



Future of the national frameworks for current pharmacy technician training and assessment programmes, including post-introduction of the new IETs and implementation of the new pharmacy technician qualification

Background

Extended roles for pharmacy technicians in Final Accuracy Checking was introduced nearly 20 years ago, followed in the early 2000s by Pre and In Process Checking in Aseptic Services and Medicines Management skills. Training providers across the UK regions have been developing and delivering training and assessment programmes to support the pharmacy technicians' development in these extended roles. As the demand for pharmacy technicians and support staff to undertake these roles increased, so did the number of training providers, highlighting the need for standardisation and consistency to the training delivery and assessment methodology.

In response to this, the NHS Pharmacy Education & Development Committee (NHS PEDC), predominately formed of members from NHS organisations with educational expertise representation from across the UK, and the Pharmacy Technician and Support Staff Group (PTSSG); a subsidiary of the main group, developed a set of national standards that would reflect best practice, provide guidance and a framework upon which training providers could build and deliver their programmes. As a result, the following frameworks were developed and continue to be published on the NHS PEDC website¹:

- Nationally Recognised Competency Framework for Pharmacy Technicians: Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Items (ACPT)
- Nationally Recognised Framework for Accreditation of Pre and In-Process Checking within Technical Services (PIPC)
- Nationally Recognised Competency Framework for Pharmacy Technicians: The Assessment of Medicines Management Skills (AMMS)

Recognition by many independent non-NHS training providers of the educational expertise and sharing of best practice applied in the development of the guidance and frameworks has resulted in some of the frameworks being adopted by both NHS and non-NHS providers. This has had a positive effect in supporting a level of standardisation and practice across sectors as well as across the NHS.

There remains support from employers for national standards providing a framework for these training and assessment programmes as it:

- provides an assurance that the programmes meet the standards of what is considered to be 'best practice' and instils confidence in the abilities of the individual to carry out the task once assessed as competent
- provides a set of standards which supports transferability across organisations or across regions

¹ <http://www.nhspec.nhs.uk/supports.htm>



Training Providers also find national standards, guidance and frameworks an invaluable resource when developing, reviewing and updating training programmes.

Following the development of the National Framework for the Assessment of Medicines Management Skills, it was agreed that to support its implementation, a process of reviewing and approving training and assessment programmes should be developed to provide a 'kitemark' that would indicate that programmes had been approved as meeting the standards of the national framework. This was the first time this process had been applied and enabled a new level of assurance that programmes that stated they met the framework, had actually been approved as doing so. The process relied on individuals from the NHS PEDC PTSSG as well as representatives from Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK to meet to review applications submitted by training providers wishing to obtain national approval of their programmes. The process proved successful and to date, eight training providers have applied and been awarded national approval. The sustainability of this model has however, proved a challenge following NHS restructuring.

Currency of the frameworks

With the changes to the national pharmacy education infrastructure over recent years, the role and governance structures of NHS PEDC has gradually altered. As a result, opportunities to review and update the frameworks and support the approval process have become increasingly challenging. The documents themselves are now becoming, or are out of date (dependent on the framework) and with NHS educational governance changes, the future of these frameworks is uncertain as it is unclear under whose governance arrangements they now sit. Although the new GPhC Initial Education & Training Standards and the forthcoming new pharmacy technician qualification will provide some of these skills as core, there is still a large legacy workforce that will be relying on these existing programmes to ensure continuity of knowledge and skills provision including current pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians.

NHS PEDC is no longer in a position to support and update these frameworks and an alternative option is needed to ensure their continuance. It may be that the frameworks need to change/modernise to support the changes in GPhC professional standards, revalidation requirements, new qualification etc. Ultimately, continuing support of the frameworks would ensure that the benefits of these to training providers, employers, individuals and ultimately to patients, would not be lost.

Transfer of Stewardship

It is important this transfer is to an established, well recognised national organisation with a central point of contact and the ability to reach stakeholders across all sectors. Therefore, a new hosting arrangement will see transfer of ownership of the ACPT and other national frameworks to The Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK (APTUK), the Professional Leadership Body for Pharmacy Technicians across all four UK countries: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Health Education England (on behalf of NHS and other Health Education organisations) will work with APTUK to oversee transfer of stewardship and development of the frameworks.

APTUK's purpose is to *'lead pharmacy technicians to deliver professional excellence for patient centred care'*.



