

**Standards
For
Foundation Training Year
2024/2025**

(Updated December 2023)

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Reforms to the initial education and training of pharmacists

New Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists were introduced by the Pharmaceutical Society NI and the General Pharmaceutical Council in 2021. The new Standards cover the first five years of the training continuum which consists of the four-year MPharm degree, followed by a 12-month foundation training year. Key changes mandated by the new Standards are for a much higher proportion of experiential learning and better integration across the continuum. This will prepare pharmacists to work at a higher clinical level across all sectors of the profession and, importantly, newly qualified pharmacists will ultimately also register as independent prescribers. The introduction of these changes began in July 2021 with full application of the new Standards anticipated by 2025/2026.

Within Northern Ireland, a phased approach to reforms is being adopted to ensure a smooth and gradual transition to the wider Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists Standards (2021). This has included the introduction of '*a foundation training year*' replacing what was formerly known as the pre-registration training year. The NI Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development (NICPLD) will oversee the delivery of the Foundation Training Year (FTY) which will be quality assured by the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

Further information about the reform of initial education and training is available on our website – <https://www.psni.org.uk/pre-registration/information/>

These Standards for FTY, produced by the Pharmaceutical Society NI, set out the requirements for the implementation of the FTY in NI. They specify the requirements for training and apply to trainee pharmacists, prospective trainee pharmacists, Educational Supervisors and employing organisations. The primary purpose of these Standards is to ensure that trainee pharmacists receive appropriate training, supervision and support during the Foundation Training Year (FTY) so that they are well prepared to sit the Common Registration Assessment (CRA) and, thereafter, practise as independent practitioners.

Terminology

The Pharmacy (Northern Ireland) Order 1976 states that '*there shall be kept a register of students*'. Students are considered trainee pharmacists and will be referred to in the Standards for Foundation Training Year as '**trainee pharmacists**'.

The term '**trainee pharmacist**' refers to any registered person undertaking the Foundation Training Year in Northern Ireland with the aim of being admitted to the Register of Pharmaceutical Chemists.

The term '**Educational Supervisor (ES)**' refers to any registered pharmacist who agrees to mentor a trainee pharmacist, accepts the associated governance responsibilities of supervising a trainee pharmacist and meets the published criteria for being an Educational Supervisor as specified by the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

The term '**relative**' refers to a person connected by blood (parent, sibling, offspring, cousin, niece and nephew), marriage or civil partnership. The term '**notification**' – Regulation 10 of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (General) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1994/202 sets out the notification requirements, thus notification, under these Standards, requires that the trainee pharmacist first notifies NICPLD who, in turn, notify the Registrar at the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

The term '**health**' refers to a trainee pharmacist's fitness to undertake all elements of the FTY.

1. Aims and objectives of the Foundation Training Year

The primary aim of the FTY experience in Northern Ireland is to reinforce among the trainee pharmacists an awareness that they are to become members of a healthcare profession and to develop a professional attitude and a sense of responsibility, embracing the requirements of The Code (Professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance for pharmacists in Northern Ireland 2016) and its associated Standards and Guidance.

The FTY takes place after students graduate with their MPharm degree. It consolidates their initial learning and education through workplace-based, practical training in a clinical setting or settings. The training enables trainee pharmacists to build upon their pharmacy knowledge, understanding, skills and behaviours, and previous experience and to apply them to enhance their knowledge and skills in preparation for registration.

2. Registering as a trainee pharmacist

In level 4 of their undergraduate studies, student pharmacists will need to complete a two-step process to enter the FTY. The first step involves applying to the Pharmaceutical Society NI to join the 'register of students' as a trainee pharmacist. The second step involves applying to the Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development (NICPLD) to join the FTY programme by submitting details of planned training arrangements.

In order to register with the Pharmaceutical Society NI for the FTY, a Level 4 student pharmacist must:

- (1) apply by the date stipulated by the Pharmaceutical Society NI, using only the specified online application (paper applications will be considered at the discretion of the Registrar);
- (2) submit documentary evidence that they have been awarded an MPharm degree/or equivalent qualification¹ in pharmacy at a UK-based University recognised by the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

It is only possible to start the FTY provided the Pharmaceutical Society NI has received written evidence from the university awarding the degree that the potential trainee has been successful. The university degree certificate must be uploaded to the Pharmaceutical Society NI online portal, via an MPharm Upload application and then a solicitor certified copy must be posted to the Pharmaceutical Society NI office for verification.

