

**Pearson Education Ltd pharmacy technician
qualification recognition event report –
November 2019**



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Event summary and conclusions

Awarding organisation	Pearson Education Ltd
Course	Pharmacy technician qualification
Event type	Recognition
Event date	8 November 2019
Recognition period	January 2020 – January 2026
Outcome	<p>Approval</p> <p>The recognition team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the L3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians (Qualification) provided by Pearson Education Ltd should be recognised for a period of six years with an interim visit in three years.</p>
Conditions	There were no conditions
Standing conditions	Please refer to Appendix 1
Recommendations	No recommendations were made
Registrar decision	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the recognition team's recommendation and approved the recognition of the qualification for a period of six years with an interim visit in three years.
Key contact (awarding organisation)	Raman Gurnami, Portfolio Manager Healthcare, Childcare and Sport
Recognition team	<p>Leonie Milliner, Event Chair, Lay Team Member</p> <p>Catherine Davies, Freelance Education and Training provider</p> <p>Donna Bartlett, Dispensary Team Leader Lancashire Teaching Hospitals</p> <p>Dr Ruth Edwards, pharmacist, Head of Professional Experience, Aston University School of Pharmacy</p>
GPhC representative	Chris McKendrick, Quality Assurance Officer, GPhC
Rapporteur	Ian Marshall, Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde; Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services)

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales (the countries of Great Britain). In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be registered with the GPhC and have satisfied us that they meet our detailed requirements. If you are a training provider or awarding body, you will need to follow the process set out **Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017** to have your pharmacy technician competency and knowledge-based course/qualification approved by us.

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

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/231/contents/made>

Background

Pearson Education Ltd. (Pearson) approached the GPhC with an application for recognition of a qualification to train pharmacy technicians. Pearson has worked as part of a group of awarding organisations, facilitated by Skills for Health, and supported by Health Education England, throughout the development of this qualification. The development process included working closely with pharmacy technicians and pharmacists to design the learning outcomes, assessment criteria and indicative content, underpinned by an external consultation. A recognition event (Stage 1) relating to the GPhC learning outcomes was held on 11 April 2019. In line with the GPhC's standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians October 2017 (integrated knowledge and competency), a further event (Stage 2) was scheduled for 8 November 2019 to review the Pearson qualification's suitability for recognition; this event concentrated on the fulfilment of the GPhC accreditation and recognition standards and criteria and the awarding organisation's ability to deliver the qualification through their centre providers. In line with the GPhC's methodology for recognising awarding organisations delivering pharmacy technician qualifications, the event was held on site at the provider's head office to allow for the GPhC's recognition team to view the resources available.

Documentation

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

Pre-visit

In advance of the main event, a pre-visit meeting took place by teleconference on 30 October 2019. The purpose of the pre-visit meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the awarding organisation to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

The event was held onsite at Pearson Education Ltd head office on 8 November 2019 and comprised a number of meetings between the GPhC recognition team and representatives of Pearson pharmacy technician qualification.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

The event

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
1.	Private meeting of recognition team and GPhC representatives	09:00 – 11:30
2.	Recognition team meet with qualification representatives	11:30 – 12:30
3.	Recognition team meet with qualification representatives	13:15 – 14:30
4.	Private meeting of recognition team	14:30 – 15:30
5.	Feedback to the qualification representatives	15:30 – 15:45

Key findings - Part 1: learning outcomes

During the Stage 1 event referred to above, the team reviewed all 53 learning outcomes relating to the pharmacy technician programme. The report to the Stage 1 event can be [**found here**](#).

To gain additional assurance the team will test a sample of learning outcomes during the interim event with the provider when the programme is operational.

