

## Requirements for members of the pharmacy team

### Education and training requirements for pharmacy support staff

June 2019 V4.0

#### Introduction

Our Standards for registered pharmacies require that:

- 2.2 Staff have the appropriate skills, qualifications and competence for their role and the tasks they carry out, or are working under the supervision of another person<sup>1</sup> while they are in training
- 2.3 Staff can comply with their own professional and legal obligations and are empowered to exercise their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public

The purpose of these requirements is to support the standards above by making sure that the supply of medication and medical devices to the public is safe and effective. It does this by setting out requirements for pharmacy support staff who are involved in this work so that they:

- Are competent and knowledgeable in the technical requirements of their role
- demonstrate the skills and behaviours required for safe and effective pharmacy practice and person-centred care
- provide appropriate support for the work of pharmacy professionals.

The principles of these requirements are applicable to all pharmacy settings:

- they apply to all staff working in or providing services from GPhC registered pharmacies
- providers of pharmacy services not registered with us and whose regulation is undertaken by another systems regulator (CQC in England, HIS in Scotland, HIW in Wales) can make use of these principles to assist the delivery of safe and effective pharmacy services, and to support pharmacy professionals to comply with their own professional and legal obligations

#### The role of pharmacy support staff:

Support staff are a major part of the pharmacy workforce.<sup>2</sup> While they do not have the responsibilities or accountability of registered pharmacy professionals, they play a key role in supporting the work of

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<sup>1</sup>This could be a registrant or another appropriately qualified or experienced individual. See [Standards for registered pharmacies](#) for further information.

<sup>2</sup> In 2017, they accounted for close to half of the community pharmacy workforce in England, see [The Community Pharmacy Workforce in England 2017](#), HEE (2018:13-14), accessed December 2018. The [NHS Workforce Statistics - October 2018](#) shows a smaller but still significant proportion of the hospital pharmacy workforce is made up of support staff- around 4,000 staff from a total workforce of 21,500- almost 20% of the hospital pharmacy workforce in England.

pharmacy professionals and contribute to the safety and effectiveness of pharmacy services in every sector of pharmacy.

New roles are appearing in different sectors of pharmacy and the boundaries between different support staff roles are becoming more fluid in others. While different setting will require different skills, they will all contribute to the safe and effective supply of medication to the public and require competent and knowledgeable staff.

These requirements are designed to ensure that support staff in any sector or setting have generic skills required to provide a safe and effective pharmacy service and the technical skills necessary to perform their particular role safely and effectively. This means that:

- all support staff, no matter what their setting, will need to be able understand how their role contributes to person centred care, collaborate effectively with patients, members of the wider pharmacy/healthcare team, and the public, and carry out their role in a way that maintains trust in pharmacy services
- all support staff should have skills appropriate for the activities they perform and the setting in which they work. This might include dispensing a prescription in a community pharmacy, making up specialised medicines in a hospital or delivering pharmacy services to a care home or advising a patient about their medication remotely

## Structure of our requirements

Our requirements for the education and training of support staff are in two parts:

- Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff- setting out our requirements for pharmacies and for support staff
- Criteria for the approval of support staff courses- setting out how we will approve those providing training for support staff to meet our requirements

# Part 1: Our requirements for education and training of pharmacy support staff

## Our requirements

Our requirements are that:

- All staff involved in the dispensing and/or supply of medicines and devices at any stage of this process, including advising individuals about their use, must demonstrate the relevant knowledge, understanding, abilities and behaviours for these roles at RQF level 2/SVQ level 5 or a level accredited as equivalent to this.
- These are defined as achieving the outcomes below. These outcomes may be demonstrated by successfully completing or working towards completing:
  - a nationally recognised pharmacy services qualification at RQF L2/SVQ L5
  - a course accredited by us as covering the required learning outcomes at a level equivalent to RQF L2/SVQ L5
- Support staff must be enrolled on a training course as soon as practical and within three months of commencing their role.
- The course must be completed in a timely manner conducive to safe practice.

## Who we require to have education and training

These requirements apply to all staff involved in the dispensing and/or supply of medicines and medical devices to individuals from a registered pharmacy. All such staff must be appropriately trained for the role they are employed in. These requirements can also be considered and applied in respect of roles in non-registered pharmacies, such as many hospital pharmacies, where training is essential in providing safe and effective pharmacy services and supporting the activities of pharmacy professionals.

