

Assessment mitigation centre guidance for Pharmacy qualifications in relation to Covid- 19 disruption, 2020-21

Version 1.1 (October 2020)

City &
Guilds

ncfe.

cache


openawards


Pearson

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has resulted in disruption to education and training during spring and summer 2020. Public health restrictions are likely to be in place during 2020/21, and further disruption may occur on a localised basis.

To mitigate the disruption to teaching, learning and assessment of Pharmacy qualifications, flexible approaches have been applied specifically where:

- there are requirements to include direct observation as the main source of evidence
- where work experience/practice hours are a mandatory requirement of the qualification

By putting in place these arrangements the Awarding Organisations have considered issues relating to the manageability, validity and reliability of the relevant qualifications and their assessment, whilst simultaneously responding to the prospect of ongoing disruption during 2020/21.

The following arrangements have been collaboratively developed and agreed with Awarding Organisations following discussions with Skills for Health, the General Pharmaceutical Council and Ofqual. They apply to the following qualifications:

Level 2 NVQ Certificate in Pharmacy Service Skills (now closed for registrations)

Level 2 Certificate in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Support Staff (Pearson only)

Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Pharmacy Service Skills (now closed for registrations)

Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians

These arrangements apply to the qualifications from the list above operated by the following Awarding Organisations:

- City & Guilds
- NCFE CACHE
- Open Awards
- Pearson

The adaptations described in this document have been discussed and agreed with the General Pharmaceutical Council and Skills for Health.

Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians

Where Awarding Organisations (AO) offer the above qualification, details relating to the specific Skills for Health Assessment Principles for this qualification can be found in the AOs qualification specification/qualification handbook. The **current** assessment principles include the following requirements:

- 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. Expert Witness Testimony may be used where it is difficult for an assessor to observe aspects of practice. **Expert Witness Testimony is NOT a substitute** for the requirement of three observations by the assessor across the qualification.
- Learners will be expected to achieve all learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Where learners are not able to achieve the skills-based learning outcomes in their usual place of employment (eg. a custodial setting), the training provider and employer must ensure that the learner is given opportunities to achieve the learning outcomes in a work placement or another suitable setting. This may include simulation. Prior to starting the qualification, an assessment of the learner's employment setting should be carried out by the training provider and employer to identify such gaps.

During the period of Covid restrictions and where there are circumstances in which the assessor is not able to gain access to the workplace to carry out observations, Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) **may replace** assessor observation.

In all cases there must be **three** records of observation by either the assessor or the EW across the qualification. This is a specific requirement for the Level 3 Diploma in the Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians.

Please refer to the section below on **Observation of Practice in Competency-based Qualifications**, below for the details of how to implement this adaptation.

Please also refer to the paragraph on the knowledge units for this qualification later in the document

The mitigations in this document update and replace those communicated in Summer 2020. They will be available until 30 June 2021 and apply to:

- Any learners who were registered and on-programme on or before 31 August 2020 and have yet to complete.
- Any new learners registered from 01 September 2020

Observation of Practice in Competency-based Qualifications

Where it is safe¹ to do so, observation by an occupationally competent and qualified assessor is preferred as the **main source of evidence for all learners**.

Where this is not possible due to protracted disruption caused by Covid-19 restrictions, the Awarding Organisations will accept testimonies provided by a suitably experienced employer/manager/leader recruited by the centre to undertake the role of an Expert Witness (EW).

Centres must ensure that EWs fulfil the specific requirements detailed in the Skills Health² Assessment Principles³ and/or their recently published 'flexible arrangements' document⁴. This includes the requirement to provide EWs with induction, training and ongoing support that is timely, meaningful and appropriate.

Additionally, centres must adapt their Internal Quality Assurance strategies to ensure that Assessor judgements based on Expert Witness Testimony (EWT) are prioritised for standardisation and sampling activities.

The appropriate use, recording, standardisation and sampling of EWT and the process of EW recruitment, induction, training and support will be subject to External Quality Assurance by the Awarding Organisations.

Certification will not be possible for any competency-based qualification unless substantial assessor observations and/or EWT are present in a learner's portfolio and that these are based on experience within a real work setting.

Recording of Expert Witness Testimony

Centres should enable Expert Witnesses to provide and present their testimony in an efficient way ensuring that this does not compromise validity and reliability. This could include:

- the use of voice and audio recordings, or
- through remote discussions where the main assessor could scribe the EW contributions. Please note that both paper and online forms are permitted.

¹ Does not contravene national and/or local restrictions and following a robust and appropriate Covid-19 risk assessment

² Skills for Health is the UK Sector Skills Council for Health

³ See <https://www.skillsforhealth.org.uk/standards/item/221-adult-vocational-qualifications> Both the original Assessment Principles and the Covid- 19 flexibles arrangements can be sourced from this web page.

