

PHARMACY TECHNICIAN EDUCATION & TRAINING STRATEGIC GROUP

GUIDANCE ON THE USE OF PHARMACY SUPPORT STAFF ACCESS UNITS

Introduction

Pharmacy Support Staff (PSS) are a vital part of the pharmacy team and contribute to the delivery of pharmacy services across all sectors with a range of job titles including Pharmacy Support Worker, Pharmacy/Dispensary Assistant, Dispenser, Assistant Technical Officer, Pharmacotherapy Assistant.

Many PSS are interested in progressing to pharmacy technician training. Furthermore, PSS is a recognised successful pipeline to a pharmacy technician career. However, not all PSS have the educational entry requirements necessary for pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician (PTPT) training as this is not needed for a PSS role. The entry criteria for the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services includes four Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) Level 5 qualifications in English, Mathematics, Chemistry and Biology, or equivalent recognised courses.

The NHS has a responsibility as an Anchor Institution to widen access to real careers and to support the career development of staff. In response to requests from pharmacy employers, the further education (FE) colleges offering the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services, Edinburgh College, Fife College and West College Scotland, developed access units or identified existing units to support career development for PSS to progress to PTPT training. These FE colleges have worked in partnership with the Pharmacy Technician Education & Training (PTET) Strategic Group to ensure standardisation of content, SCQF equivalent level and credit rating and will recognise and accept the PSS access units listed in this guidance document as meeting the relevant entry requirements for the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services. The units listed in the section below entitled Pharmacy Support Staff Access Units cover the agreed requirements for chemistry, biology, and mathematics. Additionally, all four entry subjects are available as PSS access units from Buttercups Training.

Employers should contact the FE college they plan to use for PTPT training to confirm which access units are needed for individual candidates to enable them to meet the entry criteria. Candidates often present with a range of qualifications at different levels. The FE colleges have the expertise to confirm whether other qualifications cover the minimum underpinning knowledge outlined in appendix 1.

Pharmacy employers also requested that a national position is agreed on the use of PSS access units across Scotland. This guidance aims to support pharmacy staff and pharmacy employers through setting a standardised approach for the use of PSS access units. It remains the responsibility of employers to clarify the local situation to their staff for opportunities and progression to PTPT training and to approve the local use of PSS access units.

Entry to pharmacy support staff access units

The PTET Strategic Group recommends the following entry criteria:

1. Current employment in a role recognised under the GPhC term Pharmacy Support Staff.

If you are unsure if the staff member is classed as Pharmacy Support Staff you can refer to the GPhC requirements for the education and training of Pharmacy Support Staff for detailed information.

2. Confirmation of which Access Courses are required.

Where there is any doubt about whether an individual's educational courses are equivalent to the PTPT entry requirements, employers are advised to contact the college/learning provider they plan to use for PTPT training. The college/learning provider will advise if an individual PSS has covered sufficient subject content, for example, sufficient English may be embedded within another qualification.

3. Approval from employer to use the PSS access units.

The PSS access units are aimed at PSS that have the desire, ability and support to progress to PTPT training but do not hold the educational entry qualifications. Employers should develop a local policy on the use of PSS access units to ensure equal opportunities and clarify the local position on progression to a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician role. This could include an aptitude test and/or interview against the PTPT person specification.

There is no educational justification to limit the number of access units that an individual can achieve. Furthermore, the Scottish Government widening access agenda encourages employers to support staff development opportunities. If an employer decides to limit the number of access units their PSS can use this should be outlined in their local policy.

Pharmacy Support Staff Access Units

The minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services was developed by the FE colleges offering the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services: Edinburgh College; Fife College; and West College Scotland and is detailed in appendix 1. The access units detailed below meet the minimum underpinning knowledge requirement.

Other courses may also meet the minimum knowledge requirement; therefore, you should contact the FE college you plan to use for PTPT training to confirm which access units are needed for individual candidates to enable them to meet the entry criteria.