Examples of the tasks and technical knowledge and skills that support staff will need to be competent in can be found in appendix 1. This list is indicative, and employers should use their judgement to ensure support staff receive appropriate training in all the relevant technical aspects of their role.

Individuals who are participating in educational placements, traineeships, work experience or carrying out other tasks for educational purposes under appropriate supervision are not required to complete additional training to do so (for example, students completing placements as part of an MPharm degree). However, if they are employed as support staff, they are required to complete training relevant to the activities they carry out.

## Examples

Staff will require training if they perform dispensing and supply tasks that have the potential to affect the safety and health of pharmacy users and/or their trust in pharmacy services. This will include those who:

- provide advice about medicines, medical devices or health remotely via call centres or the internet
- prepare prescriptions in a 'hub' pharmacy which are then issued at a 'spoke' pharmacy
- provide collection or delivery services to patients in their own home or in care or nursing homes
- support pharmacy professionals who provide additional services (eg those designed to promote healthy lifestyles) from a registered pharmacy

Further examples of activities are provided in appendix 1.

The principles of this guidance can also be considered in relation to staff who support pharmacy professionals working in or from pharmacies, usually hospital pharmacies, that are not registered by us, and whose regulation is undertaken by the national systems regulator (CQC in England, HIS in Scotland and HIW in Wales).

## Required outcomes

Our *Standards for pharmacy professionals* set out what is needed to provide safe and effective pharmacy services. These outcomes have been developed to relate to these standards. The reasons for this are to:

- make sure that support staff are aware of the core knowledge, skills, behaviours and values that underpin person centred care, so that they can support the work of pharmacy professionals effectively and so that they work in a way that maintains confidence in pharmacy services
- support pharmacy professionals in following the *Standards for pharmacy professionals* when they are supervising, managing and delegating to support staff to deliver pharmacy services

The outcomes are set out in two parts:

### *Requirements for all support staff:*

These are the generic requirements we expect from all support staff and which relate to behaviours and non-technical skills in role. These capture the things patients, public, members of the pharmacy or wider healthcare team and employers should be able to expect from anyone in carrying out a pharmacy support role.

These requirements relate to skills and behaviours that apply to any role in which a member of support staff contributes to safe and effective services though their role in the dispensing and supply of medicines and medical devices.

### *Students on MPharm and OSPAP courses & pre-registration trainees*

Students on MPharm or OSPAP programmes and pre-registration trainees may continue work in support staff roles without completing specific support staff training, as they will be either participating in a regulated educational programme or working in a regulated training environment. In this case, their employer should:

- conduct a learning needs assessment of the knowledge, skills and experience of student as relevant to their role
- Identify any further learning or experience required by the student to carry out the tasks within the role
- make arrangements to provide the student with any skills knowledge and experience, and the supervision required to work safely in their role - these may be provided through an approved course or through local arrangements

Employers should:

- make and retain clear records of this assessment in line with our **Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team**
- consider whether completion of approved training is appropriate. We would not usually expect students in the early years of their course to have acquired sufficient knowledge and experience, and as such, would usually be expected to complete support staff training

Employers and course providers should also consider making recognition of prior learning arrangements in their courses to enable students to complete courses efficiently.

### *Role specific requirement*

This requirement sets out that support staff must be trained in the technical skills required for the tasks they perform.

Employers should identify the key tasks and functions required for the role and ensure that training is provided that covers the requirements to carry out these functions safely and effectively.

A list of example areas in which support staff would be expected to acquire technical knowledge and skills are listed in appendix 1. This list is illustrative only and employers should consider what skills are required as the activities performed by support staff evolve.

We will agree with the provider through the accreditation process that the technical skills selected by the employer are appropriate and covered by the course.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pharmacy owners are already expected to identify essential elements of training for each role within the team, see our **Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team** 4.2.5

## Requirements for all support staff

On completion of training, pharmacy support staff will:

