

Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers

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About the GPhC

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

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

What we do

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

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

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

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

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

Introduction

Pharmacists play a vital role in delivering care and helping people to maintain and improve their health, safety and wellbeing. An increasingly central role for pharmacists is prescribing in settings where prescribing has not necessarily happened before. By doing this, pharmacists can play an important part in and helping people to take their medicines safely and effectively.

Being an independent prescriber means that you can prescribe a medicine without needing to consult another prescriber first.

Pharmacists cannot prescribe on registration but must take an additional course of education and training before they can prescribe. Courses are part-time and are run by universities. A key part of these courses is learning to consult and prescribe under the supervision of an experienced prescriber.

Before training to prescribe, pharmacists must have experience of working in a particular clinical area. The area is the one in which the pharmacist will learn how to prescribe.

These standards describe:

- the knowledge and skills pharmacist independent prescribers will achieve during their education and training, and
- our requirements for course providers

Once a pharmacist has successfully completed their course they can apply to the GPhC for an annotation to their entry in the GPhC's register. The annotation is a public record that they can practise as an independent prescriber.



The prescribing role

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

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

The structure of the standards

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

- learning outcomes, and
- standards for independent prescribing course providers

Part 1, the learning outcomes, describes what a pharmacist will be able to do on successful completion of the course. The learning outcomes are presented in four domains:

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

Part 2, the standards for independent prescribing course providers, describes the requirements for any course provider and also the entry requirements for a course. There are nine standards:

Standard 1 – Selection and entry requirements

Standard 2 – Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard 3 – Management, resources and capacity

Standard 4 – Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard 5 – Course design and delivery

Standard 6 – Training in practice

Standard 7 – Assessment

Standard 8 – Support and the learning experience

Standard 9 – Designated prescribing practitioners

Part 1: Learning outcomes

Standard: On successful completion of their education and training, pharmacist independent prescribers will have achieved the learning outcomes in these standards.

Level of study

The level of study for pharmacist independent prescriber courses is Master's level¹, as defined in national qualifications frameworks.

Minimum learning time requirements

Teaching, learning and assessment are matters for course providers, but there must be at least:

- 26 days of structured learning activities, and
- 90 hours of learning in practice

Learning activities

'Learning activities' are defined by course providers. They can include in-class work, directed study, self-directed study and distance learning activities.

Learning in practice

'Learning in practice' time is when pharmacist independent prescribers in training practise and develop their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills under the supervision of other healthcare professionals. This includes their designated prescribing practitioner (who is responsible for

signing off a pharmacist independent prescriber in training as being a competent prescriber).

Domains of study

Learning outcomes are presented under four domains:

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

The domains and learning outcomes are all equally important.

¹ Most current prescribing courses are at Master's level already.

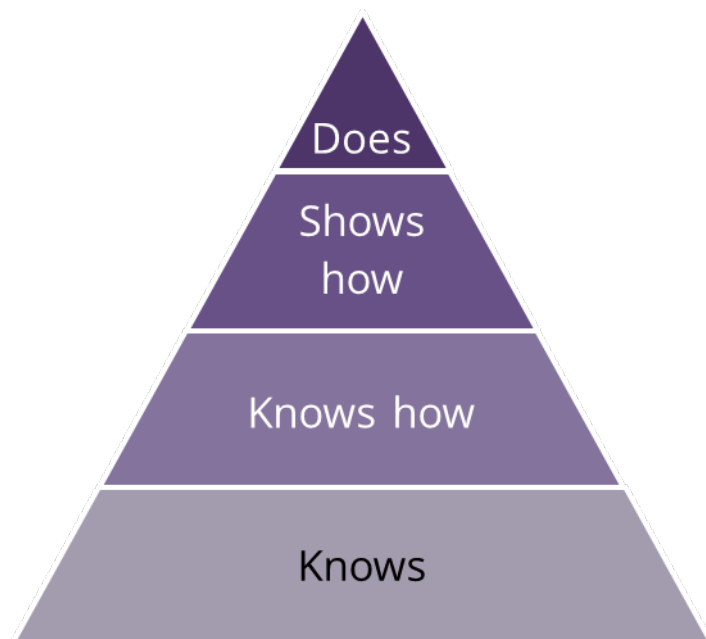
Learning outcomes

In these standards Miller's Triangle is used to set the outcome level. Miller's triangle is a knowledge and competence hierarchy describing four levels of outcome:

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

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

The learning outcomes are:



Person-centred care

Pharmacist independent prescribers at the point of annotation will be able to:

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

Professionalism

Pharmacist independent prescribers at the point of annotation will be able to:

7. Demonstrate a critical understanding of their own role and the role of others in multi-professional teams	Does
8. Recognise their own role as a responsible and accountable prescriber who understands legal and ethical implications	Does
9. Apply relevant legislation and ethical frameworks related to prescribing, including remote prescribing and the handling and sharing of confidential information	Shows how
10. Recognise and manage factors that may influence prescribing decisions	Does
11. Apply local, regional and national guidelines, policies and legislation related to healthcare	Does
12. Reflect on and develop their own prescribing practice to ensure it represents current best practice	Does
13. Apply an understanding of health economics when making prescribing decisions	Shows how
14. Understand the clinical governance of the prescriber, who may also be in a position to supply medicines to people	Knows how
15. Recognise other professionals' practice and raise concerns related to inappropriate or unsafe prescribing by other prescribers	Shows how

