

# **University of Portsmouth independent prescribing course reaccreditation event report, June 2021**



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## Event summary and conclusions

<b>Provider</b>	University of Portsmouth
<b>Course</b>	Independent prescribing course
<b>Event type</b>	Reaccreditation
<b>Event date</b>	3 June 2021
<b>Reaccreditation period</b>	September 2021 – September 2024
<b>Relevant standards</b>	<a href="#">GPhC education and training standards for pharmacist independent prescribers, January 2019</a>
<b>Outcome</b>	Approval
<b>Conditions</b>	There were no conditions.
<b>Standing conditions</b>	The standing conditions of accreditation can be found <a href="#">here</a> .
<b>Recommendations</b>	No recommendations were made.
<b>Registrar decision</b>	Following the event, the Registrar of the GPhC accepted the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the reaccreditation of the programme for a further period of 3 years.
<b>Maximum number of all students per cohort:</b>	30
<b>Number of pharmacist students per cohort:</b>	30
<b>Number of cohorts per academic year:</b>	2
<b>Approved to use non-medical DPPs:</b>	Yes
<b>Key contact (provider)</b>	Mr Nick Warren and Dr Nicola Barnes, Senior Lecturers in Pharmacy Practice, Course Leaders for Postgraduate Certificate Independent Prescribing for Pharmacists
<b>Provider representatives</b>	Dr Karen Ball, Head of School of Pharmacy and Biomedical Sciences Dr Nicola Barnes, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader

	<p>Mrs Roshni Simmonds, Senior Lecturer in Pharmacy Practice and Independent Prescriber Pharmacist in Dermatology (meeting 4 only)</p> <p>Mr Nick Warren, Senior Lecturer and Course Leader</p> <p>Dr Marisa Van Der Merwe, Associate Head of School (Academic)</p>
<b>Accreditation team</b>	<p>Susan Bradford (event Chair), Adjudicator, Social Work England</p> <p>Lyn Hanning, Director of Practice Based Learning and Head of Pharmacy Practice, University of Bath</p> <p>Professor Anne Watson, Postgraduate Pharmacy Dean, NHS Education for Scotland</p>
<b>GPhC representative</b>	<p>Philippa McSimpson, Quality Assurance Manager, GPhC</p>
<b>Rapporteur</b>	<p>Jane Smith, Chief Executive Officer, European Association for Cancer Research</p>

## Introduction

### Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and is the accrediting body for pharmacy education in Great Britain. The reaccreditation process is based on the GPhC's standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers January 2019.

The GPhC's right to check the standards of pharmacy qualifications leading to annotation as a pharmacist independent prescriber is the Pharmacy Order 2010. It requires the GPhC to 'approve' courses by appointing 'visitors' (accreditors) to report to the GPhC's Council on the 'nature, content and quality' of education as well as 'any other matters' the Council may require.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the accreditation 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

The University of Portsmouth was accredited by the GPhC in September 2010 to provide a programme to train pharmacist independent prescribers. The programme was reaccredited in February 2014 and in May 2017.

At the May 2017 event, the programme was reaccredited for three years, subject to one condition which was that "the provider must amend the assessment regulations relating to patient harm to ensure that any student who has 'failed to identify a serious problem or an answer which would

cause patient harm' in any summative assessment fails the overall programme (as per criterion 5.4). Currently, the arrangements only apply to certain assessments. This must be made clear to students and DMPs in all programme documentation." Following the event, the provider submitted a response to the condition, and the accreditation team agreed that it had been met satisfactorily.

A one-year extension to the 2017-2020 reaccreditation was granted due to the Covid-19 pandemic during 2019-20. In line with the standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers January 2019, an event was therefore scheduled on 3 June 2021 to review the course's suitability for further reaccreditation.

At the June 2021 event, the provider sought approval to deliver the programme to two cohorts of 30 students per year. The course is led by a pharmacist.

## Documentation

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

## The event

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the GPhC modified the structure of the event so that it could be held remotely. The event was held via videoconference between the University of Portsmouth and the GPhC on 3 June 2021 and comprised of meetings between the GPhC reaccreditation team and representatives of the University of Portsmouth prescribing course.

Students who were currently undertaking the course, or who had completed it in the last three years, contributed to the event by completing a qualitative survey, responses to which were reviewed by the GPhC accreditation team.

## Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## Schedule

### The event

Meeting number	Meeting	Time
1.	Private meeting of accreditation team and GPhC representatives	09:30 – 10:30
2.	Meeting with course provider representatives	11:00 – 13:00
3.	Lunch	13:00 – 14:00
4.	Learning outcomes testing session	14:00 – 14:30
5.	Panel private meeting	14:30 – 15:15
6.	Feedback to course provider representatives	15:15 – 15:30

# Key findings

## Part 1 - Learning outcomes

During the event, the team reviewed all 32 learning outcomes relating to the independent prescribing course. To gain additional assurance the team also tested a sample of **five** learning outcomes during a separate meeting with the provider and was satisfied that **all 32 learning outcomes will be met** to a level as required by the GPhC standards.

The following learning outcomes were tested at the event: **4, 10, 22, 23 and 30.**

### Domain - Person centred care (outcomes 1-6)

Learning outcomes met? Yes  No

### Domain - Professionalism (outcomes 7-15)

Learning outcomes met? Yes  No

### Domain - Professional knowledge and skills (outcomes 16-26)

Learning outcomes met? Yes  No

### Domain - Collaboration (outcomes 27-32)

Learning outcomes met? Yes  No

## Part 2 - Standards for pharmacist independent prescribing course providers

### Standards 1 - Selection and entry requirements

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to the selection and entry requirements will be met.** (The criteria can be found [here](#))

The full entry criteria and admissions process were described by the provider. However the provider confirmed that there had been a delay in updating this information on the website due to recent university-wide IT issues. The updates would go live on the website as soon as possible. In the meantime, applicants were being given complete advice by the course team. Appropriate checks against the entry criteria are made by the provider, and all applicants are interviewed by two members of the course team before being offered a place, to ensure that they have the appropriate experience and opportunities for learning in practice. Applicants who are rejected are given reasons for the decision. Typically, applicants are advised to obtain

further, more relevant, experience and to reapply at a later date, rather than being rejected outright.

Measures are in place to monitor the diversity data relating to applications and admissions. Meaningful analysis is not yet possible given the low applicant and student numbers currently available, but this will continue to be monitored and will become useful over time as numbers increase.

## Standard 2 - Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion will be met.**

All staff contributing to the course are trained in equality and diversity. Students are encouraged to share their different experiences, cultures, beliefs and opinions. Ground rules are developed and agreed at the start of the course to ensure that all students are treated with dignity and respect.

Students are taught specifically about equality and diversity, and are supported to apply their learning to diverse populations. For example, physical assessment teaching includes the observation of signs and symptoms on different skin tones. Students are expected to consider the full range of diversity in the management of the patient groups they will encounter in their scope of practice.

Students are signposted to University services to support them to identify learning needs, and reasonable adjustments are made when appropriate. The provider will introduce some weekend study days from summer 2021 onwards, to facilitate the inclusion of students who may find it difficult to attend weekday study days. The continued inclusion of some online remote learning, initially developed in response to Covid-19, also provides students with more flexibility. Many students have childcare responsibilities and wherever possible study days are scheduled to avoid school holidays.

## Standard 3 - Management, resources and capacity

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all six criteria relating to the management, resources and capacity will be met.**

Roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the course are defined in a DPP guide and Student Handbook. These documents additionally outline processes for raising concerns across all settings, which are also discussed directly with students and DPPs during the programme induction. This includes a description of the use of progress review meetings to provide feedback to all parties and raise concerns.

At the start of the course, students identify their learning needs against the Royal Pharmaceutical Society competencies for all prescribers. These learning needs are discussed with the DPP and the resulting development plan forms a learning agreement which is agreed between the student, DPP and academic tutor. A minimum of three progress review meetings

between the students and the DPP must take place during the course. These are recorded in the student's e-portfolio. Any issues are discussed with the student, either at one of the review meetings or separately.

The course is delivered by appropriately qualified staff, including registered pharmacists. Staff are supported to develop in their roles, beginning with a comprehensive induction programme. All academic staff are expected to achieve Fellowship of Advance HE within two years of joining the School. The provider checks that the DPPs who support the students in practice have also had training and experience appropriate to the role, and that they are able to offer the required level of support. A University practice audit tool is used to ensure that the facilities, staffing and opportunities available to the student in the practice environment are appropriate to enable the student to successfully complete the course.

There is a clear annual process for course review which ensures that the quality of the course is monitored and any areas of concern or risk are considered and addressed. The process also allows for areas of good practice to be identified and disseminated.

As the course will become one 60 credit module (see Standard 5), the module lead and course lead roles will be fulfilled by the same person. The provider is satisfied that this is appropriate and is clear about the responsibilities associated with each role. The module lead is concerned with day-to-day delivery of the course material, while the course lead has a more strategic overview with a developmental focus.