In the context of Transfer of Stewardship APTUK will provide:

- organisational structure which includes four devolved country 'Associate' posts held by individuals from England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, that sit within the Policy and Standards Directorate. These roles provide APTUK with information on current and emerging healthcare policies, pharmacy policies and priorities, workforce priorities and workforce planning within each country.
- governance structure which includes an 'Advisory Group' consisting of pharmacy experts from all pharmacy sectors, both pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, and lay representation from across all four countries. A specific objective of the advisory group is to advise on the professional development of Pharmacy Technicians and to appraise specific APTUK projects.

Current APTUK developments relevant to frameworks

Professional Practice Standards

As the professional leadership body for pharmacy technicians in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales APTUKs role is to promote best practice and to provide guidance that directs and maintains a safe and competent pharmacy workforce for the people that use pharmacy services. It is a current priority for professional leadership bodies to produce professional standards that support improved daily practice and to aid development and maintenance of quality systems.

APTUK are currently developing Professional Practice Standards for Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products.

The Professional Practice standards:

- set out what is expected of pharmacy technicians engaged in the process of Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products.
- align with principles of set out in WHO's Medication without Harm document, by identifying good practice to address the weaknesses in the process prior to medicine supply to the end user.
- align with NHS England's Medicines Value Programme in supporting improved health outcomes and patient safety from medicines.
- contain key elements and domains which focus on safe systems, patient/customer experience, effective outcomes and leadership and good governance.

Final Accuracy Checking Standards

Aligned with the Professional Practice standards APTUK are developing a new framework (with acknowledgement to, and based on the content of the existing framework) that sets out the key features and educational components for the delivery of outcomes focused final accuracy checking training programmes including:

- Selection and entry requirements
- Curricula and learning outcomes
- Course design and delivery
- Course assessment, assessment strategies and quality assurance
- Management, resources and capacity
- Equality, diversity and inclusion



- Monitoring, review and evaluation
- Trainee support and learning experience
- Appeal process

The development of these standards has been led by the APTUK ACPT Steering Group and APTUK ACPT Professional Standards Working Group.

The working group consists of representation of pharmacy professionals from all sectors of pharmacy and home countries who are asked to provide initial feedback on the draft standards alongside the APTUK Professional Committee before these are consulted on more widely.

It is essential that the framework(s) remain free at point of access for staff providing NHS services. Any additional approval processes by the host organisation must be financially viable and recognisant of NHS resource at original development.

APTUK Professional Practice Standards for Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products course provider approval

The development of Professional Practice Standards was commissioned by the APTUK Board of Directors to provide a broad patient centred outline, which will support pharmacy technician attributes, skills and knowledge for the maintenance of safe and competent practice across all settings and sectors and the delivery of the best possible outcomes.

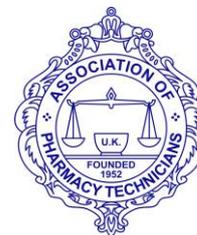
The approval of any programmes through these standards will be carried out under the authority of APTUK

The standards are intended to be used by training providers who require their programmes to be approved against the nationally endorsed standard and who:

- Plan to develop final accuracy checking training and assessment programmes or
- Currently deliver final accuracy checking training and assessment programmes

Approval will be available to all UK training providers who require their programmes approved against the APTUK Professional Practice Standards for Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products. Approval panel members will be pharmacy professionals and occupational experts who have been selected by APTUK and the approval process will be open to NHS and non-NHS organisations.

Gaining APTUK approval will demonstrate to the pharmacy and healthcare professions, patients and the public that final accuracy checking of dispensed medicines or products has been carried out to a consistent and approved standard. It will contribute to raising standards in pharmacy, medicines optimisation and patient care, allow transferability of skills and knowledge between organisations and pharmacy sectors and support the development of pharmacy professionals' leadership skills aligning with the APTUK Foundation Pharmacy Framework.



Professional Practice Standards Development and Timelines

APTUK are applying a three staged approach to the development of the Professional Practice Standards for Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products

Stage One	Stage Two	Stage Three
Development of an introductory framework document outlining quality approaches, governance and risk management across a range of current and future developments	Completion and publication of the final draft Professional Pharmacy Technician Practice Standards for Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines or Products standards for a consultation	Final Accuracy Checking Standards Development of an outcomes based ACPT framework Set up of task and finish group, drafting & consultation
Timelines		
February 2019	February 2019	January – April 2019

APTUK provide assurances that amendments to the framework principles and/or content, will be undertaken in collaboration with Health Education organisations, NHS training providers and other key stakeholders from across the four countries.

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