

Advice for newly qualified prescribing pharmacists

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About this advice note

This note gives advice to newly qualified prescribing pharmacists about factors to consider when prescribing.

The term ‘newly qualified prescribing pharmacists’ refers to pharmacists who have recently gained their MPharm under the 2021 initial education and training standards (qualifying from summer 2026) and who will join the register as pharmacist independent prescribers.

When we say ‘you’, we are referring to newly qualified prescribing pharmacists.

References to ‘prescribing practice’ also include de-prescribing and medicines optimisation.

This advice should be applied alongside the **standards for pharmacy professionals** which all pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must meet and our existing **guidance for pharmacist prescribers** which provides detailed guidance to all pharmacist prescribers on applying the standards when prescribing. You should also be aware of our **standards for registered pharmacies** and **guidance for registered pharmacies providing services at a distance, including on the internet**.

As a newly qualified prescribing pharmacist you should also keep to the other relevant standards and guidance that apply to your role and your place of work. These may be from the Care Quality Commission, the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency, Healthcare Inspectorate Wales, Healthcare Improvement Scotland, the Advertising Standards Authority, the Royal College of Pharmacy (formerly the Royal Pharmaceutical Society or RPS), the NHS or your employer, for example.

All prescribing pharmacists must be sure that they are familiar with and apply relevant prescribing guidance which supports the appropriate and effective provision of pharmaceutical care and medicines to meet the requirements of the law and the standards.

We have designed this advice note mainly to support newly qualified prescribing pharmacists, but it may also be helpful for those managing newly qualified prescribing pharmacists and the services in which they practise, whether they are provided in a patient-facing environment or online, as well as those mentoring or supporting newly qualified prescribers.

This note does not give legal advice, as all pharmacy professionals must use their professional judgement and keep to the relevant laws.

Not taking steps to ensure that you are prescribing safely could result in harm to patients and to your registration being put at risk.

Introduction

Independent prescribers are healthcare professionals able to prescribe medicines and medical devices without consulting another prescriber such as a doctor. Pharmacist independent prescribing was introduced in 2006 and requires a registered pharmacist to successfully complete an independent prescribing course and be annotated on the register as an Independent Prescriber.

Independent prescribing is now included in the initial education and training of pharmacists. Those joining the register from the summer of 2026 – and who trained to the 2021 initial education and training standards - will be independent prescribers from the point of registration. Pharmacists who trained to the 2011 standards (or earlier) or the Overseas Pharmacist Assessment Programme standards will still need to complete an independent prescribing course after they register with us.

This advice sets out the principles you should follow when beginning and developing your prescribing practice.

Prescribing is subject to legal and regulatory requirements and standards. In addition to these, you also have a professional obligation to self-regulate to make sure that you are practising safely and in the best interests of patients.

GPhC guidance for pharmacist prescribers

You need to be familiar with and follow our guidance for pharmacist prescribers which sets out the requirements for and gives guidance on:

- taking responsibility for prescribing safely
- keeping up to date and prescribing within your competence
- working in partnership with other healthcare professionals and people seeking care
- prescribing considerations and clinical judgement
- raising concerns

Our guidance for pharmacist prescribers makes clear that you must be able to justify your prescribing decisions and use your professional judgement in the patients' best interests.

The guidance also includes useful questions to ask yourself when prescribing and helpful sources of further information.

In addition to the guidance, you should also make sure that you are aware of and follow relevant local formularies and prescribing protocols.

Scope of prescribing practice

As a newly qualified prescribing pharmacist, understanding the scope of your prescribing practice is a vital part of your professional judgement. You should only prescribe within your knowledge, competence and experience.

When you qualify, the scope of your prescribing is based on the competence and experience you have gained from your core training. When you start work, you should agree the scope of your prescribing with your employer.

Prescribing within your scope of practice may sometimes mean saying 'no' to a prescribing request which you consider to be outside of your current knowledge, skills and competence. Examples of this include (but are not limited to):

- prescribing higher-risk medicines or those that require additional safeguards
- prescribing for complex conditions which may need specialist or expert input
- prescribing in situations where you may not have all the necessary information, for example, when you have an incomplete medical history or the patient has an undifferentiated diagnosis

If this happens, you should seek support with the request or refer it to another prescriber.