Teaching facilities have been upgraded since the last reaccreditation. The main teaching suite has been refurbished to provide a fully flexible teaching space, able to be used for clinical teaching, group work and workshop / lecture sessions. A suite of eight counselling rooms, used for teaching and OSCE assessments, is also now available. Simulation facilities have been expanded to include two hospital wards, and a care home and GP surgery environment.

#### Standard 4 - Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

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

The provider confirmed that the redesigned course was validated by the University in January 2021.

A new annual monitoring and review policy was introduced by the University in 2019-2020. Data are supplied to staff through a Quality Assessment Dashboard (QuAD) which provides a red, amber or green rating for each course, according to whether agreed benchmarks have been met. Using the QuAD data, the course leader, in collaboration with the Associate Head Academic, produces an Excellence and Quality Improvement Plan (EQuIP) identifying action to be taken in any of the red or amber areas. Data that are considered include student satisfaction, progression data and employment data. The EQuIP also captures good practice, external examiner feedback, student feedback and involvement, and any outcomes from professional, statutory and regulatory body events. This course plan informs a departmental plan which is reviewed at the faculty level. Resources and support are then allocated across the faculty as



required. There has only been one review of this course under the new system and no areas were flagged for action.

Student feedback has led to a number of changes to the delivery of the course, and has influenced the redesign in response to the new GPhC standards. Changes include the introduction of a full formative OSCE, the availability of weekly tutorials with their personal tutor and an enhanced library induction to include literature searching and referencing.

The views of stakeholders including local NHS trusts, primary care providers, community pharmacy contract representatives, commissioners, patients and the public, have also been sought and used to develop the course design and delivery. Their views have led to the introduction of weekend study days, and to the exploration of opportunities to provide on-going support and networking for graduates of the course.

The course team reviews legislation and practice guidance for pharmacist prescribers and makes updates to the course as needed. Regular course team meetings are used as an opportunity to consider relevant changes to the course, including input from those staff members who are active independent prescribers.

The team asked how the provider is assured of the quality and suitability of the learning in practice environments. The provider stated that students complete a practice audit for consideration by the School which considers the practice environment, resources and governance structures. The audit also confirms that there will be a local induction and that sufficient time will be made available to enable students to successfully complete the course.

The provider acknowledged that the move from DMPs to DPPs is a significant change and has been given careful consideration. The DPPs will be assessing the students' clinical examination skills. In order to provide some quality assurance of these assessments, a second person from the practice setting with these skills will be required to observe one assessment, effectively acting as a second marker. This will be recorded in the student's clinical skills log. The team stated that these processes should be kept under review as they are implemented.

## Standard 5 - Course design and delivery

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

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

The team asked how the provider had reviewed the course against the new GPhC standards and was told that a comprehensive review was undertaken involving all staff. Input from other stakeholders including students, local employers, DMPs and patients was also sought.

As an outcome of this review:

- for reasons of clarity, the course title has been changed from 'PgCert Prescribing and Therapeutics' to 'PgCert Independent Prescribing for Pharmacists'.
- the course structure will change from three 20 credit modules to a single 60 credit module, studied part-time over a period of 8 months. This change is proposed as originally the course was intended for students from a range of professional backgrounds, who might be exempt from individual modules. In fact, the course is now

only offered to pharmacists who must all complete the same components of the course. The three-module structure therefore felt unnecessary.

- the course will allow DPPs to supervise students, rather than DMPs. Changes to the application process, DPP training and feedback have been implemented to account for this.
- there will be an increased emphasis on the development of bespoke clinical skills in practice through the introduction of a clinical skills log. In addition to core clinical skills which are developed and assessed at the University, students will identify skills appropriate to their scope of practice. These will be developed and assessed under the supervision of the DPP with quality assurance processes in place (see Standard 4).

The team asked for clarification of how the 26 days of teaching and learning will be delivered and was told that it is made up of an induction day, 10 in-person study days, four online study days, an assessment day and 10 days of preparation and self-directed study.

The pass mark for assessments is 40% and the team asked how the provider is assured that this is appropriate and reflects safe practice. The provider stated that there are clear Level 7 marking criteria and these were made available to the team before the event. The quality assurance process includes independent verification of 10% of papers. OSCEs are recorded where it is not possible to have two assessors present. The external examiners provide advice and input on assessments and any assessment is failed if a student makes a serious patient safety error.

In response to the Covid-19 pandemic, GPhC approval was gained for changes to delivery and assessment of the current course. From March 2020, students were offered the opportunity to suspend their studies, have extended deadlines or to complete to the original schedule. All taught sessions were delivered online, via a mix of asynchronous learning and live online lectures and tutorials. Assessments were also moved online, with OSCEs run as a mix of timed online written stations and face-to-face stations via Zoom. An online viva was developed to assess the theory and practice of blood pressure measurement as a core clinical skill. Equipment was posted to students to enable them to demonstrate their skills. All learning outcomes continued to be assessed.

