

**Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) pharmacy
support staff qualification recognition interim
event report, February 2024**



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Event summary and conclusions

Awarding organisation	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Qualification	Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 6
Event type	Interim
Event date	1-2 February 2024
Approval period	May 2021 – May 2027
Relevant requirements	<u>Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020</u>
Framework used	National Occupational Standards
Outcome	The recognition team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the pharmacy support staff qualification provided by SQA should continue to be recognised for the remainder of the recognition period.
Conditions	There were no conditions
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be found here .
Recommendations	There were no recommendations
Registrar decision	<p>The Registrar of the GPhC has reviewed the interim report and considered the recognition team’s recommendation.</p> <p>The Registrar is satisfied that SQA has met the requirement of continued approval in accordance with Part 5 article 42 paragraph 4(a)(b) of the Pharmacy Order 2010, in line with the Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020.</p> <p>SQA is approved to continue to offer the Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 6 for the remainder of the recognition period until the end of May 2027.</p>
Key contact (provider)	Jonathan Gillies, Qualifications Manager
Awarding organisation representatives	<p>Jonathan Gillies, Qualifications Manager, SQA*</p> <p>Laura Gibson, Qualifications Officer, SQA*</p> <p>Suzanne Thompson, Quality Enhancement Lecturer, West College Scotland*</p>

	<p>Monica Hunter, Senior Educator, NHS Education for Scotland*</p> <p>Laura McClelland, Curriculum Team Manager, Edinburgh College</p> <p>Carol Neilson, Senior Pharmacy Technician, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde</p> <p>Angela Cannon, Lead Pharmacy Technician, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde</p> <p>Colin Sinclair, Lead Pharmacy Technician Education & Training, NHS Fife</p> <p>Yvonne Bayne, Health & Life Sciences Partnerships Manager, Fife College</p> <p>Juliette McGinley, Senior Operations Manager, SQA</p> <p>Keiran Stockwell, Quality Assurance Officer, SQA</p> <p>Jodi Jenkins, External Verifier, SQA</p> <p>Aileen Begley, External Verifier, SQA</p> <p><i>*also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024</i></p>
Recognition team	<p>Rebecca Chamberlain (Team leader), Self-employed Pharmacy Technician, Trainer and Associate*</p> <p>Sheetal Jogia (team member - pharmacy technician), London Pharmacy Aseptics Workforce Transformation Project Lead, Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust</p> <p>Shahzad Ahmad (team member - pharmacist), Clinical Lead, NHS England Transformation Directorate</p> <p>Liz Harlaar (team member - lay), Independent Business Consultant</p> <p><i>*also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024</i></p>
GPhC representative	<p>Chris McKendrick, Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Education), General Pharmaceutical Council*</p> <p><i>*also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024</i></p>
Rapporteur	<p>Ian Marshall, Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services); Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde</p>
Observer	<p>Siobhan McGuinness, Director for Scotland, General Pharmaceutical Council*</p> <p><i>*also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024</i></p>

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain. The approval process is based on the **Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020**.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the accreditation of pharmacy education are legislated in the Pharmacy Order 2010. For more information, visit the **website**.

Purpose of this event

The purpose of the interim event is to review the performance of the qualification against the education and training of pharmacy support staff to ensure that delivery is consistent with the GPhC education standards. The interim event utilises trainee feedback and evaluation together with a review of documentation and a meeting with the awarding organisation representatives and relevant stakeholders.

Documentation

Prior to the event, the provider submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales. The documentation was reviewed by the accreditation team and it was deemed to be satisfactory to provide a basis for discussion.

Pre-event

In advance of the main event, a pre-event meeting took place via videoconference on 19 January 2024. The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the provider to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

The event began with a private meeting of the recognition team and GPhC representatives on 1 February 2024. The remainder of the event took place via videoconference on 2 February 2024 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the qualification.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

Day 1 Pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff combined interim event, 2 February 2024

Meeting with awarding organisation

Question-and-answer session based on the standards and their criteria, including short presentation.

