Accreditation of a Medicines Counter Assistant Training Programme, National Pharmacy Association

Report of a reaccreditation event, 30-31 March 2011

Introduction

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 GPhC assumed responsibility for pharmacy regulation from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) on 27 September 2010.

The National Pharmacy Association (NPA) ('the provider') was accredited by the previous regulator, the RPSGB, in 2007 to provide a training programme for medicines counter assistants. As the current pharmacy regulator, the reaccreditation of this course was carried out in line with the General Pharmaceutical Council's processes and reaccreditation was to the General Pharmaceutical Council's 2010 standards for accreditation of medicines counter assistant courses, which reflect the knowledge and understanding equivalent to units of the Pharmacy Services Skills level 2 NVQ (QCF).

Documentation

The provider submitted documentation to the GPhC and a pre-event meeting was held on 10 March 2011. At the pre-event meeting the accreditation team leader and Accreditation and Recognition manager advised of a number of amendments and additions needed. The provider subsequently submitted updated documentation, as detailed below:

The following documents were submitted by the provider in advance of the accreditation pre-event meeting:

- Completed application template for accreditation of a dispensing/pharmacy assistant programme
- Supporting material
      (i)   Module workbooks 1 – 10

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(ii)   Summative Part A and B MCQ assessment papers (including 2 re-sit papers for each)
(iii)   Student's Guide to Interact
(iv)   Intro Guide to Interact
(v)   Supervisor's Guide
(vi)   Learning Contract
(vii)   Sample Certificate
(viii)   Enrolment form

The following documents were received the day before the reaccreditation event (30 March 2011):
- Response to GPhC's comments on mapping
- Response to GPhC's feedback at pre-event

The following documents were submitted by the provider on the day of the reaccreditation event (31 March 2011):
- Expanded version of response to GPhC's feedback at pre-event meeting
- New module 1 and Introduction module

The event

The reaccreditation event was held on 31 March 2011 at the Novotel Waterloo hotel, 113 Lambeth Road, London and was attended by the provider's representatives and the GPHC's representatives and accreditation team.

A private meeting of the accreditation team and GPhC representatives was held on the afternoon of 30 March 2011 at the General Pharmaceutical Council, 129 Lambeth Road, London.

The Accreditation Team:

The GPhC accreditation team ('the team') comprised:

Name	Designation at the time of accreditation event
Mr Peter Curphey	Accreditation team leader
Mrs Cath Davies	Accreditation team member (pharmacy technician)
Mrs Donna Bartlett	Accreditation team member (pharmacy technician)
Mr Alan Kershaw	Accreditation team member (lay)

along with:

Name	Designation at the time of visit
Ms Joanne Martin	Accreditation and Recognition Manager, General Pharmaceutical Council
Ms Philippa Strevens	Senior Administrator and Assistant to the Head of Education and Quality Assurance, General Pharmaceutical Council (rapporteur)
Mrs Leonie Milliner	Accreditation team member (observer)

The accreditation criteria

	Accreditation team's commentary
1. The Training Programme	**Three of the four criteria relating to the training programme are met, the remaining criteria is likely to be met** The provider's course is entitled 'Interact' and consists of ten modules which are equivalent to the three units of the Pharmacy Service Skills NVQ level 2 (QCF) required to meet the GPhC's minimum training standards for this role (Units 4, 5 and 15). Demonstration of transfer of knowledge through the workplace is shown through completion of learning activities and end of module MCQs, as well as summatively through completion of two separate formal assessments undertaken after completion of modules 1- 5, and then module 5-10. In order that the course is fully mapped to the programme requirements the team advised that it would be a condition of reaccreditation that the required adjustments to the course material are satisfactorily addressed and that the provider confirms that the amendments presented during the event will be reflected within the course documents distributed to trainees (see condition 2).
2. Academic Management Structures	**The four criteria relating to Academic and Management Structures are met.** The team was satisfied with the assessment process and strategy for standardisation of marks, but The team was but noted that suggested that the current content in the Supervisor's Guide on examinations could benefit from being more detailed, to define exactly what examination conditions are expected. The team was satisfied with the provider's policies and procedures but advised that the provider should update their plagiarism policy to spell it out to trainees that the policy also applies to use of web-based materials.