- (3) pay in full the required fee to the Pharmaceutical Society NI;
- (4) be familiar with and accept the rules and regulations relating to the FTY as specified by the Pharmaceutical Society NI and outlined in these Standards;
- (5) be in good health;
- (6) affirm that they will abide by the Code and Professional Standards and Guidance documents; and
- (7) be fit to practise as a trainee pharmacist. A statutory declaration must be made that there is nothing in their history, conduct or character that, having regard to patient safety and public health, would render it unsafe for them to undertake the FTY.

¹ OSPAP overseas pharmacist assessment programme

- (8) In addition, an applicant wishing to be registered as a trainee pharmacist must:
- i. not have been refused permission to join the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) training programme/register;
 - ii. not have previously failed the Common Registration Assessment three times with the GPhC or where there is any other reason that has resulted in refusal by the GPhC to permit him/her to undertake or complete training in Great Britain;
 - iii. not have taken longer than 24 months from graduation to commencement of the FTY (subject to paragraph (10) below).
- (9) In order to ensure that their knowledge and skills are up-to-date and relevant to current pharmacy practice, **applicants for registration as a pharmacist** must complete their initial pharmacy education and training successfully and apply to register with the Pharmaceutical Society NI within:
- eight years of beginning the MPharm degree, or
 - four years of beginning the OSPAP postgraduate diploma (subject to paragraph (10) below).

It should be noted that, if undertaking a PhD immediately after graduation, the eight-year stipulation will still apply.

The Registrar will consider extenuating circumstances to extend these time limits on a case-by-case basis on submission of supporting evidence.

- (10) To apply to join the FTY programme with NICPLD, a student pharmacist must:
- organise a FTY placement in an establishment that has been approved for this training purpose (Section 6) under the supervision of an accredited ES (Section 7);
 - have applied to join the 'register of students' with the Pharmaceutical Society NI; and apply to NICPLD to join the FTY programme by the date stipulated by NICPLD, providing confirmation of the date of commencement of training, where they are to undertake training and the name(s) of their ES(s) for the duration of training.

- Suitable sites for training include community pharmacies and hospital pharmacies.

If there is any doubt about any aspect of the requirements, clarification should be sought from NICPLD (nicpld-fty@qub.ac.uk).

The training period will not be recognised unless all of the conditions specified above are met in full.

3. Trainee pharmacist employment conditions

- (1)** Employment for the FTY is acceptable if it is full-time and is undertaken during the normal working hours of the establishment concerned. In exceptional circumstances, the trainee pharmacist may wish to be considered for training other than in a full-time capacity. In such situations, the trainee pharmacist must contact NICPLD for further guidance.
- (2)** Periods of training must total one continuous year (12 months) and include accepted holiday entitlement including public holidays whilst not exceeding the permitted total absence specification.
- (3)** The trainee pharmacist will be expected to work 35-45 hours per week. If an establishment opens for an extended period each day, the hours of employment must be agreed with the employer prior to commencing employment ensuring the total number of hours worked per week does not exceed 45 hours.
- (4)** If the trainee pharmacist is absent on sick leave, or for any other reason (excluding normal holiday entitlement), for more than the equivalent of one working week, they must inform NICPLD and provide a valid and documented reason. A maximum total absence of 42 days (inclusive of annual leave, sick leave, public and bank holidays and any other statutory leave entitlement) out of the 12-month training year is allowed before an extension to training is required. NICPLD has discretion regarding any allowances that can be made.
- (5)** The FTY must not be undertaken in an establishment in which the trainee pharmacist has a potential conflict of interest. For example, where there is significant financial interest or where the individual is related² to an owner, director or employee (including an ES) of the pharmacy where they will be training.

² See definition on page 4.

4. Foundation Training Year: Requirements for trainee pharmacists

- (1) The trainee pharmacist is required to demonstrate that they have developed adequate competence during their training such that, upon joining the Pharmaceutical Register, they will be able to undertake all the duties of a pharmacist.

Competence is having the necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to consistently undertake the role of a pharmacist. Learning outcomes have been specified and published which make explicit the competencies to be developed during the course of the FTY. All learning outcomes must be achieved before the final declaration document can be signed by the ES.