Meeting with sample of centre providers and associated IQA representatives

How centre providers work with the awarding organisation in ensuring compliance to the GPhC education standards/requirements.

Meeting with qualification EQA representatives

How the awarding organisation monitors and quality assures assessment decisions made by centre providers provider and supervisors in practice, and how this is ratified.

Deliver outcome to awarding organisation

Key findings - Part 1 - Outcomes for all support staff

Outcomes required for all pharmacy support staff roles were not tested at the event.

Key findings - Part 2 - Standards for the initial education and training

Criteria 1: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion continue to be met.

The submission stated that the SQA is committed to equality, diversity and fairness. Its policy on the equality of access to its qualifications follows the Equality Act 2010 in supporting the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposition to all forms of unlawful discrimination. SQA staff members are trained in equality and diversity to ensure that equality is fully considered and embedded within the qualifications.

The team was told that the course has been designed for flexible delivery to suit individuals and locations, with both on-campus and distance learning used. Centres must scrutinise course materials for equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment. They must have relevant processes and procedures in place to become an approved centre. Centres, including health boards, use specialist departments, for example, a health board Inclusion Department, to work with candidates and recommend reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning or assessment to help those with specific needs. SQA ensures that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all trainees and will approve reasonable adjustments in accordance with relevant legislation. It was confirmed that any adjustments such as additional time in assessments must be agreed formally, and that all learning outcomes must be met. Systems and qualification verification visits by SQA ensure that all course documentation is regularly reviewed and processes/procedures are applied consistently and fairly.

The team learned that EDI data are gathered by training providers at college level to help determine services required. Employers also collect such data. The team was told that learning support needs are based on the collected data. Students may self-refer at application and induction but usually delay until they realise the support available. The team was told that there are no barriers to progress for any groups and that there is an equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment to ensure equity of access opportunity. Under-represented groups, including males, are highlighted in marketing images for the qualification. College representatives told the team that EDI data are not looked at specifically in relation to progression, but is rather done at college level.

Criteria 2: Course curriculum

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to course curriculum continue to be met.

The Scottish Vocational Qualification, SVQ, in Pharmacy Services at Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, SCQF, level 6 is designed to ensure the integration of knowledge, competency and work experience. It is a work-based qualification and must follow the requirements of the Skills for Health Assessment Strategy for the SVQs in Pharmacy Services. The qualification was developed using National Occupational Standards, NOS, using the entire content of a NOS. Trainees must achieve all of

the knowledge and all of the performance criteria requirements. To pass an SVQ unit, trainees must demonstrate all of the required knowledge and performance statements included in the NOS. In response to the team's query about any inappropriate supervision, it was told that EVs check for this, including interviewing learners, and every unit has direct observation of practice, but no such situations had arisen.

The team noted that at the previous accreditation event, LOs 3 and 9 had been deemed not met as there had been limited evidence in their mapping. The team was told that increased scope and range had been added to the Assessor guidelines. SQA requirements which were over and above the NOS had been added to the evidence requirements. EQAs check that the guidance is being applied.

There have been other minor amendments to the qualification since the last GPhC event, all of which were submitted to GPhC for approval, which was granted. Thus, at the request of the profession, Skills for Health developed three new pharmacy NOS for trainees working in primary care which have been added to the optional section of the SVQ; 1) Pharm 34 - Contribute to the management of medication audit and review, 2) Pharm 35 - Contribute to the non-clinical medication review, and 3) Pharm 36 - Support the prescription administration process. The team was told that the knowledge requirements were reviewed and the NOS built up, partly based on feedback from the workplace. NHS Education for Scotland was requested to identify gaps and guidance was updated and included. In addition, as it is no longer a requirement for trainees working in Scotland, the Assessor's Guidelines for the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 6 and 8 were revised to remove the need for trainees to provide evidence for several performance criteria in Pharm 07 – receive prescriptions. The team was told that the revised NOS fit the job role and have been successful.