	Outcome	Level
1	Act to maintain the interests of individuals and groups, making patients and their safety their first concern	Does
2	Recognise what it means to give person-centred care and support in pharmacy settings, including settings where patients are not physically present	Knows how
3	Involve individuals in decisions about their health, care and wellbeing, recognising principles of consent and applying them as appropriate to their role	Knows how
4	Listen to individuals and understand their needs and what matters to them	Shows how
5	Respect diversity and cultural differences, ensuring that person-centred care is not compromised because of personal values and beliefs	Does
6	Communicate effectively with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• individuals using pharmacy services</li> <li>• carers</li> <li>• other members of the pharmacy or healthcare team</li> <li>• other health and social care professionals</li> </ul> using a range of techniques to determine their needs	Shows how
7	Adapt information and communication to meet the needs of particular audiences and communication channels	Shows how
8	Recognise and raise concerns about safeguarding people, particularly children and vulnerable adults	Shows how
9	Refer issues and individuals as appropriate to another member of the team, other health and social care staff, organisation or service.	Shows how
10	Recognise and work within the limits of their knowledge and skills, seeking support and referring to others when needed	Does
11	Make use of feedback on performance, local HR processes and reflection to identify and act on their own learning needs	Knows how
12	Apply the principles of information governance and ensure confidentiality	Does
13	Recognise and raise concerns, even when it is not easy to do so, using appropriate systems	Knows how
14	Demonstrate trust and respect for individuals using pharmacy, members of the pharmacy team and other health professionals at all times	Does
15	Identify the roles and responsibilities of those they work with and functions of the wider pharmacy and healthcare system	Knows
16	Work effectively as part of the pharmacy team	Knows how

17	Apply policies around health and safety relevant to their role, including recognising hazards and acting appropriately to avoid harm to themselves and others	Does
18	Recognise and apply the relevant legal and regulatory requirements, local processes and standard operating procedures in their own role	Shows how
19	Apply and work within the local, regional and national guidelines and policies, systems and governance Demonstrate effective team working	Does
20	Apply and work within the local, regional and national guidelines and policies, systems and governance	Does

### Role specific requirements

On completion of training, pharmacy support staff will:

	Outcome	Level
21	Apply technical knowledge and skills identified as being required for the safe and effective performance of their role in the dispensing and supply of medicines and medical devices <sup>4</sup> . This including applying legal and regulatory requirements and best practice in the context and role in which they work.  Examples of the technical skills in which support staff would need to be competent is included in appendix 1.	Shows how

### Identifying learning outcomes for role specific requirements

The technical knowledge and skills content of the course must be derived from and mapped to an appropriate framework for pharmacy knowledge and skills in the UK, such as the National Occupational Standards (NOS) framework which includes a suite of 26 units specific to pharmacy.

Employers should identify the tasks and functions required by members of pharmacy support staff and engage with course providers to ensure that appropriate training for these tasks and functions is provided. Course providers to ensure that these functions are covered through mapping to an appropriate external framework such as the NOS. Examples of functions requiring training are included in a (non-exhaustive) list in appendix 1.

For staff who work to support pharmacy professionals to deliver other specialised pharmacy services to individuals, it may be appropriate to include content from the wider healthcare suite of NOS, depending on the tasks they perform.

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<sup>4</sup> It is for employers to identify the tasks/functions of a role and for course providers to ensure these knowledge and skills required for these tasks/functions are provided by the course through deriving the technical content of the course from an appropriate framework for pharmacy skills in the UK, such as the National Occupational Standards.

## Responsibility for meeting requirements

Providing safe and effective care is the responsibility of the whole pharmacy team. While some roles may have specific responsibilities, our standards for registered pharmacists require all staff are empowered and competent to safeguard the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public.

### Specific responsibilities

Pharmacy owners are responsible for:

- meeting the *Standards for registered pharmacists*, including:
  - ensuring that staff have the appropriate skills, qualifications and competence for the tasks they carry out
  - enabling all staff to comply with their own professional and legal obligations, and ensuring they are empowered to exercise their professional judgement in the interests of patients and the public
  - meeting the education and training requirements for pharmacy support staff
- following relevant parts of the *Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team*, including identifying essential elements of training for each role within the team
- appointing a responsible pharmacist(s) to secure the safe and effective running of the registered pharmacy
- following our **Guidance on working in pharmacy when not on the register**

Pharmacy professionals are responsible for ensuring:

- that they delegate tasks only to people who are competent and appropriately trained or are in training, and exercise proper oversight
- following the *Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team* and the *Standards for pharmacy professionals* as relevant to their role
- following our **Guidance on working in pharmacy when not on the register**

For more information, see our **Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team**.

Pharmacy support staff are responsible for:

- supporting pharmacy professionals to provide safe and effective pharmacy services

The responsibilities of training providers are set out in our accreditation criteria below.