- (2) The trainee pharmacist is required to prepare a portfolio evidencing their completion of the learning outcomes. The trainee pharmacist must achieve a satisfactory standard in all learning outcomes in order to complete the FTY.
- (3) The trainee pharmacist must complete all mandatory elements of training, including all mandatory training days.
- (4) The trainee pharmacist's progress will be assessed regularly by their ES via the process of appraisal. The purpose of appraisal is to help both the ES and trainee pharmacist to regularly monitor progress during the 12-month FTY. Appraisal should be a transparent process, providing constructive feedback to inform ongoing development of the trainee pharmacist and to address any issues in a timely manner.
- (5) Appraisals relating to the trainee pharmacist's progress must be submitted online to NICPLD within the deadlines specified.
- (6) The trainee pharmacist must pass the CRA within a maximum of three entries (Section 5).
- (7) If the trainee pharmacist fails to make satisfactory progress throughout the year and/or fails to attain a satisfactory standard at the end of the FTY, their training will be reviewed. They may be required to extend their training (subject to the availability of funding) for a further period until they are deemed to have achieved a satisfactory standard by appraisal/passing the CRA.

- (8)** If the trainee pharmacist experiences any problems in relation to the training provided, the matter should first be discussed with the ES and employer and then, if necessary, with the FTY Lead at NICPLD. The expectation is that problems are best addressed and managed in the first instance at a local level and at an early stage.
- (9)** While recognising the important role of the ES, the trainee pharmacist must always take responsibility for their own learning.

5. Requirements for the Common Registration Assessment

Trainee pharmacists undertaking FTY in NI shall be eligible to sit the Common Registration Assessment after satisfactory completion of not less than 45 weeks of FTY having obtained a satisfactory 39-week appraisal from their ES, providing:

- i. they have paid an examination fee of £174; and
- ii. after completion of not less than 39 weeks of the Foundation Training Year, an Educational Supervisor, approved by the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI, has submitted a satisfactory 39-week appraisal report.

Further information is available via this link: [General Information about the Foundation Training Year - Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland \(psni.org.uk\)](https://www.psn.org.uk)

6. Foundation Training Year: Requirements of employers

- (1)** All establishments in which FTY is provided must be approved for this purpose. The relevant section of the NICPLD FTY application must be completed by the pharmacy owner/superintendent or registered pharmacist to ensure premises meet the standards for the delivery of the FTY programme.
- (2)** Applications for approval for FTY trainee to undertake training in the proposed establishment should be made on the NICPLD Foundation Training Year application.
- (3)** The employer must ensure that a suitably qualified ES is available to supervise the trainee pharmacist before offering employment and that the pharmacist will be able to fulfil the role of ES as specified.
- (4)** The workplace learning experience provided by the employer should enable the trainee pharmacist to develop and evidence the competencies specified in the learning outcomes.
- (5)** If any aspect of competency development cannot be ensured at the employing establishment, alternative arrangements to develop the competency must be put in place. These should be agreed with the trainee pharmacist.
- (6)** Facilities within the establishment should allow the trainee pharmacist to keep up to date with recent developments relevant to the practice of pharmacy.
- (7)** Trainee pharmacists are considered supplementary to the workforce. The employer must agree to allow the trainee pharmacist to attend the mandatory NICPLD FTY training days.
- (8)** An employer must be aware of all the requirements relating to the FTY.
- (9)** An employer, who is not the ES, must be aware of the duties and responsibilities of such and commit and agree to facilitate the ES in carrying out their duties.
- (10)** The FTY must not be undertaken in an establishment in which the trainee pharmacist has a potential conflict of interest, for example, where there is significant financial interest or where the individual is related to an owner, director or employee (including an Educational Supervisor) of the pharmacy where they will be training.

- (11)** An employer/superintendent pharmacist must ensure that the trainee pharmacist will have onsite Protected Development Time agreed by both the trainee pharmacist and the ES. Training needs should be reviewed regularly. A minimum of the equivalent of four hours per working week must be dedicated to Protected Development Time. This time is in addition to and should not include time out of the workplace to attend FTY training days run by NICPLD.
- (12)** The trainee pharmacist should be given access to the internet, if required during designated Protected Development Time, to support their professional development. Trainee pharmacists must adhere to the employer's standards on internet behaviour.