All trainees working in Scotland will continue to cover the knowledge requirements of the above topics should they have to process English prescriptions presented or move to work elsewhere in the UK.

Criteria 3: Assessment

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to assessment continue to be met.

The SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 6 must be delivered and assessed by registered pharmacists or pharmacy technicians that are specialists in this field, ensuring that trainees are monitored, assessed and supported throughout their training to ensure that they are able to practise safely and effectively.

The SVQ at level 6 follows the requirements of the Skills for Health Assessment Strategy for the SVQs in Pharmacy Services. The assessment strategy outlines the various roles within the assessment and verification process, including assessors, co-ordinating assessors, expert witnesses, internal verifiers and external verifiers. The assessment strategy also outlines acceptable sources of evidence in the workplace. Evidence must be from the learner's performance at work, assessed through direct observation of practice. There must be direct observation of practice by a qualified assessor or direct observation of practice by an expert witness and a professional discussion between the learner and assessor, along with a reflective account. There may also be direct questioning and assignments, and assessment of products generated during the trainees' normal work practices.

To pass a work-based unit, trainees must be able to demonstrate all of the required knowledge and performance statements included in the SVQ unit/NOS. This includes all of the knowledge and performance statements in the NOS. In order to achieve the SVQ at level 6, all component units, four mandatory and three optional units, must be passed. If trainees fail to pass a unit, they will be unable to complete the training programme.

A guide to assessment has been developed to provide support for everyone who assesses SQA qualifications. The guide is based around the principles of assessment and covers the full range of SQA qualifications.

Ongoing systems and qualification verification visits by SQA ensure that all assessment documentation and decisions are regularly reviewed and national standards are being maintained consistently across all centres. All assessment decisions must also be internally verified by the centre. Assessors, internal verifiers and trainees are all interviewed as part of systems/qualifications verification. Employers are also engaged with during these visits. Where issues are identified during a verification visit, sanctions can be placed on the centre and these outcomes must be addressed and approved by SQA prior to the centre submitting any results to SQA.

Criteria 4: Management, resources and capacity

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all eight criteria relating to management, resources and capacity continue to be met.

Centres must have a range of processes and procedures in place to become an approved centre. This includes systems, policies and procedures for managing the centre, for reviewing the reference, learning and assessment materials, assessment environments and equipment, resources and staff, for supporting the delivery of SQA qualifications and learners throughout their qualification. Centres must also have evidence of systems, policies and procedures to ensure that all assessment decisions will be consistent with qualification standards, and how they will maintain records of the internal verification process. The detailed roles and responsibilities for those delivering the course must be evident and, where appropriate, agreements between the college and the employer outlining roles and responsibilities. The team learned that course planning takes place almost a full year before delivery, allowing capacity issues to be managed appropriately. There is constant monitoring of capacity.

All centres must also have a range of processes and procedures in place to be approved to offer the qualification. These must include qualifications and experience for each member of staff who will be an assessor and/or an internal verifier, the suitability of delivery sites, learning materials and equipment, the details of any partnership with another organisation or centre for qualification delivery. External verifiers, EVs, told the team that they had good access to college policies and found strong evidence of conformation to SQA requirements. EVs confirmed that they checked the qualifications of recruitment staff, including training in EDI, along with those of teaching staff, including CVs, CPD records and pharmacy experience.

Centres must describe how learners' development needs and prior achievements will be matched against the requirement of the award, how it will be ensured that learners will meet regularly with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly, and how all of

the Vocational Qualification units they intend to offer will be assessed, including the assessment materials they will be using for a minimum of six units. In the event that trainees do not complete the whole qualification, the team wished to know if trainees are certificated for individual units. It was told that although each unit is a qualification, trainees have to select units for full qualification and certification. Trainees are issued a record of achievement, with dates, which will indicate any individual units that have been achieved. Trainees that pass all the requisite units receive a group award certificate to which they can add further units if they change role. Errors committed during the course require the trainee to reflect on their mistakes. The team was told that SQA has a malpractice policy but EVs told the team that they had not encountered any such situations.

