

Pharmacists' Defence Association Response to Skills for Health's Consultation on Qualification Units for Pharmacy Technicians

About the Pharmacists' Defence Association

The Pharmacists' Defence Association (PDA) is a not-for-profit organisation which aims to act upon and support the needs of individual pharmacists and, when necessary, defend their reputation. It currently has more than 27,000 members, making it the largest pharmacists' membership organisation in the UK. The PDA Union was inaugurated in May 2008 and achieved independent certification in 2011.

The primary aims of the PDA are to:

- Support pharmacists in their legal, practice and employment needs
- Represent the individual or collective concerns of pharmacists in the most appropriate manner
- Proactively seek to influence the professional, practice and employment agenda to support members
- Lead and support initiatives designed to improve the knowledge and skills of pharmacists in managing risk and safe practices, so improving patient care
- Work with like-minded organisations to further improve the membership benefits to individual pharmacists
- Provide insurance cover to safeguard and defend the reputation of the individual pharmacist

Background to consultation (provided by Skills for Health)

In October 2017, The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) published revised Initial Education and Training Standards for Pharmacy Technicians (IET). These Standards will ensure that pharmacy technicians have the right knowledge and skills for current and future workforce requirements at point of registration with the GPhC. Health Education England (HEE) has commissioned Skills for Health to facilitate the collaborative development of a new qualification to meet the IET Standards for pharmacy technicians. Skills for Health has worked with Awarding Organisations and subject matter experts to develop the qualification which will be made available in England and Wales by Awarding Organisations in 2019.

Response

The PDA supports the development of the role of the pharmacy technician, to work symbiotically with and support the role of the pharmacist. We responded in March 2017 to the GPhC consultation on the initial education and training standards for pharmacy technicians. Our primary, overarching recommendation was *“Before changing the IET standards for pharmacy technicians, the current and future roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must first be defined by the profession, including how the two roles will work together.”*

There have been repeated calls, including in academic research commissioned by the GPhC, for a clear role definition for pharmacy technicians in community pharmacy. [1] [2] [3] [4] [5] Without first defining the role, it would seem difficult to comment on the suitability of either the GPhC’s IET standards or this Skills for Health qualification.

We stand by the response we gave to the GPhC consultation on pharmacy technician IET standards, which can be found here <https://www.the-pda.org/gphc-proposes-changes-to-pharmacy-technician-training/>. We ask that Skills for Health read it because it is indicative of our views of the qualification requirements proposed in this consultation. Our view is that *the current*

and future roles of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must first be defined by the profession, including how the two roles will work together, in order to meaningfully revise and update the qualification for pharmacy technicians. However, in addition, over the past few years the PDA has been writing a report on the roles pharmacy technicians, particularly focusing on community pharmacy. The report will be published over the coming months on our website here <https://www.the-pda.org/pharmacy-technicians/> We believe that the report may be of interest to Skills for Health in understanding our views on how the pharmacy technician role and qualifications should be developed.

As a separate point, whilst we have not responded to the individual units of the qualification, our view is that the timeframe for the consultation (2 July to 30 July) was too short. There are 25 units to comment upon, spread across 103 pages of dense 12-point text, and 9 questions to answer on each unit (meaning that there are 204 questions in the consultation survey in total). Responses have to be made using an online survey. This may limit the quality and number of responses that Skills for Health receives.

References

- [1] S. Jee, S. Willis, A. Pritchard and E. Schafheutle, "The quality of pharmacy technician education and training: A report to the General Pharmaceutical Council," November 2014. [Online]. Available: http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/quality_of_pharmacy_technican_education_and_training.pdf.
- [2] H. Rosado, C. John, D. Puaar and I. Bates, "An analysis of the initial education and training standards for pharmacy technicians and views on their fitness for purpose – a report to the General Pharmaceutical Council," 2015. [Online]. Available: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/lpet_ucl_iet_stds_analysis_pts_final_report_november_15.pdf.
- [3] E. Schafheutle, S. D. Jee and S. C. Willis, "Fitness for purpose of pharmacy technician education and training: The case of Great Britain," *Research in Social and Administrative Pharmacy*, vol. 13, pp. 88-97, 2017.
- [4] General Pharmaceutical Council, "Tomorrow's pharmacy team – responses to the discussion paper," November 2015. [Online]. Available: https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/sites/default/files/report_on_educating_the_pharmacy_team.pdf.
- [5] Pharmacists' Defence Association, "Pharmacists' Defence Association Response to the General Pharmaceutical Council's Consultation on Initial Education and Training Standards for Pharmacy Technicians," March 2017. [Online]. Available: <https://www.the-pda.org/wp-content/uploads/pda-consultation-response-pharmacy-technician-iet-march-2017.pdf>.