The team informed the provider that during the pandemic the GPhC adapted its processes to accept certified pass lists alone as evidence of completion of the course. The team clarified that that the award for successful completion of a GPhC-accredited independent prescribing programme continues to be a 'Practice certificate in independent prescribing' and this award is required for annotation. It is a copy of the certificate itself that is not currently required as part of the application process for annotation.

## Standard 6 - Learning in practice

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to the learning in practice will be met.**

The team asked how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the learning in practice element of the course and was told that for the cohort who started the course in September 2019, in line with GPhC guidance, students had been permitted to submit 70 hours of reflective practice instead of 90 hours. In fact, the majority of students submitted 90 hours as usual, as they found they needed this time in order to meet the learning outcomes, especially as there were

significantly more online and telephone and fewer in-person consultations than usual. For the cohort that started in February 2020, students were given the option of suspending their studies and re-joining at a later date, carrying on to the original schedule, or continuing with extended deadlines.

The provider has decided that if the DPP is a non-medical prescriber, they must confirm that the student will be able to spend a minimum of 30 hours under the supervision of a medical doctor. The team asked about the rationale for this requirement and was told that this was to ensure the student experienced multi-professional learning. The provider acknowledged that this requirement might be difficult for DPPs to meet, and will keep it under review.

The team asked about the guidance given to DPPs on assessing competence and was told that as part of the application process, the DPP is required to confirm that they have the appropriate patient-facing clinical and diagnostic skills to both mentor and assess the student in the development of skills appropriate to their chosen scope of practice. The student's portfolio must show that the DPP has evidence of how the student meets each competency, and the provider will check a sample of these. (See also Standard 5 for reference to the use of a second clinical skills marker in practice).

## Standard 7 - Assessment

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied all eleven criteria relating to the assessment will be met.**

The assessment strategy for the course is made available in the course specification document. Learning outcomes have been designed to reflect the GPhC independent prescribing learning outcomes and are grouped under four areas:

- knowledge and understanding;
- cognitive (intellectual or thinking) skills;
- practical (professional or subject) skills
- transferrable skills.

There are four assessments:

- Therapeutic framework (4,000 words)
- OSCE
- Case Study (4,000 words)
- Reflective portfolio (15,000 words)

All assessments are marked as pass/fail and cannot be compensated. Assessment regulations are appropriate and ensure that the GPhC learning outcomes are met. In the light of the discussion about the DPPs assessment of clinical skills (see Standard 6) the provider will consider producing some standardised, generic marking guidance. The provider also stated that basic clinical skills are assessed by academic staff in the OSCE.

The team asked what adaptations had been made to the assessment strategy in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and was told that the OSCE had moved online and consisted of a multiple choice/short answer assessment station, a history-taking station, and a blood pressure-taking clinical skills demonstration and viva via videoconference. These changes were agreed with the

GPhC in advance. The online multiple choice assessment will be retained post-pandemic, but other elements of assessment will return to face-to-face.

## Standard 8 - Support and the learning experience

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating the support and the learning experience will be met.**

Students have access to a range of support structures at School and University level and are given guidance on raising concerns, within both the academic and practice environments. The three formal progress meetings between the student and the DPP are designed to ensure that students' progression is monitored and any concerns are identified and addressed.

The provider responded to the pandemic by communicating regularly and clearly with students about the options available to them and about changes to assessment regulations. The team received some written feedback from students who confirmed that they felt supported in their studies, especially during the pandemic.

## Standard 9 - Designated prescribing practitioners

Standard met? Yes  No  (accreditation team use only)

**The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to the designated prescribing practitioners will be met.**

As part of the application process, the prospective DPP is required to complete a declaration and provide evidence of how they meet the GPhC's criteria for supervising students. All applications are reviewed by the course leaders and the professional registration of all DPPs is checked with the appropriate register. If the criteria are not clearly met, the DPP will be contacted for further information. The provider gave an example of an application that was not accepted after these checks were carried out.

DPPs will be invited to an online induction session. This (or a one-to-one version of it) will be mandatory for all first time non-medical DPPs. All DPPs are given a DPP Handbook setting out their role and responsibilities in the broader context of the course.

The progress review meetings provide an opportunity for the provider to give feedback to individual DPPs, based on comments from the student. This will include arranging additional support and training if required. The team suggested that the provider consider collating feedback on DPPs at a cohort level and providing a summary of the key points to all DPPs.