SQA carries out approval visits and external verification takes place on an annual basis to quality assure the processes and procedures and to monitor all learning and training environments. Where issues are identified during a verification visit, sanctions can be placed on the centre and these outcomes must be addressed and approved by SQA prior to the centre submitting any results to SQA.

Criteria 5: Quality management

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to quality management continue to be met.

SQA has external quality assurance processes and procedures in place to ensure that courses are monitored, reviewed and evaluated systematically. These comprise systems approval, systems verification, qualification approval, and qualification verification. Qualification verification is to ensure that centres are assessing trainees in line with national standards, and that assessment decisions comply with SQA quality assurance criteria. The team learned that qualification verifiers, external verifiers, are experienced subject experts, registered with GPhC, who are appointed by SQA to undertake visiting qualification verification on SQA's behalf. Centres will have a systems verification visit within the first year after gaining approval as a centre, if they have trainees registered with SQA. Thereafter, the visits will be scheduled according to the level of need established from the previous visit.

Systems and qualifications approval requires the centre to demonstrate its processes, including those for reviewing learning and assessment materials, the assessment environments and equipment, resources and staff, assessment modes, internal verification, and how the centre supports trainees throughout their qualification.

The team was told that the SQA pharmacy Qualifications Support Team, QST, meets two to three times per year to discuss SQA's portfolio of pharmacy qualifications. All SQA-approved centres, including employers, and NHS Education for Scotland are members of the pharmacy QST. Trainees meet regularly with their assessor to provide feedback on the training programme. In addition, surveys are issued to trainees seeking feedback on their training programme to ensure that the student voice is heard.

The SVQ in Pharmacy Services at level 6 was designed and developed by Skills for Health in partnership with a number of key pharmacy stakeholders. Skills for Health engages with local and national stakeholders to ensure that the qualification is fit for purpose. Consultations on the pharmacy NOS and the SVQ structure are made available online to allow key stakeholders, including

patients and the public, to respond. However, it was explained to the team that although SQA depends on Skills for Health for patient and public involvement, the NOS are not designed with patients and the public in mind, and that responses from these groups have been virtually non-existent. SQA itself has only limited involvement with patients. Where issues are identified, national steering groups and working groups are established.

Criteria 6: Supporting learners and the learning experience

Criteria met/will be met? Yes No

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to supporting learners and the learning experience continue to be met.

Centres must provide evidence of how they will support trainees throughout their qualification. Evidence includes a complaints policy and associated procedures, and an induction checklist covering all SQA requirements. The induction should also cover the GPhC guide to raising concerns about pharmacy education and training. Centres must also provide evidence of how they will support trainees throughout their qualification. Evidence includes a complaints policy and associated procedures, and an induction checklist covering all SQA requirements. The induction should also cover the GPhC guide to raising concerns about pharmacy education and training.

Trainees are supported by educational supervisors and workplace mentors. Dedicated workplace educational supervisors will be in place to co-ordinate the training programme and to liaise regularly with the centre and work-based assessor(s). Trainees are supervised using an agreed system in all learning and training environments at all times to ensure patient safety. Trainees meet regularly with their assessor to review their progress, revise their assessment plans accordingly and to provide feedback on the course.

Employers complete a pre-enrolment candidate information pack for each trainee, describing the sector or role, the selection of optional units relevant to the sector/role, support arrangements in place for the trainee as well as confirmation of the allocated protected learning time each week. The pack will also confirm the named employer contact to allow discussions to take place with regard to the time and opportunities required by trainees to meet the course requirements.

SQA carries out external verification on an annual basis to quality assure the ongoing application of the processes and procedures to ensure that trainees receive appropriate and timely feedback on their performance. Assessors, internal verifiers and trainees are all interviewed as part of systems/qualifications verification. Employers are also engaged with during these visits.

Key findings - Part 3 - Role-specific learning outcomes

Please see the individual qualification part 3 report for commentary.

