team as part of a desk-top exercise. Following review of the documentation it was agreed that an event would not be necessary. The accreditation team ('the team'), however, had a number of follow up questions which were passed to the provider for response through a desk-top process. Following a satisfactory response to each of the questions and points of clarification the accreditation team agreed to recommend accreditation of the programme.

## The event

The accreditation process took place as a desk-top exercise, due to an interim event having taken place shortly before in relation to the 4-year MPharm, at which the accreditation team was assured of the provision for the 4-year MPharm programme.

## Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest

## Key findings

### Standard 1: Patient and public safety

Standard will be met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

Students are advised that there is a professional standard of behaviour required of pharmacy students and that the University will consider their behaviour both before, and during, their period of study, and that failure to comply with the GPhC Standards for Pharmacy Professionals could impair their eligibility to register as a pharmacist. The standards apply equally to all students upon entry onto the MPharm programme, whether they are taking the 4-year MPharm degree or 5-year MPharm degree with preparatory year route.

All prospective students are also advised that they must undergo an Enhanced Disclosure from AccessNI or other relevant authority, and this disclosure must be of a satisfactory nature, prior to registration on the programme being confirmed. They will also have to provide a satisfactory medical report which will determine whether there is any health condition or disability which could potentially be a risk to patient safety. International students must provide a satisfactory police check from their relevant appropriate authority before registration is confirmed.

Students are introduced to both the Standards for Pharmacy Professionals, and to Fitness to Practice requirements, at induction and during a dedicated lecture session in Year 0 and again in Year 1. This supports them in understanding what is expected of them in relation to their behaviour, both on-and off-campus and future implications for registration with the professional body. Pharmacy induction for MPharm Year 0 students will be in addition to the general induction. The MPharm Course Director and Fitness to Practise Lead will both attend the induction in person, to introduce him/herself to the students and immediately create a link to the MPharm programme and to help the students identify as pharmacy students. The induction session will include the same information that Year 1 students receive on Fitness to Practise, including the importance of self-declaration of Fitness to Practise issues during the academic year, Standards for Pharmacy Professionals, in addition to information on the academic requirements that need to be achieved at the end of Year 0 required for transition to Year 1.

The accreditation team wished to understand how students' behaviour will be monitored during their first year of study (Year 0) and was told that the Course Director for the IFY will have at least two meetings each semester with all students on an individual basis. At these meetings, students will be encouraged to set goals, reflect on performance, and discussions take place which consider behaviour and attendance. Any member of staff, or student, who is concerned about another student's behaviour immediately reports this to the Course Director as per normal procedure. If the behaviour is deemed to be a Fitness to Practise issue, the Fitness to Practise Lead will take the matter forward and advise on next steps if appropriate.

The team enquired how staff from outside of the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences will be trained and supported to raise fitness to practice concerns. It was confirmed that the Fitness to Practise lead will attend the School Board for the International foundation year (Year 0) at which all staff teaching on the course will attend. Staff will be briefed on how to

raise Fitness to Practise concerns by initially contacting the School Fitness to Practise lead who would advise on next steps if appropriate. This session will be repeated on a regular basis (every two years) to consider staff changes. This will ensure that all staff understand the types of concerns which could be raised under Fitness to Practise and the process for raising concerns.

#### Standard 4: Selection of students *and trainees*

Standard will be met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

Applicants to the MPharm with preparatory year will be required to have 2 AS levels, or equivalent, and meet fitness to practice requirements. English and Maths at GCSE grade C or equivalent is also required and those applicants whose first language is not English will need to achieve an IELTS test score of at least 6.5, with speaking at 6.5 and no less than 6.0 in any category. The accreditation team was told that the University does not currently use contextual data to determine any offer made, offers are based solely on appropriate subjects and academic attainment, and interviews are not carried out. The course team are reviewing this currently in light of the requirement within the 2021 Initial Education and Training Standards for Pharmacists for selection to include an interactive component.