7. Foundation Training Year: Requirements of Educational Supervisors

- (1)** A pharmacist can only act as an ES if:
 - they hold three years' post-registration relevant experience within the previous five years in the sector in which they wish to tutor e.g., community or hospital pharmacy;
 - are a registered pharmacist with the Pharmaceutical Society NI; and
 - have no sanctions or conditions on their registration.
- (2)** A pharmacist who wishes to act as an ES must first complete an accredited training course run by the NICPLD.
- (3)** To renew accreditation, a pharmacist must undertake annual training to become an accredited ES.
- (4)** No ES should agree to supervise a trainee pharmacist where there is a potential conflict of interest, for example, where there is significant financial interest or where the trainee pharmacist is related to an owner, director, or employee (including an Educational Supervisor) of the pharmacy where they will be training.
- (5)** The primary objective of the FTY is to ensure that trainee pharmacists receive the appropriate level of training and are robustly and fairly assessed against criteria described by the learning outcomes and appraisal process. This is best achieved when each trainee pharmacist has a dedicated ES as their exclusive mentor. Such an arrangement ensures that the trainee pharmacist receives appropriate supervision, mentoring and support to help them prepare for practice and to be fully prepared for the CRA whilst also allowing the ES to be well placed to deliver robust and accurate assessments.

Except for one particular circumstance, the ES must personally supervise only one trainee pharmacist at a time. The exception to this rule can be at the beginning or end of a period of training, only in circumstances where the outgoing trainee pharmacist started training late due to not achieving their MPharm in the normal timeframe. Both trainee pharmacists must consent to the overlap. A maximum of twelve weeks' overlap may be approved by NICPLD subject to the conditions set out in the explanation being satisfied. Any such arrangement will be quality assured by the PSNI.' An employer can request an application form for an overlap in ES mentoring by contacting NICPLD.

The application must:

- clearly demonstrate that all other options for ES mentoring have been exhausted;
- provide details of efforts made by the employer/ES to minimise the potential adverse effects on training which may arise from an ES supervising two trainee pharmacists simultaneously;
- provide evidence that both trainee pharmacists affected have consented to the overlap; and
- outline proposed arrangements to minimise the impact of any proposed overlap on the trainee pharmacists' progress in evidencing the learning outcomes.

Please note that training will only be recognised if the overlap arrangement has been approved in advance by NICPLD.

- (6) An ES must be aware of all the requirements of the FTY programme.
- (7) An ES must be aware of, and accept, the supervisory responsibilities as specified below:

ESs are responsible for the supervision and delivery of the FTY. In conducting their supervisory responsibilities, ESs are expected to provide training, deliver constructive feedback to trainee pharmacists about performance in practice, conduct assessments objectively and act as a mentor to their trainee pharmacist. They are also expected to work with the trainee pharmacist to help them develop the necessary professional skills so that they have the right attitude expected of healthcare professionals, have good communication skills, can work with others and can demonstrate leadership. An important part of the ES role is making the final declaration that the trainee pharmacist is fit to practise. The ES will gather evidence for this throughout the year from the verification of learning outcomes via the online ePortfolio and the appraisal process.

Other responsibilities of the ES include:

- helping the trainee pharmacist plan training and identify training needs;
- providing timely and constructive feedback on the trainee pharmacist's performance;
- providing an assessment of the trainee pharmacist's progress in a robust, objective and fair manner;

- encouraging the trainee pharmacist to reflect on their own performance;
- working with the trainee pharmacist to set objectives for learning and development;
- providing training opportunities to enable the trainee pharmacist to meet the learning outcomes;
- welcoming feedback from the trainee pharmacist to help them identify their own learning needs in relation to being an ES;
- listening and respecting the views of the trainee pharmacist;
- acting as a role model;
- conducting quarterly appraisals and submitting to NICPLD in a timely manner; and
- providing support if the trainee pharmacist encounters difficulty.

(8) The Pharmaceutical Society NI expects that trainee pharmacists will be well supported and will receive an appropriate level of training. This is best achieved when each trainee pharmacist has an ES who is responsible for ensuring a robust and fair assessment of the trainee pharmacist in line with the FTY requirements.

In any period of training at one approved training site, and in order to undertake their supervisory responsibilities, an ES normally shall be engaged full-time at the same training site as the trainee pharmacist.

The Pharmaceutical Society NI defines full-time as a pharmacist working a minimum of 30 hours over a minimum of four days each week at the training site where the trainee pharmacist is based.

Where training occurs in the community pharmacy setting, and where the majority of clinical pharmacy services and training experiences are provided at the same premises, the expectation is that the trainee pharmacist and ES will be located together at the same training site. The ES will provide the majority of the training experience whilst fulfilling their supervisory and assessment responsibilities for a minimum of 30 hours over a minimum of four days each week at the same training site at which the trainee pharmacist is based.