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

Standard 1: Selection and entry requirements

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to the selection and entry requirements will be met

The team was told that the registrations on the current pharmacy technicians' qualification expire in July 2020 but that some centres might deliver both the current and the new qualification for a period of time with different cohorts of trainees. The team was assured that Pearson had sufficient resources to oversee this, including a sufficient number of standards verifiers (SVs), and that the quality assurance of both current and new qualifications would be continued. The documentation submitted explained that entry requirements for this qualification are included within the Qualification Specification to ensure consistency across all Pearson approved centre providers. Centres are advised that they should review applicants' prior qualifications and/or experience, considering whether this profile shows that they have the potential to achieve the qualification. The presentation indicated that it will be rare to see recognition of prior learning (RPL) being applied for entry to the qualification. The team was informed that Pearson may look to implement recognising prior achievements (RPA) and that this would be assessed from a practical point of view. The entry requirements for this qualification include that learners must be currently working in a pharmacy environment, therefore securing the placement as a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician. Additionally, learners must have GCSE passes in English, Mathematics and Science and acceptable good character references and health check results. As part of the Standard Verifier (SV) visit it will be ensured that centres have a procedure to check fitness to practise in the form of a DBS check or a character reference check. There are templates for gathering the health check and good character reference to support the centres. Selectors must apply the selection criteria consistently, in an unbiased way and in line with relevant legislation. They will be trained to do this, and the training will include equality, diversity and inclusion. Centres will provide evidence of this as part of the sampling exercise during Standards Verifier (SV) visits. Additionally, SVs will ensure that centres have policies on fair recruitment. Centres are advised that for learners with disabilities and specific needs, the assessment of their potential to achieve the qualification must identify, where appropriate, the support that will be made available to them during delivery and assessment of the qualification. The learner must be directly supervised by a pharmacy professional that is registered with the GPhC. The team was told that in the case of a trainee changing employer or provider, there would be a continuity of provision and although the SVs would need to be consulted, such changes did not pose an issue for Pearson.

Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

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

The documentation submitted indicated that Pearson has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, which includes its approaches to qualification development, assessment and related services in an inclusive way. This policy aims to ensure that all learners have equal opportunity, and that the qualification is awarded in a fair way to every learner. Reasonable adjustments must be made to course delivery and assessment to help learners with specific needs to meet the learning outcomes. Teaching, learning and assessment may be modified for this purpose but learning outcomes may not. The team was told that centres are able to make adjustments to assessments to take account of the needs of individual learners in line with the guidance given in the relevant Pearson document; the process includes centres requesting reasonable adjustments which must be approved by the Principal Standards Manager. The team noted from the submission that it is the centre's responsibility to collect and use EDI data and to use general EDI principles in designing and delivering the qualification. The team was told that this mainly relates to the use of language and the avoidance of stereotypes in learning and assessment materials. Pearson obtains the same EDI data as the centres and ensures that assignment briefs are inclusive and that trainees with specific learning needs are catered for.

Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to management, resources and capacity will be met

The submission explained that during the initial development for this qualification there was a wide consultation involving a range of stakeholders, as identified above, and the feedback was given due consideration in shaping the final product. The review of the qualification will be done jointly by the awarding bodies involving the range of stakeholders and this will be done as a sub-group of the Joint Awarding Body Qualification Group (JABQG). The team asked about the lines of accountability between Pearson and the centres, especially in relation to risk, risk mitigation, or roles/ responsibility, and learned that there is the initial review of the application from centres to deliver the programme. Clear expectations of the responsibility of centres are set with heads of centres agreeing to comply with Pearson quality standards. The qualification is classed as high risk by Pearson and as a result there will be two visits per year in terms of Standards Verification. Centres are provided with reports which highlight effective practice. Learners must be directly supervised by a pharmacy professional registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council. The learner must be supported by their supervisor in receiving sufficient training and experience in the workplace in order to work competently and safely as a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician. Centres must make sure that learners have access to specified resources and to the sector specialists delivering and assessing the units. Centres must adhere to the Pearson policies that apply to the different models of delivery. The Lead Standard Verifier (LSV) visits the centre twice a year to risk-assess the centre in relation to the qualification management and administration, and monitors progression with actions and outcomes. The LSV will review policy and procedures, interview staff and provide feedback. LSVs are sourced from the pool of existing SVs and need to successfully complete yearly standardisation in order to be eligible for the role. The Standard Verifier (SV) is an experienced expert in assessment who is GPhC-registered. The focus of the SV role will be towards considering if the qualification assessment decisions are correct and if the learners are being sufficiently supported as defined within the specification. Centre resources are checked at the SV visits. It was stated that successful delivery of the qualification is dependent on the human resource at centres. The team was told that the