Throughout the process centres must ensure that the confidentiality, dignity and privacy of individuals, children, young people, or families using services remains paramount and must not be compromised. This is particularly important when video and/or audio streaming or recording is being used.

Use of technology to support assessment

In order to protect their confidentiality, dignity and privacy the use of video and/or audio streaming or recordings is **not permitted for direct observation** where an individual, child or young person, or their families may be present or wherein personal information about their health or care is being discussed. Additionally, it is not permitted to use technology to record supervision or appraisal meetings.

Video and/or audio streaming and recording **can** be used to gather evidence in the following situations only:

- assessment planning, feedback and review
- team meetings – only aspects of the Agenda that are general in nature e.g. not linked to the care of a specific care of an individual, child or young person, or their families
- Planning and/or review of the learner's training and development
- Planning of supervision/appraisal
- Professional discussion
- Planning and recording EWT
- Learner reflection

Triangulation of evidence

The requirement to capture evidence of competence, and applied knowledge and understanding, continues to be best practice and is essential to robust assessment. Triangulation of evidence during this period **must** include:

- Assessor observation and/or EWT
- Learner reflection⁵
- Professional discussion

Simulation

Simulation is a useful way to learn new skills and to develop and gain confidence in a safe and supported environment.

Within competency qualifications, simulation is **ONLY** permitted where explicitly detailed within a specific unit. Simulation must **NOT** be used in any other circumstances.

⁵ Reflection on experiences in real working environments – reflections based on simulation, case studies or scenarios will not be accepted

Mandatory work experience/practice hours

Where a work experience/practice requirement is a mandatory requirement within a qualification, wherever possible Awarding Organisations/Bodies expect all learners to achieve this requirement in full.

In addition, where Level 3 qualifications are approved by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and are included in the GPhC list of approved qualifications for Pharmacy Technicians, the following must also apply:

Within the two-year period of training and work experience a minimum of 1260 hours of work experience must be undertaken under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician to whom the applicant is directly accountable, excluding sickness absence, maternity or paternity leave and holidays (1.6) of the Criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician in Great Britain September 2019

Applicants must provide evidence they have completed a minimum of two years' relevant work- based experience in the UK under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician to whom the applicant was directly accountable for not less than 14 hours per week. (1.5) of the Criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician in Great Britain September 2019

If the placement/qualification is delayed for whatever reason, documented evidence should be kept by the centre provider as this may have an impact on the trainee being able to register in terms of the registration requirements.

Best practice the Awarding Organisation should also keep records relating to deferrals or delays for both placements and qualifications. Centres must inform their Awarding Organisation if there are issues with learner access to the required practice/work experience hours. If the placement is delayed for whatever reason, documented evidence should be kept by the centre as this may have an impact on the trainee being able to register in terms of the five year registration rule (1.2) of the Criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician in Great Britain September 2019, which can be found on the web page below.

<https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/registration/registering-pharmacy-technician>

Details of GPhC approved qualifications can be found at this link

<https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/education/pharmacy-technician/accredited-courses>

Knowledge only qualifications

The qualifications below are now closed for registrations, however are still being delivered with assessments available until the end certification date:

Level 2 Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science

Level 3 Diploma in Pharmaceutical Science

Only City & Guilds and Pearson offer these qualifications and each has a different assessment strategy.

Where assessment strategies are unique to specific qualification and Awarding organisation, each awarding organisation have/will set out their own specific adaptation requirements.

Knowledge based units of the Level 3 Diploma in Principles and Practice for Pharmacy Technicians

For knowledge-based units, evidence will be assessed using internally set, internally marked written assignments. The Awarding Organisation will provide sample assignments and assessment guidance to centres. The assignments will be internally quality assured, then subject to externally quality assurance sampling by the Awarding Organisation. Individual Awarding Organisations will issue specific guidance on any adaptations on this assessment approach is permitted.

General Pharmaceutical Council Requirements

Centres need to consider all GPhC standards and guidance when delivering or assessing qualifications and share these with employers to apply the guidance for employers. The following documents can be found on the GPhC website <https://www.pharmacyregulation.org/standards>

- [Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians](#),
- [GPhC requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff](#)
- [Guidance on tutoring and supervising pharmacy professionals in training](#)
- [Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff](#)
- [Guidance for employers on the education and training requirements of pharmacy support staff](#)
- [Criteria for registration as a pharmacy technician in Great Britain September 2019](#)

Monitoring of any ongoing impact resulting from Covid-19 restrictions

The Awarding Organisations will continue to monitor and review any ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and their potential to disrupt learner access to work experience/practice and qualification assessment.