## Ongoing training requirements

### Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team

The criteria in this document set out our requirements for the education and training required for new pharmacy support staff or staff who are new to their role. The *Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team* explains that pharmacy owners, working with pharmacy professionals, should:

- encourage and enable all staff – particularly those still in training – to reflect on their performance, knowledge and skills, and to identify learning and development needs, and
- support them in meeting those needs, to enable them to carry out their role

This includes, but is not limited to:

- understanding the learning and development needs of their team and taking appropriate steps to meet those needs, preferably making protected time available for learning and development
- making sure pharmacy staff work within the limits of their competence and refer to other, more appropriate, staff when they need to
- making sure everyone in the pharmacy team, with the help of other members of the team, within the resources provided, keeps their knowledge and skills up to date
- making sure managers have the competence, skills and experience needed to carry out their role
- identifying essential elements of training for each role within the team, and actively reviewing and reassessing these in response to changing needs and circumstances, and any ensuring changes are made in a timely manner
- demonstrating that learning and development is taking place
- making sure individual and team development plans are in place to make sure pharmacy staff are not carrying out roles they have not been trained for
- taking a tailored approach to learning and development which is continued throughout individuals' employment to make sure the knowledge and skills of pharmacy staff remain up to date

For more information, see the *Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team*.

### Changing or expanding roles

The *Guidance to ensure a safe and effective pharmacy team* states that employers should:

- actively review and reassess the essential training for each role in the team
- review the requirements of the role and the skills of their staff and arrange any additional training required if a staff member changes their role, or their tasks or responsibilities expand or change

# Part 2: information for course providers

## Approval of support staff courses

There are two methodologies by which we will approve a course of education and training for unregistered pharmacy support staff- either accreditation, or recognition. The criteria for each are set out below. The purpose of approval is to confirm that support staff complete a programme of learning that provides the knowledge and skills required to contribute to the dispensing and supply of medicines and medical devices as part of a safe and effective pharmacy team. Training providers will **either** provide a recognised, nationally regulated course at L2 **or** a course accredited by the GPhC as being equivalent to this.

### Criteria for approval by recognition

We will recognise and assess a course as approved if:

- (i) it is already approved by one of the national education regulatory bodies, the Office of the Qualifications and Examinations Regulator (Ofqual), Qualifications Wales or the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA); and
- (ii) it is included in a national qualification framework (the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Credit and Qualifications Framework Wales (CQFW), or Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)

### Criteria for approval by accreditation

We will assess a course of education and training in order to approve courses for pharmacy support staff. To gain approval, a course must undergo accreditation and achieve the following criteria

**Criteria 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion:** courses must be based on, and promote, the principles of equality, diversity and fairness; meet all relevant legal requirements; and must be delivered in such a way that the diverse needs of all students are met

- a. Systems and policies must promote the principles and legal requirements of equality, diversity and fairness.
- b. Reasonable adjustments must be made to teaching, learning or assessment to help those with specific needs to meet requirements; teaching, learning and assessment may be modified for this purpose but learning outcomes may not.
- c. Course design and delivery must ensure support staff understand principles of equality and diversity as they relate to the delivery pharmacy services

**Criteria 2: Course curriculum:** Courses must be designed and delivered to develop the skills, knowledge and behaviours required to work safely as part of the pharmacy team

- a. All courses must ensure those completing them successfully achieve the learning outcomes required for their role, including the outcomes relevant to all support staff
- b. The technical knowledge and skills content of the course is relevant to the tasks/activities to be carried out by the support staff in question and both derived from and mapped to an appropriate knowledge and skills framework for pharmacy services in the UK, such as the National Occupational Standards framework
- c. All courses must ensure those who complete it can apply technical knowledge and skills required for their role. They must specify the purpose of the course and identify the tasks and technical skills required, clearly setting out what content the course intends to cover and demonstrating that it is designed to do so through mapping
- d. The level of the course is equivalent to RQF L2/SQF L5
- e. Courses must be designed and delivered using strategies which bring together knowledge, competence and work experience. Learning must be applied to, and demonstrated in, the workplace.
- f. Courses must be structured in a logical and coherent way. Course structure, content and assessments must reflect relevant and current principles in education and pharmacy.