assessments are criterion-driven, centres are given access to the assignment briefs but may wish to impart a local element to the assignment. The Pearson assignments are based on knowledge and practice but do not include tests *per se*, but rather involve presentations and coursework-based learning. The assignments are assessed by the centres with Pearson providing a checking service. Trainees failing assignments are allowed to re-sit the assessment after being provided with feedback. Supporting centre staff members to deliver the qualification effectively is an established and key aspect of the SV role and LSV roles. SVs will triangulate learner interviews and progress, the quality of assessment decisions and interviews with supporting staff. LSVs also check that assessor workloads take into account learners' locations and needs, that sampling and standardisation activity is appropriate to the level of risk associated with each qualification in the programme area, and that Professional Development Plans are in place for all assessors and Internal Verifiers in the programme area. The team was told that if an educational supervisor leaves the employment or is on long-term leave, then a replacement must be found; the possibility of this eventuality needs to be discussed at the outset.

Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to the monitoring, review and evaluation will be met

The documentation explained that the qualification has been designed collaboratively with HEE and other awarding organisation and the views of employers and other providers were gained through consultation and used to improve various aspects of the qualification. Pearson will continue to gain the views of employers and other stakeholders throughout the lifecycle of the qualification and make improvements where necessary. Pearson will, through the SSV, SVs and stakeholders, be receptive to including changes in practice as necessary. As part of the Joint Award Body Qualification Group (JABQG), all the Awarding Organisations that have been part of this collaborative development will review the qualification annually and take the view of stakeholders on board including service users, employers and providers. Centres are expected to become an approved centre and then apply to deliver the qualification and enter a formal agreement with Pearson to offer the qualification. A quality assurance process was described consisting of a three-way partnership between the provider, Standards Verifiers and Pearson which has been devised to reflect the General Conditions of Recognition June 2016 and SQA Accreditation's Regulatory Principles 2014 published by Ofqual and the SQA Accreditation respectively. The external quality assurance model places emphasis on working collaboratively with centres to improve the quality management of programme delivery. Centres have their own policies and procedures on monitoring and evaluation of courses; this is monitored during standards verifier visits. If there is an issue with centre non-compliance, it is escalated to the Principal Standards manager, who then visits the centre for support and further actions. Feedback to pre-registration pharmacy technicians forms part of the qualification delivery and assessment. Each learner must have a learning agreement covering all the learning and training environments which outlines roles, responsibilities and lines of accountability, and must say how learners will be supported during the programme. Each learner must be supported as a trainee in the workplace, and there must be systems in place for liaising with centres regularly on the progress of learners. Learners should be provided with an induction that identifies how the course will be taught and assessed. Learners should have a clear understanding of the staff they would speak to for support, guidance and, if necessary, to make an appeal or complaint. Pre-

registration trainee pharmacy technicians should be suitably supervised in all aspects of their work to ensure that their practice is safe and accurate. Their supervisor should monitor their workload to ensure that it is appropriate and realistic, and reflective of their experience. Time to learn must be sufficient and provide effective opportunity to complete work and collect or produce satisfactory evidence. Learners must be able to access personal and academic support and the supervisor must signpost this support clearly to learners at induction and through the course. The supervisor must ensure that learners have sufficient access to resources in order to support their learning and make effective progress. Centres need to demonstrate how the learner voice is captured and how this feeds into quality development. Centres also need to demonstrate how they engage with local workforce and employer groups and how this feeds into quality development. SVs will triangulate the minutes of such meetings, together with interviews with learners, to determine the outcome. It was stressed that quality improvement is a key aspect of the SV visit and is an important aspect of the SV report.