If an ES is of the view that training would be enhanced by gaining experience in another pharmacy business, approval may be sought by contacting NICPLD to discuss their reasons for requesting this arrangement at an alternative pharmacy. The ES is required to submit a training plan, in advance, which indicates:

- the number of days the trainee pharmacist will be away from the approved training site (up to a maximum of five days per training year);
- what areas of pharmacy practice will be covered;
- what learning outcomes will be met;
- what governance arrangements will be in place to ensure continuity of training and verification by the ES; and
- confirmation that an accredited ES will be available on site.

Where training occurs in a hospital pharmacy setting, and where the trainee pharmacist is required to meet the learning outcomes across a range of disciplines by visiting multiple departments and, as it is recognised that other healthcare personnel may need to be involved in the delivery of this training, the following must apply:

- the nominated ES still has overall responsibility for conducting assessment of outcomes of training and for submission of those assessments and must, therefore, be directly involved in the planning and delivery of the training provided; and
- arrangements must be in place to ensure that there is clear and ongoing communication about the trainee pharmacist's progress between the ES and other personnel supervising the different aspects of the training experience.

The expectation is that the ES, in this instance, will still be situated at the same hospital training site as the trainee for a minimum of 30 hours over a minimum of four days each week. This is to ensure that the ES is available for a sufficient period of time to provide support and to intervene, if required, to ensure that adequate training is being provided, to provide feedback and to monitor and assess progress.

Irrespective of sector of practice, the ES is accountable for making the final declaration that the trainee pharmacist is fit to practise and, consequently, must have appropriate first-hand knowledge of the individual's performance. In order to fulfil their duties and supervisory responsibilities, including being adequately informed to make the final declaration, the Pharmaceutical Society NI expects that an ES will be working at the same training site as the trainee pharmacist for a minimum of 30 hours over a minimum of four days per week.

- (9)** An ES is responsible for a sole trainee for the duration of the 12-month training period. If an ES is not in a position to supervise a trainee pharmacist for the requirement of a minimum of 30 hours over a minimum

of a four-day week, a co-supervision arrangement must be considered. Where two pharmacists share supervisory responsibilities, the trainee pharmacist must consent to the co-supervision arrangement. Approval for co-supervision should be sought from NICPLD.

In a co-supervision arrangement, the total hours worked by both ESs must meet the minimum full-time requirement as previously described. In such an arrangement, both ESs will contribute to the quarterly appraisals and to the validation of evidence submitted via the reflective ePortfolio to demonstrate attainment of the learning outcomes. Both ESs must co-sign the final declaration.

Please note that co-supervision will only be recognised after approval by NICPLD.

- (10)** While it is the responsibility of each trainee pharmacist to inform NICPLD, in writing by the date specified prior to the commencement of training, where they are to undergo training and the name(s) of their ES(s), the ES should confirm with each trainee pharmacist that this has been completed before allowing the commencement of the FTY.
 - (i)** NICPLD must be informed of any proposed change of ES in advance and as soon as possible, training will only be recognised after the change has been approved.
 - (ii)** In some circumstances, the trainee pharmacist may be required to find an alternative suitable training position, for example, if no alternative ES is available.
- (11)** If an ES receives unsatisfactory feedback from trainee pharmacists over a two-year period, they will lose accreditation as an ES for a period of one year. They will be required to attend further training to develop their mentoring skills before accreditation will be awarded again.
- (12)** An ES must provide opportunities for the trainee pharmacist to demonstrate all of the specified learning outcomes.
- (13)** An ES must ensure that the trainee pharmacist will have onsite Protected Development Time of at least four hours per working week.

8. Educational Supervisor responsibilities

- (1)** As an ES, a pharmacist is expected to role model professional attributes and competencies.
- (2)** An ES is expected to complete any assessment of the trainee pharmacist promptly and professionally. This must not be delegated to any other individual.
- (3)** An ES is expected to provide regular feedback to the trainee pharmacist on progress to help them identify strengths and weaknesses and, in association with the trainee pharmacist, to plan activities to ensure the trainee pharmacist reaches the required standard by the end of the training period. Review meetings should be held with the trainee pharmacist to discuss training needs. These meetings should be held regularly and at least twice per month. Good practice would be that the outcomes of these discussions are documented.
- (4)** If an ES is concerned about the progress of the trainee pharmacist, they must inform the FTY Lead at NICPLD of their concern as soon as possible.
- (5)** An ES must make a final declaration that the trainee pharmacist is eligible for registration. If an ES is unwilling to make this final declaration, they must inform the trainee pharmacist and indicate what further training is necessary. NICPLD must be informed. Whilst situations will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, a further continuous three months' assessed training is the expected minimum additional training period. The ES is under no obligation to accept the trainee pharmacist for this extended training period.