

Reforms to initial education and training of pharmacists

**An update from the Chief Pharmaceutical Officers and UK Pharmacy Regulators
28 July 2020**

Dear colleagues,

We wanted to provide an update on the major reforms to the initial education and training of pharmacists that we are taking forward across the United Kingdom.

Reforms to initial education and training

During the last decade pharmacists' roles have evolved quickly in response to rapid changes in healthcare and pharmacy practice and there is a significant and growing demand across the UK for clinical, patient-facing pharmacist practitioners. It is vital that the pharmacy workforce is equipped to work flexibly alongside other health and care professionals, using their specific skills to help meet the changing demands of healthcare and patients. As a result, we need to ensure that the early stages of education and training of pharmacists are reformed to reflect the changing nature of practice, including the importance of assuring patient safety.

In January 2019, the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) consulted on new standards for the initial education and training (IE&T) of pharmacists, in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI, ensuring a UK-wide perspective.

This consultation highlighted the importance of revising the IE&T standards to equip pharmacists for increasing clinical roles in a multi-sector environment, with closer integration of academic study and learning in practice. It set out learning outcomes focused on person-centred care; professionalism; professional knowledge and skills; and working in collaboration. It also set out revised standards for education providers, including a stronger focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.

The consultation and subsequent discussions identified a broad consensus on the reasons for change and the skills and knowledge required by pharmacists in the future. This included the importance of students having a coherent and connected "continuum" of five years of education and training with greater application of science in clinical practice and development of skills in decision-making, risk management and patient consultation. Mindful of the need for reform to move at pace, and pragmatically, there was a good opportunity for the desired outcomes to be achieved through a model which builds on the existing four-year MPharm degree and one-year training. This would involve Higher Education Institutions, NHS Education Commissioners and employers working together in new ways, with a clear set of accountabilities, including systems of quality management and quality control, and with oversight of the outcomes from the regulators.

The standards and timetable for implementation are also being informed by the discussions at the Education Governance Oversight Board (EGOB) regarding foundation training. At its meeting on 4 June, EGOB members from all parts of the profession discussed the learning from the pandemic, the urgent need for change and the financial implications. There was strong support for a proposal to replace the current pre-registration year with a foundation period of 12 months at the end of which, one aim

would be for new registrants to be independent prescribers, albeit recognising implementation needs to take account of each country's circumstances and be subject to appropriate consultation. The work led by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS) to develop and revise a foundation programme for pharmacists would help to inform the work in this area.

The objective for foundation training is to support pharmacists in the early stages of their careers through a structured work-based approach that embeds knowledge, skills, abilities, values, attitudes and beliefs in their practice. This in turn will lead to practitioners with the necessary skills to take on extended clinical roles and to work flexibly across sectors and in collaboration with other healthcare professionals. It will also be a sound base from which pharmacists can extend their skills and develop their careers into advanced and consultant level practice, including research.

The next steps

The GPhC has reconvened a working group, which includes the Pharmaceutical Society NI, to inform the final set of revised IE&T standards for pharmacists and to drive implementation of the standards.

Once the standards are finalised, there will be a phased approach to implementation. The reforms will start in July 2021 for those beginning their fifth year of education and training as the current pre-registration year develops into a foundation period.

The GPhC is now developing a plan to finalise the revised standards and reform the five years of initial education and training in light of the proposals and broad cross-profession support described in this letter, and will be providing regular updates on the progress of this important work in GB, with the Pharmaceutical Society NI carrying out work in parallel for Northern Ireland.



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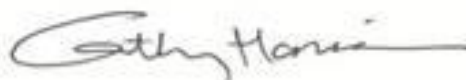
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