The scope of your prescribing will expand over time. It can be helpful to follow a competence framework such as ***A Competency Framework for all Prescribers*** provided by the Royal College of Pharmacy, (which is available to non-members) or a locally provided framework. It is important that you undertake relevant additional training before expanding the scope of your prescribing practice.

Documenting your scope of practice, including your prescribing practice, and keeping this under regular review can help you understand the areas where you are developing and your current limitations.

Support and mentorship

You should make sure that you have support using and developing your prescribing skills.

Support could come from a:

- supervisor
- mentor (including a prescriber from another healthcare profession in a multi-disciplinary team)
- peer support group which includes more experienced prescribers.

It can be helpful to undertake a career development pathway to enhance your training, such as the Royal College of Pharmacy's Enhanced Curriculum or a development programme provided by your employer or other organisations.

There are a range of organisations that can provide help and support, for example:

- professional leadership bodies can provide a range of services
- indemnifiers, unions and representative bodies can provide guidance and support which can help to reduce risk
- educators and training providers can support your development in practice
- employers can offer clinical as well as managerial supervision and specific training and support programmes relating to aspects of care or service delivery

You can find links to further information about the support available in the resources section at the end of this document.

Discussions with the person or people supporting you will play an important part in helping you decide when and in what ways you are ready to expand the scope of your prescribing practice, and in becoming a competent and confident prescriber. It can be helpful for these discussions to include reflection on any incidents or near misses.

Prescribing logs and portfolios can be a helpful basis for these discussions and can also help you to review the scope of your prescribing practice on a regular basis.

Prescribing decisions

Consider the risks and benefits of prescribing or not prescribing a medicine in any given situation. You can find more information on the factors you should consider in our guidance for pharmacist prescribers.

Private prescribing

If you intend to prescribe privately, it is your responsibility to check whether you are required to register with the Care Quality Commission (in England), Healthcare Improvement Scotland or the Healthcare Inspectorate Wales to do so.

Indemnity

Your professional indemnity should cover the risks that may arise as a result of your practice. You need to make sure that your professional indemnity covers all aspects of your prescribing and that you comply with any practice conditions that are part of your indemnity cover.

Revalidation

All registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are required to carry out revalidation as part of their continuing registration and continuing professional development.

Revalidation helps you to develop your professional knowledge and skills, keep up to date and reflect on your practice.

As a newly qualified prescribing pharmacist, revalidation provides a structured opportunity to reflect on your prescribing experience and demonstrate how you are building your competence in this area. It is important to include prescribing in your revalidation submissions.

Employers and managers

As an employer or manager, you should take account of your workforce's scope of practice when deciding which services to offer, bearing in mind your responsibilities as a service provider.

If you employ or manage a newly qualified prescribing pharmacist, you should support them to understand, document and work within their scope. You should only require them to prescribe within their competence and experience. Asking them to prescribe beyond their current scope could put patient safety at risk.

You should support newly qualified prescribing pharmacists to maintain and develop their prescribing practice and facilitate appropriate and supportive supervision and training.

The guidance for pharmacist prescribers also gives information for employers.

Resources

- Royal College of Pharmacy: [rpharms.com/prescribing](https://www.rpharms.com/prescribing)
 - The RCP has produced [guidance on expanding scope of practice](#)
- Primary Care Pharmacy Association: [pcpa.org.uk](https://www.pcpa.org.uk)
- UK Clinical Pharmacy Association: [ukclinicalpharmacy.org](https://www.ukclinicalpharmacy.org)
- Pharmacists' Defence Association: www.the-pda.org
- Pharmacist Support: [pharmacistsupport.org](https://www.pharmacistsupport.org)
- National Pharmacy Association: [npa.co.uk](https://www.npa.co.uk)
- Guild of Healthcare Pharmacists: [ghp.org.uk](https://www.ghp.org.uk)
- Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education: [cppe.ac.uk](https://www.cppe.ac.uk)
- NHS England (which includes Health Education England): [hee.nhs.uk](https://www.hee.nhs.uk)
- NHS Education for Scotland (now part of Public Services Delivery Scotland): [nes.scot.nhs.uk/](https://www.nes.scot.nhs.uk/)
- Health Education and Improvement Wales: [heiw.nhs.wales/education-training/](https://www.heiw.nhs.wales/education-training/)
 - HEIW has produced [*Standards for Competency Assurance of Independent and Supplementary Prescribers in Wales*](#)



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