

Registration assessment development process

About the registration assessment

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) runs an online computer-based registration assessment in collaboration with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

The primary purpose of the assessment is to ensure that candidates demonstrate an understanding of how to apply pharmaceutical knowledge appropriately and in a timely manner when making professional judgements in pharmacy practice contexts. In addition, it ensures that candidates are appropriately numerate to practise as a pharmacist.

The Board of Assessors has responsibility, within the Council's policies, for:

- developing and holding, or causing to be held, registration assessments (art 44(1)(b))
- determining the arrangements under which assessments under art 44(1)(b) will be held including: dealing with disciplinary matters relating to candidates or prospective candidates; agreeing adjustments for candidates with specific needs related to any protected characteristic; considering candidate appeals and awarding results (art 44(1)(b)(iii))

The Board's primary purpose is to protect patients and the public by ensuring that the standard of the registration assessment is maintained at the appropriate level. To make sure that each assessment is consistent, the question papers are set and moderated by the Board. All decisions about questions, papers, candidate outcomes, and pass marks are made by the Board.

This document outlines the stages in developing registration assessment papers and the robust quality assurance (QA) mechanisms which are in place (see figure 1).

Additional information on the mark awarding algorithm and the process for marking papers and issuing of results can be found on the [registration assessment page](#).

Figure 1:Registration assessment development process



Glossary of terms

Board of Assessors

The Board of Assessors comprises mainly pharmacists with expertise in academia, pharmacy practice and assessment. There are also non-registrant members on the Board with expertise in education and assessment.

Question writers

Registration assessment questions are written by practising pharmacists. These pharmacists work in different sectors of pharmacy and are based in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. They receive training on how to write high-quality questions for the registration assessment. Questions test application of knowledge and not simple recall. The [style guide to the registration assessment](#) provides further information on the agreed style and format of assessment papers. Trainee pharmacists should use the example questions to understand the style and format of questions and become familiar with the onscreen platform used to deliver the assessment.

Registration assessment framework

The registration assessment framework explains what is tested in the registration assessment. The registration assessment tests some, but not all, of the learning outcomes set out in '[Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists](#)'. In the framework, each of the learning outcomes tested by the registration assessment have been linked to indicative assessment topics. This will help candidates better understand how learning outcomes are applied. The assessment topics give an idea of what will be tested – there will be other topics included in an assessment paper. To help candidates understand the relative importance of each outcome to the registration assessment, they have been given a weighting of high, medium, or low.

Standard setting

The standard required to pass the registration assessment is set periodically using modified Angoff methodology and maintained using Item Response Theory (a statistically driven technique). Modified Angoff methodology involves making professional judgements on the difficulty of individual questions for barely passing candidates. A standard setting panel of pharmacists assess the difficulty of each question in the assessment and agree what proportion of barely passing candidates would answer the question correctly. This process produces a provisional pass mark for each paper and forms part of the QA process for each sitting. There is no number or percentage of candidates predetermined to pass or fail the assessment. Only candidates who meet the passing standard will pass the assessment.

Standard setting panel members

Standard setting panel members are practising pharmacists with current knowledge of foundation trainees and/or recently registered pharmacists. Panel members work in different sectors of pharmacy and are based in Northern Ireland, England, Scotland, and Wales. They have a substantial patient-facing element to their own practice and receive training before contributing to a panel.