

**National Pharmacy Association pharmacy support
course reaccreditation event report, Medicines
Counter Assistant Course (MCA), part 3, November
2024**



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Event summary and conclusions

Provider	National Pharmacy Association
Course name	Medicines Counter Assistants Course (MCA)
Event type	Reaccreditation
Event date	27 – 28 November 2024
Approval period	January 2025 – January 2028
Relevant requirements	<u>Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff, October 2020</u>
Framework used	National Occupational Standards
Outcome	Please refer to parts 1 and 2.
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be found here .
Recommendations	Please refer to parts 1 and 2.
Minor amendments	Please refer to parts 1 and 2.
Registrar decision¹	Please refer to parts 1 and 2.

Technical knowledge and skills

The technical knowledge and skills content of the course/qualification must be derived from, and mapped to, an appropriate national framework for pharmacy knowledge and skills recognised in the UK.

¹ Registrar or appointed delegate

Part 3: Role-specific learning outcomes (National Occupational Standards)

Please note, the NOS unique identifiers are hyperlinked to the relevant NOS standard.

PHARM03 - Respond to pharmaceutical queries and requests for information

How does the course/qualification support the trainee to achieve this NOS outcome and where the outcome is taught?

Provider's commentary

The course supports the trainee to achieve this outcome by firstly ensuring that they understand the importance of good communication at the start of the course. This is done by providing them with the underpinning knowledge of the topic of communication via theory. Trainees are taught about effective communication, different types of communication, listening skills, effective questioning techniques and how to overcome barriers to communication.

The introductory chapters also teach the trainee about the WWHAM questioning method, Standard Operating procedures (SOPs) and the Sales of Medicine Protocol. Which are all essential to responding to pharmaceutical queries and requests. The textbooks also advise about when to refer to a pharmacist, in a general context and then throughout both textbooks, in relation to specific conditions and queries.

Both books cover advice on medicines that are liable to misuse and how to deal with requests of this nature. Trainees are taught to know how to look out for signs of abuse and neglect and how to deal with such situation, as well as relevance of knowing this, in terms of their role.

K10: the psychological, occupational and social aspects and implications for individuals living with conditions has been omitted from the qualification and does not map. PHARM03 was not previously mapped on the MCA qualification. This aspect of the PHARM03 we feel is difficult to include and perhaps beyond what should be expected of an MCA.

How and where does the course/qualification assess the trainee's achievement of this NOS outcome at the stated competency level?

Provider's commentary

The course assesses whether the trainee has achieved this outcome through inter text activities in Chapter 1, that help assess their understanding. There are also end of chapter Multiple choice questions which further assess the trainee's knowledge on the topic. This is applicable for this topic in Chapter 1 and in the chapters for each minor ailment/condition. This topic is further tested in end of chapter MCQs and the formal MCQ assessment.

The competency booklet further assesses the trainee by assessing the application of their knowledge gained from textbooks. The supervisor is required to assess their competency on various aspects of their role throughout the course and sign off the competency for the number of times indicated. It is assessed in Learning Outcome 1 of the competency booklet – where the trainee is asked to be observed communicating and advising patients.

GPhC accreditation/recognition team use only:

NOS met/will be met? Yes No

Accreditation team's commentary:

The team was satisfied with the evidence provided.

PHARM04 - Provide advice on non-prescribed medicines and products

How does the course/qualification support the trainee to achieve this NOS outcome and where the outcome is taught?

Provider's commentary

The course starts by teaching the trainee the importance of SOPs, in chapter 1 and then goes onto other important guidelines such as health and safety, in Chapter 2. This helps them meet the learning outcome and set the right foundation for their training. Chapter 1 also addresses local guidelines and organisational policies that are relevant to the trainee's role, such as RP regulations, EDI and GDPR. Chapter 1 also explains the classification of medicines (HMR 2012), herbal remedies and the THR scheme.

The whole of the Part B textbook and some of the Part A textbook teaches the trainee how to provide advice on non-prescribed medicines and products. The areas that are covered are, Pain (Chapter 3), Colds, coughs and hay fever (Chapter 4), Indigestion, heartburn and constipation (Chapter 5), Women's health, family planning and child health in Chapter 6, Skin, feet and men's health (Chapter 7) Eyes, ears and mouth (Chapter 8), Holiday healthcare and healthy living (Chapter 9), Veterinary medicines (Chapter 10).

The books teach the trainee how to do this by first providing them with the knowledge of each condition and then how to advise on medication/treatment using WWHAM or suggested questions to ask for the condition. This addresses performance criteria 3, 4 and 5 of this learning outcome.

Trainees are also advised when they should refer the customer to the pharmacist to provide advice, where it is not appropriate for the trainee to give advice. This addresses performance criteria 7.

'The main actions, side effects and cautions for the most commonly used non-prescription medicines', is covered in each section where medicines for treating conditions are covered (Chapter 3-10).

How and where does the course/qualification assess the trainee's achievement of this NOS outcome at the stated competency level?

Provider's commentary

The course assesses the trainee through at the end of every chapter, as part of a formative assessment and at the end of each book as a summative assessment e.g. A1 assessment Q17, 21, 22 and B1 assessment Q2, 7 and 14 (these are just a few examples). There are also inter – text activities within each chapter to build on the knowledge of that chapter further and apply their knowledge.

The competency booklet further assesses the trainee by assessing the application of their knowledge gained from textbooks. The supervisor is required to assess their competency on various aspects of their role throughout the course and sign off the competency for the number of times indicated.