Standard 5: Course design and delivery

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course design and delivery will be met

The qualification consists of 21 mandatory units which cover a mix of knowledge and skills. These units are designed to be delivered in the workplace and by education and training providers and be assessed holistically where appropriate, in line with the common assessment principles. Learners are also required to understand professionalism for their role, and this includes revalidation as a pharmacy technician. The training providers will develop their own teaching and learning strategies for the programme to allow for flexibility in delivery of the programme according to local provision. Quality assurance includes approval process, where Pearson monitors centres' approach to delivery and assessments, including sample assignment briefs and any supporting documents, logs, and schemes of work. The strategy and timeline for teaching and learning must be available to the SV (delivery plan). The SV will provide commentary on the quality and the appropriateness of this strategy. Adherence to this strategy and timeline will also be triangulated through learner's portfolios and interviews with learners and assessors during the SV visit. However, the quality of teaching is not monitored by Pearson as most of the centres are under Ofsted monitoring, but outcomes of the qualifications will inform the quality of teaching, and SVs monitor learners' progress. The currency of the learning material is checked by the SVs, particularly in relation to the assignments. The SVs also check the CPD status of centre staff members to help ensure currency of teaching materials. Pearson supports centres via newsletters such as Spotlight, produced by the SSV, and also considers potential upcoming changes. If the SVs identify a lack of currency in assessments this will be discussed with the centres. The qualification development group, consisting of the six Awarding Organisations, engaged with subject matter experts at meetings and through webinars throughout the development process. The feedback from an online public consultation was considered, resulting in amendments to units as well as a new knowledge unit being developed for the manufacture of medicines. Should there be any further relevant regulatory changes, the qualification will be reviewed to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. Awarding Organisations are committed to working together to review the qualification at such time that a review is required. Pre-registration trainee Pharmacy Technicians will be employed and the responsibility for supervision will lie with the employer and training provider. Employers and learners will have an agreement in place which will include information on supervision requirements. The team was interested to learn how trainees

understand their pre-registration status and how they operating within the limits of their confidence is assured, and was told that SVs speak to learners on this issue. The team was told that the main difficulty is in learners not knowing that they should not be undertaking a particular task; in this the supervising pharmacist has the major role. Centres must have clear procedures for the management of raising concerns and supporting learners. The SV will triangulate this during visits through learner interviews and if a learner identifies a concern to Pearson, for example being asked to perform an inappropriate task to their level of knowledge and experience, this will be investigated by the investigations team. Pearson will give centres direction on the suggested order of delivery of the units with the skills and underpinning knowledge being taught throughout the two-year programme. Awarding Organisations, assessors and employers will ensure that unsafe practice is not passed. The learner will have to demonstrate that they meet all of the units, to enable them to pass the qualification.

Standard 6: Course assessment

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course assessment will be met

The documentation stated that Pearson along with other awarding organisations, as part of the collaborative development, has developed a set of common assessment principles covering the requirements for skills-based and knowledge-based units. The primary method of assessment for the skills-based units is observation in the workplace by the assessor. Across the qualification's skills-based units, there must be at least three observations which cover the required skills. Evidence should be generated over a period of time to show consistent performance. The role of the workplace educational supervisor in assessment decisions is the responsibility of the centres, with some assessing and others not. The role of the trained expert witness is that of a pharmacy professional who makes statements on the assessments. Thus, expert witness testimony may be used where it is difficult for an assessor to observe aspects of practice. Knowledge-based units will be assessed using internally set and internally marked written assignments. Assignments will be marked by the centre using set marking criteria produced by the centre. The assignments will be internally quality assured, then subject to external quality assurance sampling by the Awarding Organisation. Assessors and expert witnesses must be a pharmacist or pharmacy technician who is occupationally competent and knowledgeable in the area of practice to which the unit being assessed applies. Employers will have policies and procedures in place to monitor their learners and these will vary locally. There will be standard governance policies in place, and these will include how to raise concerns about patient safety or any other health and safety concerns. Each centre must demonstrate how they enrol only learners that fulfil the demands of the qualification specification. Centres must recruit only learners who are appropriately supervised as per the current legal framework. The centre must demonstrate that auditable records are produced for each learner that clearly describes the learner's assessment journey; this must include clear plans for assessment together with reviews of progression associated with attainment of standards. The centre must provide the learner with feedback and this must ensure that the wider view of supervisors and managers are included. Centres' assessment practice must reflect the learners' practice over time and capture safe and reliable practice; such assessment practice must be auditable and scrutinised as part of the centre's IQA process. As registered professionals with GPhC, the SVs would be obliged to report and share any issues of unsafe practices brought to their attention. Learners will have regular supervision and reviews in line with individual