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3. Resources	**Seven of the eight criteria relating to resources are met, the remaining criteria is likely to be met**
	The team considered that the support guidance provided for locum supervisor was very brief. The team therefore made a recommendation that a dedicated guide for locums would be beneficial, for example included as a pull-out guide within the supervisors' handbook.
	The team was satisfied that the provider has sufficiently qualified and experienced staff to deliver the programme and sufficient facilities and other resources. The Provider is currently in the process of developing their IT resource with a view to offering electronic training materials and assessments in the future. The team advised that the provider must inform the GPhC when this launches (see condition 3).

Summary and conclusions

The accreditation team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council that the National Pharmacy Association's medicines counter assistant course should be reaccredited for a period of three years, subject to conditions.

Conditions:
1. The GPhC must be notified when the IT initiative involving online training materials and assessment is launched.
2. All outstanding mapping errors and adjustments must be rectified.

Condition 2 must be met by 1 May 2011.

Standing condition of reaccreditation:

All references to the RPSGB as the regulator must be removed from all teaching materials, handbooks and documentation. These must be replaced with the General Pharmaceutical Council as the body who regulates pharmacy. This must be done with immediate effect.

The accreditation team made the following recommendation:

1. A separate guide is produced for locum pharmacists/pharmacy technicians who may work with a trainee. This should be available within the trainee guide to enable locums to understand their training obligations.

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The full record and report includes other comments from the team and the Registrar regards the record and report in its entirety as its formal view on provision. Providers are required to take all comments into account as part of the reaccreditation process.

The provider was reminded of the following:

1. The General Pharmaceutical Council has assumed responsibility for the regulation of pharmacy education. The Pharmacy Order, the legislation establishing the General Pharmaceutical Council as regulator, states that the General Pharmaceutical Council accept previous decisions of the Society. In this context, that means previous accreditation decisions of the Society will stand.
2. Our recommendations are not binding on the Registrar and the Registrar may add, remove or modify points on reflection and in light the accreditation panel views.
3. The General Pharmaceutical Council's record and report will be sent to you shortly to comment on factual accuracy. The providers must respond to the definitive version of the record and report within three months of receipt.
4. Thereafter the summary report, along with your response, will be published on the General Pharmaceutical Council's website and remain for the duration of the accreditation period. The record remains confidential to the Training provider and the General Pharmaceutical Council.
5. All accredited providers are required to inform the General Pharmaceutical Council annually of changes to the curriculum and/or resources.

Please note that the accreditation team's feedback is confidential until it has been ratified by the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council.

Following the above accreditation event, satisfactory evidence was provided to meet the above conditions of reaccreditation.

The Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council agreed with the accreditation team's recommendation and approved the course for reaccreditation for a further three years, until the end of June 2014.

Appendix 1 - Accreditation Criteria for Medicines Counter Assistant training programmes

1. The training programme

 a. The course content covers the knowledge and understanding associated with units Pharm 05 (unit 4) Pharm 07 (unit 5) and Pharm 32 (Unit 15) of the Pharmacy services skills S/NVQ level 2 (QCF)

 b. The programme is taught at Qualifications Credit framework level 2.

 c. The programme is planned with reference to the Medicines Counter Assistant template.

 d. For each unit, the transfer of underpinning knowledge into the workplace is demonstrated through the use of a variety of methods

2. Academic and Management Structures

 a. Assessment process and strategies assure appropriate standards in assessment and that students are able to demonstrate fitness for purpose.