Professional knowledge and skills

Pharmacist independent prescribers at the point of annotation will be able to:

16. Apply evidence-based decision-making in all aspects of prescribing	Does
17. Manage the risks and benefits associated with prescribing decisions	Does
18. Demonstrate the application of pharmacology in relation to their own prescribing practice	Does
19. Demonstrate clinical and diagnostic skills in clinical settings appropriate to their scope of practice	Does
20. Create and maintain appropriate records which ensure safe and effective care and align with relevant legislation	Does



21. Identify relevant investigations and interpret results and data in their prescribing practice	Does
22. Utilise current and emerging systems and technologies in safe prescribing	Does
23. Identify and respond to people's need when prescribing remotely	Shows how
24. Apply the principles of effective monitoring and management to improve patient outcomes	Does
25. Recognise and manage prescribing and medication errors	Shows how
26. Recognise the public health issues in promoting health as part of their prescribing practice	Does

Collaboration

Pharmacist independent prescribers at the point of annotation will be able to:

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

Part 2: Standards for pharmacist independent prescribing course providers

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

Entry requirements

The entry requirements for a pharmacist independent prescriber course are that:

- a. Applicants are registered as a pharmacist with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) or, in Northern Ireland, with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI).
- b. Applicants are in good standing with the GPhC and/or PSNI and any other healthcare regulator with which they are registered.
- c. Applicants must have at least two years' appropriate patient-orientated experience post registration, in a relevant UK practice setting.
- d. Applicants have an identified area of clinical or therapeutic practice in which to develop independent prescribing practice. They must also have relevant clinical or therapeutic experience in that area, which is suitable to act as the foundation of their prescribing practice while training.
- e. Applicants must have a designated prescribing practitioner who has agreed to supervise their learning in practice.

The applicant's designated prescribing practitioner must be a registered healthcare professional in Great Britain or Northern Ireland with legal independent prescribing rights, who is suitably experienced and qualified to carry out this supervisory role, and who has demonstrated CPD or revalidation relevant to this role. Although an applicant may be supervised by more than one person, only one prescriber must be the designated prescribing practitioner. The designated prescribing practitioner is the person who will certify that successful pharmacists are competent to practise as independent prescribers.



Selection and entry requirements

Standard 1: Selection processes must be open, clear and unbiased, comply with relevant legislation and ensure that applicants meet course entry requirements.

Criteria to meet this standard

- 1.1 Selection criteria must be clear and must include meeting all the entry requirements in these standards.
- 1.2 Selectors must apply the selection criteria consistently, in an unbiased way and in a way that meets the requirements of relevant legislation.
- 1.3 Course providers must provide clear guidance on the type of experience a pharmacist should have before applying to the course. This guidance must be available to applicants before they make an application.
- 1.4 Course providers, when considering applications, must evaluate the suitability and relevance of the applicant's clinical and therapeutic experience (which the pharmacist must demonstrate in their application) against the requirements of the course.
- 1.5 A course provider must fully evaluate each application and decide if the applicant has sufficient and relevant experience to begin a course to train as an independent prescriber. If the course provider decides that there is insufficient relevant

experience, they must reject the application, clearly setting out the reasons behind this decision.

- 1.6 Course providers must ensure that all the entry requirements have been met before the start date of a course on which an applicant is enrolled.

Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard 2: All aspects of pharmacist independent prescribing education and training must be based on and promote principles of equality and diversity and comply with all relevant legislation.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

Management, resources and capacity

Standard 3: Courses must be planned and maintained through transparent processes which must show who is accountable for what. The education and training facilities, infrastructure, leadership, staffing and staff support must be sufficient to deliver the course.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

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

Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard 4: The quality of a course must be monitored, reviewed and evaluated in a systematic and developmental way.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

Course design and delivery

Standard 5: Courses must develop the behaviours, required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards through a coherent teaching and learning strategy.

Criteria to meet this standard

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



Learning in practice

Standard 6: Courses must enable the pharmacist independent prescriber in training to develop the behaviours and the required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards in learning in practice settings.

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

Criteria to meet this standard

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

Assessment

Standard 7: Courses must have an assessment strategy which assesses the professional behaviours and the required skills, knowledge and understanding to meet the outcomes in Part 1 of these standards. The assessment strategy must assess whether the practice of a pharmacist independent prescriber in training is safe and clinically appropriate.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

Support and the learning experience

Standard 8: Pharmacist independent prescribers in training must be supported in all learning environments to develop as learners during their training.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

Designated prescribing practitioners

Standard 9: Designated prescribing practitioners must be fit to undertake that role and must have appropriate training and experience.

Criteria to meet this standard

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

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

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

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



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