Chemistry

Course title	College / learning provider
Chemistry for Pharmacy	West College Scotland
Nature's Chemistry	Edinburgh College
Chemistry Fundamentals 1 (SQA HT6P45)	Fife College
Level 2 Foundation in Science for Pharmacy Technicians	Buttercups Training

Biology

Course title	College / learning provider
Biology for Pharmacy	West College Scotland
Human Body (SQA F1RH11) & Cell Biology	Edinburgh College
Human Body (SQA F1RH11) & Human Body & Illness (SQA J4DV34) with additional Biology for Pharmacy	Fife College
Level 2 Foundation in Science for Pharmacy Technicians	Buttercups Training

Mathematics

Course title	College / learning provider
Maths for Pharmacy	West College Scotland
Numeracy (SQA F3GF11) with additional pharmacy numerical calculations (SQA FH2712)	Edinburgh College
Numeracy (SQA F3GF11) with additional pharmacy numerical calculations (SQA FH2712)	Fife College
Level 2 Foundation in Maths for Pharmacy Technicians	Buttercups Training

English

Course title	College / learning provider
Level 2 Foundation in English for Pharmacy Technicians	Buttercups Training

Appendix 1: Minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to the SQA Diploma in Pharmacy Services

Minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to Diploma	Area of the PDA this underpins
Biology	
Cell structure and function	Pharmacological principles and all Pharmacotherapeutics
Cell transport across cell membranes (diffusion, osmosis, active transport)	Pharmacological principles and all Pharmacotherapeutics
Cell respiration	Pharmacological principles and all Pharmacotherapeutics
DNA structure and replication (transcription & translation)	Pharmacological principles and all Pharmacotherapeutics but particularly number 4
Production of proteins	
Enzyme action (ideally both lock and key and induced fit)	Pharmacological principles and all Pharmacotherapeutics but particularly number 1
Producing new cells – meiosis, mitosis, cell specialisation	All Pharmacotherapeutics but particularly number 4
Genetic engineering	Pharmacological principles
RBC and transport of oxygen including dissociation	Pharmacotherapeutics number 2
WBC and immunity	Pharmacotherapeutics number 2
Heart – structure and function	Pharmacotherapeutics number 2
Lungs – structure and function including gas exchange	Pharmacotherapeutics number 2
Urinary system – structure and function	Pharmacotherapeutics number 1
Nervous system – structure and function	Pharmacological principles and Pharmacotherapeutics number 3
Endocrine system – structure and function	Pharmacotherapeutics number 3
Reproduction – gamete formation, fertilisation and development	Pharmacotherapeutics number 1
Genetics – variation and inheritance (including punnett square and family tree)	Pharmacological principles and Pharmacotherapeutics number 4

Minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to Diploma	Area of the PDA this underpins
Chemistry	
Periodic table, elements and compounds	Storage and use of medicines outcome 1, Pharmacological Principles and Pharmacotherapeutics particularly number 1
Chemical symbols & formulae	
Mixtures	
Solvents, solutes and solutions	
Chemical reactions, reaction rate, factors that affect reaction rate	
pH	
Atomic structure, atomic number, electron arrangement and influence on activity	
Mass number, isotopes, RAM	

Writing/working out chemical formulae (including clues from names)	
Bonding structure & properties – ionic including use of roman numerals and electrolysis)	
Bonding structure & properties – covalent	
Bonding structure & properties – metallic	
Chemical equations (word and formula equations)	
Balancing equations	

Minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to Diploma	Area of the PDA this underpins
Maths	
Working with numbers – whole numbers, decimals, rounding, the four rules	Supply of prescribed medicines outcome 2, Health promotion in pharmacy, Pharmacotherapeutics for dose calculations, SVQ and job role
Application of numbers in science	
Fractions	
Percentages	
Ratios	
Conversions	
Averages	
Graphs	
Charts	

Minimum underpinning knowledge required for progression to Diploma	Area of the PDA this underpins
English	
Summarise information	GPhC requirement, needed for job role, needed for PDA essays, reflections, answering questions, demonstrating understanding throughout and particularly for Health promotion unit, Storage and use of medicines outcome 2 and SVQ
Able to read, write, talk and listen, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context	
Can understand, analyse and evaluate texts	
Can create and produce texts, as appropriate to purpose, audience and context	
Able to understand, analyse, evaluate, and use, detailed language for a range of purposes in practical and relevant contexts.	
Ability to communicate, think critically, and to be thoughtful and creative.	
Note – English qualification <i>does not</i> remove the need for ESOL qualification/appropriate evidence of level for those where English is not their first language (GPhC requirement)	

Working Group Membership

The following members of the Pharmacy Technician Education and Training (PTET) Strategic Group contributed to this guidance report.

Chair

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