 b. In the processes of programme review and development, the training provider has taken account of advances in pharmacy practice, for instance recent POM to P reclassifications, and developments potentially impacting on pharmacy.

 c. Course regulations include procedures for appeals against assessment decisions

 d. Course regulations include procedures for dealing with suspected plagiarism and/or malpractice

3. Resources

 a. Buildings, human, equipment, and other resources available to the training provider are sufficient for the effective delivery of the course to the numbers of students on the course, and overall.

 b. Record keeping systems are able to generate data on candidates completing, completion rates, student sector of practice and disability.

 c. Systems are in place for issuing certificates of completion to successful students in the GPhC's approved format

 d. There is an appropriate mix of tutors, mentors and assessors.

 e. The student has access to a personal tutor or tutors for academic guidance and pastoral care.

 f. The student is instructed in the use of information resources.

 g. There are adequate student feedback mechanisms in place.

 h. The training provider seeks to provide the student with a positive learning experience.

4. Assist in the Sale of medicines and products

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply:

Legislation, policy and good practice
- A working knowledge of the pharmacy protocol on the sale of medicines and SOPs including:
    a) What is listed in them
    b) How to use them
    c) Why it is important that SOPs should be followed at all times
- A factual knowledge of the legal responsibility and authority of the pharmacist and others in the organisation
- A working knowledge of legal and ethical requirements for confidentiality

Specific health related knowledge and skills
- A working knowledge of the main actions and side effects of the active ingredients within commonly used non-prescription medicines.
- A working knowledge of the differences between:
    a) General Sales List (GSL) medicines
    b) Pharmacy (P)
    c) Prescription Only Medicines (POM) items

Procedures and techniques
- A working knowledge of the use of questioning techniques such as 2WHAM
- A working knowledge of the needs of different types of individuals
- A working knowledge of the sources of information to access
- A working knowledge of the information that is suitable to give individuals
- A working knowledge of the type of information/advice that needs to be referred to a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician

5. Receive prescriptions from individuals

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply:

Legislation, policy and good practice
- A working knowledge of the importance of working within the limits of their own role and recognising when to refer to an appropriate person
- A working knowledge of Standard Operating Procedures regarding the receiving of prescriptions and the importance of adhering to them at all times
- A working knowledge of current legislation relating to prescription charges and exemptions and differences in practice across the UK
- A working knowledge of regulations and procedures relating to prescriptions for clinical trials
- A working knowledge of the relevant national and local guidelines, policies and procedures that are available and how and when they should be accessed
- A working knowledge of the different types of prescribers

Specific health related knowledge and skills
- A working knowledge of the different types of prescriptions and when they are used
- A working knowledge of exemptions and how individuals can claim refunds, including the use of official forms and prepayment certificates

Procedures and techniques
- A working knowledge of how to deal with individuals with special needs
- A working knowledge of the transactional and administration procedures as required by governmental regulations and those that apply to the workplace

Records and documentation
- A working knowledge of the importance of maintaining dispensary records

16. Assist in the issuing of prescribed items

To demonstrate knowledge and understanding in this NOS , assistants should be able to apply :

Legislation, policy and good practice
- A working knowledge of the limits of their own role and when to refer to an appropriate person
- A working knowledge of principles for issuing dispensed medicines and products and the local Standard Operating Procedures that relate to this
- A working knowledge of the current ethical and legal requirements that govern the issuing of a prescription

Procedures and techniques
- A working knowledge of how to deal with individuals with special needs
- A working knowledge of the importance of confirming the individual's identity before issuing dispensed items
- A working knowledge of the importance of providing information on:
a) the storage and maintenance of prescribed items
b) possible side effects

Records and documentation
- A factual knowledge of the importance of maintaining dispensary records including the use of the dispensary computer
- A factual knowledge of how medicines are administered

Materials and equipment
- A working knowledge of the importance of selecting the correct equipment for use
- A working knowledge of the properties of different types of container types and when to use each