



Peer discussion: a guide for peers

About this document

This document is for someone who has been asked to participate in a peer discussion by a pharmacist or pharmacy technician. The document gives you information about:

- the GPhC and revalidation for pharmacy professionals
- what a peer discussion is and what it is for
- who can be a peer
- how a peer discussion works
- what you should do to prepare for the discussion
- what you should do during the discussion
- what you should do following the discussion

There is also a link to more guidance about what to do in the very rare circumstance that you feel you have a concern about a pharmacy professional.

In this document we use the following words in this way:

'We' or 'us' means the GPhC

'You' means someone acting as a peer for a pharmacy professional

'They' or 'them' means a pharmacy professional seeking a peer discussion

The GPhC and revalidation for pharmacy professionals

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the independent regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacies in England, Scotland and Wales.

We hold a list of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians who are registered with us. Every year they must renew and revalidate their registration.

To revalidate pharmacy professionals must undertake and record some activities each year and then submit those records to us. One of those records is of a peer discussion.

You can [find out more information about revalidation for pharmacy professionals](#) in the revalidation section of our website.

What a peer discussion is and what it is for

Peer discussion is an activity that encourages someone to engage with others in reflection on learning and practice. Research shows that having another person's view can help pharmacy professionals to reflect on their practice and can reduce the potential for professional isolation.

If you decide to act as someone's peer, it is important to remember the purpose of the discussion is to help a pharmacy professional reflect on their learning and practice. Your role is to be supportive and to use questions to help a pharmacy professional think differently about their practice.

A pharmacy professional must record their peer discussion in an online recording tool. You can [see an example of the format of a peer discussion record](#) in the revalidation section of our website.

Who can be a peer

Almost anyone can be a peer. There are only a few reasons why someone cannot undertake this role. These are:

- they have too close a personal relationship with the pharmacy professional and feel they cannot be objective
- they have a conflict of interest, or a perceived conflict of interest, like a commercial relationship which undermines their objectivity
- they are a health professional currently under sanction from a regulator

The important thing is that both you and the pharmacy professional feel you understand what they do well enough so that you can ask useful questions to support them to think about how they might improve their practice. This means you might be a pharmacy professional, another health and social care professional or possibly from a completely different background. These are some examples of people who might be effective peers (this not an exhaustive list):

Pharmacy professional	Example of a suitable peer
Academic pharmacist	An academic from a different discipline
Military pharmacy technician	A military nurse
Public health pharmacist	Another public health specialist
Industrial pharmacy technician	A colleague from another scientific background
A pharmacist working as a senior manager	Another senior manager
A pharmacy technician in the community setting	An expert patient
A hospital pharmacy technician	A group of health professionals

How a peer discussion works

The choice of peer rests entirely with the pharmacy professional. This is very important and something that as a peer you need to respect. This is because if the peer relationship is to be effective, the pharmacy professional must trust and respect the relationship. If you feel that the relationship is not based on mutual trust and respect you may want to advise the pharmacy professional to find another peer.

Your pharmacy professional will arrange a mutually convenient time for the peer discussion or series of discussions at some point during the year. It is up to them to decide when and how the discussion will benefit them the most.

The peer discussion can be conducted at any time, in person, remotely over the phone or video call, or in a group setting (provided the topic of the group's conversation is the registrant and their practice and not another issue).

The peer discussion will typically take an hour, although it can be shorter or longer and they may choose to have more than one discussion if they think it will be helpful for them. More time may be needed in preparation and to follow up from the discussion.

You must be willing to provide your name, role, organisation and telephone and email contact details to the registrant, who will record these as part of their annual revalidation record. We may contact you using these details to verify that the peer discussion took place according to the details provided by the registrant. If we do this, we will only seek to confirm the discussion took place and we will not ask you for details of the conversation.

Preparing for the discussion

Most of the preparation will be done by the pharmacy professional. However, they may want to share documents and information with you to inform the discussion.

During the discussion

When a pharmacy professional records their peer discussion they provide a response to the following prompt:

Describe how this peer discussion changed your practice for the benefit of your patients or service users.

To help them respond you will need to be able to ask questions about their practice, offer suggestions for improvement if possible and supportively challenge their assumptions. It is important to listen to what they say and ask the right questions. Try using open questions or prompts like these:

Why did you decide to do it that way?

Were there any other options?

What happened next?

What did you do in response?

How do you think that made them feel?

What would you do differently?

There are lots of different subjects you might want to talk about over the course of the discussion. Your pharmacy professional will bring these up but if you want to you could assist them by asking about:

- the learning they have been doing or intend to do this year, particularly the learning that they have applied in practice.
- any successes or challenges they have been having this year and how this is impacting on the people who use their services.

- incidents, events, complaints, and compliments that they have received this year, paying particular attention to what changes they made in their practice in response to this feedback and what impact those changes have had for people using their services.
- the General Pharmaceutical Council's *Standards for Pharmacy Professionals* to help identify examples where they feel they have met or exceeded the standards for the benefit of their service users.
- quality improvement activities that they have undertaken and how they have benefited the people using their service users.

You **do not** need to make notes of the discussion other than the date that it occurred. Pharmacy professionals may keep a note to help them write up their peer discussion record. The content of the peer discussion remains completely confidential between you and the registrant.

Following the discussion

We may contact you following the discussion to confirm it took place. We will not seek any other details about the conversation from you. It may be almost a year after your discussion that we decide to check that it took place. To make sure you remember that you acted as someone's peer, you should keep a record of the date of the discussion and the name of the person for whom you acted as a peer.

If you have a concern about a pharmacy professional

In some very rare cases, you might have a concern about something that took place as part of your role as a peer. In these circumstances, you should **look at our guidance on concerns** which is available in the *Raising concerns* section of our website.