It is assessed in Learning Outcome 2 of the competency booklet – where the trainee is asked to be observed communicating and advising patients using SOPS and SOMP over 12 assessment criteria. P8, place the medicine/product in the appropriate packaging before giving it to the individual has been omitted from the course and does not map. We do not feel this is relevant, as OTC medicines come pre-packaged and are subject to their own requirements. We do highlight the importance of the patient information leaflet (PIL), and important aspects that can be found on the packaging, within the course but mainly in Part A

GPhC accreditation/recognition team use only:

NOS met/will be met? Yes No

Accreditation team's commentary:

The team was satisfied with the evidence provided.

PHARM07 - Receive prescriptions

How does the course/qualification support the trainee to achieve this NOS outcome and where the outcome is taught?

Provider's commentary

This course supports the trainee to be able to competently receive prescriptions, by giving the trainee the essential knowledge about prescriptions for their role in the Part A textbook. Chapter 1 teaches the trainee about the different types of prescriptions, types of prescribers and ways that prescriptions may be received. Chapter 1 also covers the importance of following SOPs, local procedures, legal and organisational requirements relating to their role in this activity and importance of complying with information governance procedures.

Methods of communication are also addressed in Chapter 1, which is essential for when receiving prescriptions from customers. The trainee is also advised on prices and exemptions relating to prescriptions, which is knowledge that is needed for when receiving prescriptions.

In Chapter 2 the trainee is taught about whistleblowing and safeguarding. It is important that they are aware of this so that they are able to report any acts that could be detrimental to others, as per the objectives of this learning outcome. When receiving prescriptions Medicines Counter assistants can be in a position to notice safeguarding issues to patients.

How and where does the course/qualification assess the trainee's achievement of this NOS outcome at the stated competency level?

Provider's commentary

The trainee is assessed in this outcome through inter - text activities in chapter 1. They are also assessed on this outcome in the end of Book MCQs, which is a summative assessment.

The competency booklet further assesses the trainee by assessing the application of their knowledge gained from textbooks. The supervisor is required to assess their competency on various aspects of their role throughout the course and sign off the competency for the number of times indicated.

It is assessed in Learning Outcome 3 of the competency booklet – where the trainee is asked to be observed receiving prescriptions in line with company SOP's and legal requirements. This is assessed over 8 assessment criteria.

GPhC accreditation/recognition team use only:

NOS met/will be met? Yes No

Accreditation team's commentary:

The team was satisfied with the evidence provided.

PHARM32 - Assist in the issuing of prescribed items

How does the course/qualification support the trainee to achieve this NOS outcome and where the outcome is taught?

Provider's commentary

The trainee is taught about assisting in the issuing of prescribed items, in the context of supply over the counter medicines as well as handing out prescriptions. The course teaches them about WWHAM, SOPs and SOMP, in chapter 1, which are all relevant to selling medicines. These aspects are further covered in relation to each minor ailment throughout the chapters about each clinical topic. This includes how to advise customers about the medicine/product they are selling and when to refer to a pharmacist. It also teaches the trainee, how to process a transaction in Chapter 2.

Chapter 1 also covers handing out of prescriptions and referring to local procedures and SOPs for this, as well as Responsible pharmacist regulations, in relation to them being present for such activities.

How and where does the course/qualification assess the trainee's achievement of this NOS outcome at the stated competency level?

Provider's commentary

The course assesses this outcome through inter text activities, end of chapter MCQs and end of book assessments. Chapter 1 tests the understanding of SOPs and general knowledge of issuing pharmaceutical stock, whilst the chapters relating to minor ailments are more specific to products/advice in that topic.

The competency booklet further assesses the trainee by assessing the application of their knowledge gained from textbooks. The supervisor is required to assess their competency on various aspects of their role throughout the course and sign off the competency for the number of times indicated.

It is assessed in Learning outcome 1, 2 and 3 & 4 where learners have to demonstrate skills communicating, advising customers appropriately and receiving prescriptions. Learning Outcome 4 of the competency booklet is where the trainee is observed following SOPs and maintaining confidentiality when handing out prescriptions. Learning outcome 4 ensures learners correctly match the prescription to the items being handed out in accordance with SOPs. Within Learning outcome 4 learners must also demonstrate that they ask the correct questions before handing out medication including whether an individual has used a particular medication before & if they are taking any other medications which would warrant referral to the pharmacist. Finally, learners must correctly confirm an individuals identify before handing out medication.

GPhC accreditation/recognition team use only:

NOS met/will be met? Yes No

Accreditation team's commentary:

This learning outcome was discussed at the event. The team sought to understand how the learning outcome is introduced, how it is developed in line with Miller's triangle, and how the assessment ensures learning outcomes are assured at the right level.

The provider explained how Pharm 32 differed from Pharm 10, with Pharm 32 being more transactionally focused and as trainees are not advising patients.

The team heard that learning outcomes are introduced through the course content, delivering information at the Knows level of Miller's triangle. Trainees are introduced to information mapped to the relevant learning outcomes for the course. The provider comprehensively summarised key learning content covered in the course.

Learning is consolidated through short answer questions and exercises in the workbook. Pharmacies may also use simulation or discussion to support learning, although this is less likely to feature for this course as trainees are involved in issuing everything.

Assessments ensure knowledge is met at the required level, using MCQs and competency booklets which assess learning at the Does level of Miller's triangle.