**Criteria 3: Assessment:** courses must have an assessment strategy which assesses skills, knowledge and behaviours required to work safely as part of the pharmacy team

- a. The provider must have a strategy or plan that sets out the different assessments in the course and how these assessments will make sure all the requirements of the course are demonstrated in a timely manner and to an objective, standard which demonstrates the outcomes of the course have been met by the learner.
- b. All the required outcomes of the course must be assessed, using appropriate and robust methods.
- c. Assessment regulations are appropriate for a course that allows those who complete them to work in the supply of medicines, ie they prioritise working safely and supporting the practice of pharmacy professionals
- d. Students must receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance to support their development as learners

**Criteria 4: Management, resources and capacity:** The education and training facilities, infrastructure, leadership, staffing and staff support must be adequate to deliver the course

- a. There must be adequate resources to enable all students on the course to meet outcomes, including staffing, facilities, learning materials and learning resources

- b. There must be a sufficient numbers/mix of teaching staff, mentors and assessors to deliver the course
- c. The roles and responsibilities of the trainee, employer and course provider must be defined and set out in agreements
- d. Learners who successfully complete the course, or parts of the course, must receive certificates which clearly state what the learner has achieved
- e. Course regulations must include procedures for dealing with behavioural issues such as academic malpractice. They must communicate these procedures clearly to learners and employers and link them to expectations in role.
- f. Course providers must have procedures to deal with any concerns raised during the course. This may include concerns about the learner themselves, the environment they are working or training in, or the practice of those they come into contact with. Serious concerns eg those related to safety must be reported appropriately. This could include raising concerns to the GPhC
- g. Course providers must have processes to manage and address complaints about the course in a clear, timely and transparent manner

**Criteria 5: Quality management:** The quality of courses must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated in a systematic and developmental way

- a. All relevant aspects of the course are quality managed, monitored and reviewed and issues identified are addressed, including teaching, learning and assessment. Procedures for this must be set out, and timings and responsibilities for taking action must be described.
- b. Feedback from those on the course and their employers must be collected as part of quality management processes and used to improve the course.
- c. The course must reflect developments in medicines, medical devices, pharmacy law and pharmacy practice
- d. Data about the students and their progression on the course is collected, reviewed and used to inform the management of the course. This should include analysis and review of equality and diversity characteristics of students.

**Criteria 6: Supporting learners and the learning experience:** Support staff must receive support for their initial education and training in all learning environments.

- a. Students and those involved in supporting, supervising and teaching them must have access to clear information and resources to enable them to meet the requirements of the course. This includes providing information on processes and course regulations eg for appeals and providing information to employers about the time and opportunities required by learners to meet course requirements.

- b. Students have access to a designated individual (or individuals) who can help them with academic and pastoral issues related to the course. This includes a designated supervisor in their place of work who is able to provide support and supervision on a regular and reliable basis.
- c. Those involved in supporting, supervising and teaching on the course must receive the information and support they need to be able to perform their roles in supporting and supervising students.
- d. Course providers must seek to provide students with a positive learning experience

## Appendix 1: Example key areas of competence, knowledge and skill for support staff

Employers should identify the essential elements of training required by support staff and ensure staff receive appropriate training in the technical knowledge and skills required to perform their role safely and effectively. This may include, but is not limited to, knowledge and skills required to:

### Example of activity

**NB-** Employers are expected to ensure that support staff work within their scope of practice and under appropriate supervision.

- Order, receive, maintain, monitor and issue pharmaceutical stock
- Receive, assemble, check and dispense a prescription, in person or at a distance.
- Advise on and sell non-prescribed medicines or devices to individuals safely
- Manufacture and prepare medicines and medical devices for individual use, including specialised manufacturing practices
- Provide a pharmacy service in person or at a distance/remotely or in a setting away from a registered pharmacy
- Providing pharmacy collection and delivery services
- Issue medicines to individuals using pharmacy, other members of the pharmacy or wider healthcare team, or organisations
- Counsel individuals (in person or remotely) on:
  - the effective use of medicines/medical devices,
  - accessing and using healthcare services
  - their own health and its management
- Carry out checking and other quality control processes in the dispensing and supply of medicines
- Dispose of medicines and medical devices safely or advise on their safe disposal
- Assist in any of the following:
  - management of medicines for individuals
  - assist in the process of preparing and administering treatments to individuals
  - assist in taking clinical measurements

These areas are designed to be indicative of key areas in which support staff will need to be competent. As the range of activities and settings changes and evolves, the areas and tasks for which staff will need to be competent will evolve and employers will need to ensure staff are trained appropriately. The list above is indicative, but not exhaustive.

The technical knowledge and skills content of the course must be derived from and mapped to an appropriate framework for pharmacy knowledge and skills in the UK, such as the National Occupational Standards (NOS) framework, including a suite of 26 units specific to pharmacy. For staff who work to support pharmacy professionals to deliver other specialised pharmacy services to individuals, it may be appropriate to include content from the wider healthcare suite of NOS, depending on the tasks they perform.