In order to progress from the 1<sup>st</sup> taught year (Year 0) into Year 1 of the MPharm degree, students must achieve at least 70% overall and at least 70% in the two science modules. The team enquired what the process was for acceptance into Year 1 of the MPharm for those who met these academic requirements. The team confirmed that there is no further application process for these students, and they are permitted to join Year 1. From 2023 onwards, interviews will be introduced for all MPharm applicants, including those applying for the MPharm degree with preparatory year. It is intended that interviews will be carried out at the same time, irrespective of whether an applicant is applying for entry to MPharm Year 1 or MPharm Year 0. There will be no further interview required to progress from Year 0 to Year 1, and students will be given automatic access provided they meet the academic requirements and continue to meet fitness to practise requirements.

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

Standard will be met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

All Year 0 and Year 1 MPharm students are assigned a 'buddy' from another year of study. These buddies are all volunteers and are expected to contact the student and be a useful source of information for them as they adjust to higher education. It is intended that Year 0 students will keep the same buddy, where possible, for the first two years of their study. The buddy scheme aims to connect new students with current students, providing a social and academic network early in their transition to university life.

The University introduced the Being Well-Doing Well at Ulster Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2021, and the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences introduced a Wellbeing Strategy as the first steps to mainstreaming mental wellbeing. The plan

is the first step to support student growth, mindset, engagement, and a positive student experience. It is recognised that if students are enjoying good wellbeing that they will succeed.

The team was satisfied with the range of support available for MPharm students but wished to understand how the University's Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences Wellbeing Strategy applied to students undertaking an MPharm with preparatory year, as reference appeared to be made only to those in years 1 to 4 of the MPharm degree. The provider clarified that the Wellbeing Strategy also applies to students in Year 0 undertaking the MPharm with preparatory year, although accepted that this was not clear with in the document and that this would be rectified.

Students on the MPharm with preparatory route are assigned two Advisers of Studies, one from the international foundation year and one from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences. The team wished to understand how this worked in practice and who had overall responsibility for the student whilst they were in Year 0. The team was told that the primary advisor of studies for Year 0 students will be the IFY Course Director, who has the overall responsibility for each student; and this will be made very clear to all students. The IFY Course Director meets with all IFY students individually multiple times throughout the academic year. While the number of meetings is at least twice each semester, typically there can be many more such meetings as the international students need a significant amount of support in this early year. At these meetings, students are encouraged to set goals, reflect on performance, and discussions take place which consider behaviour and attendance. Students on the MPharm with preparatory year also have an additional supporting advisor of studies from the School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences who will attend one meeting in each semester which has been arranged with the IFY advisor.

The team wished to understand how students on the MPharm degree with preparatory year provide feedback on the course and whether students on this route contribute to meetings of the MPharm degree Staff Student Consultative Committee (SSCC). It was confirmed the Year 0 part of the course (International Foundation Year) has its own SSCC. In addition, MPharm Year 0 students will be asked for nominations to sit on the MPharm degree SSCC. Formal feedback is also sought through module surveys to gain specific feedback on each module. These surveys are designed to complement the wider feedback mechanisms. These surveys are all online and students are encouraged to complete one per module. Responses are available to staff as soon as the evaluation closes, and aggregate data is provided for previous years for comparative purposes. Course directors and module leaders are required to report on actions taken in response to student feedback.

## Standard 7: Resources and capacity

Standard will be met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

The accreditation team wished to understand what consideration has been given to managing the impact of the additional students on the MPharm degree, in terms of both staff resource and accommodation, as the MPharm with preparatory year students move into the later years of the MPharm programme. The provider confirmed that number of students on the MPharm with preparatory route would be small and therefore it was not expected that it would have a significant impact in terms of staff resource and accommodation. However, to mitigate against

this as a potential risk, the number of students entering the MPharm Year 0 will be considered in the following year's admission cycle at the time that offers are being made. In this way the projected Year 1 intake can be managed and controlled appropriately.