employer policies and practices. It was confirmed that professionalism, patient safety and safe and effective practice are embedded throughout the programme.

Standard 7: Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience

The team was satisfied all seven criteria relating to the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and learning will be met

The submission stated that there will be clear signposting to the support available to the learners, covering academic study, general welfare and career advice. This support should be discussed at length at induction and revisited frequently throughout the course. Learner support and raising concerns was described as a major role of the SV. Thus, centres have been provided with guidance on learner support throughout the specification, and this will be further reinforced during training and networking events. Centres must have agreements in place with employers for learners to have full access and support required for learning and assessment. Centres must have clear policies and procedures for learner support. The SV role will identify the procedures and consider how these are implemented. The implementation will be considered through interviews with staff and learners, the quality of assessment and IQA outcomes and progress over time. The team was told that SVs will examine in advance all the policies and procedures in relation to learner support in centres new to Pearson. Thus, assessment, delivery and quality assurance strategies are required from the outset, all carried out by the SV before approval is given. Centres attend networking sessions organised by Pearson to share best practice.

Learners must be given the opportunity to work in multi-disciplinary teams to have the opportunity to learn from peers. All centres and employers must have procedures in place to deal with concerns. Serious concerns that may affect a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician's suitability for future registration, such as inappropriate or criminal behaviour, must be reported to the GPhC. There must also be clear procedures for learners to raise concerns. Any concerns must be dealt with promptly, with documented action taken when appropriate. Learners must be made aware of the GPhC's guidance to raising concerns about pharmacy education and training. During Pearson's SV visits it will be confirmed that ~~that~~ tutors are registered with the GPhC and have been practising for at least three years.

Appendix 1 - Standing conditions

The following are standing conditions of recognition and apply to all awarding organisations:

1. The record and report include other comments from the team. Awarding organisations are required to take all comments into account as part of the recognition process. The awarding organisation must confirm to the GPhC that required amendments have been made.
2. The awarding organisation must respond to the definitive version of the record and report within three months of receipt. The summary report, along with the awarding organisation's response, will be published on the GPhC's website for the duration of the recognition period.
3. The awarding organisation must seek approval from the GPhC for any substantial change (or proposed change) which is, or has the potential to be, material to the delivery of a regulated qualification. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. the content, structure or delivery of the recognised qualification;
 - b. ownership or management structure of the awarding organisation;
 - c. resources and/or funding;
 - d. trainee numbers and/or admissions policy;
 - e. changes to/conditions imposed by qualification regulators;
 - f. any partnership, licensing or franchise agreement;
 - g. staff associated with the qualification.
4. The awarding organisation must make trainees and potential trainees aware that successful completion of a regulated qualification is not a guarantee of registration as a Pharmacy Technician with the GPhC or future employment.
5. The awarding organisation must make trainees and potential trainees aware of the GPhC website address where they can view the GPhC's recognition reports and the timescales for future recognition events.
6. Whenever required to do so by the GPhC, awarding organisations must give such information and assistance as the GPhC may reasonably require in connection with the exercise of its functions. Any information in relation to fulfilment of these standing conditions must be provided in a proactive and timely manner.

