



The Society has a range of policies covering minimum training and competence requirements for pharmacy support staff. For pharmacy technicians a regulatory framework is being put in place and those wishing to use this title in the future will need to be registered with the Society.

Medicines Counter Assistants

Since 1996 it has been a professional requirement that any assistant who is given delegated authority to sell medicines under a protocol should have undertaken, or be undertaking, an accredited course relevant to their duties. The Society's requirement is that courses should cover the knowledge and understanding associated with units 2.04 and 2.05 of the Scottish/National Vocational Qualification level 2 in Pharmacy Services, titled *Assist in the Sales of OTC medicines and provide information to customers on symptoms and products* and *Assist in the supply of prescribed items* (taking in a prescription and issuing prescribed items).

Medicine Counter Assistants should be enrolled on a training programme within three months of them commencing their role (or as soon as practical within local training arrangements) and the programme should be completed within a three-year time period.

Dispensing/Pharmacy Assistants

Staff falling into this category will have a range of roles and responsibilities and therefore different job titles will apply. In the community sector these include dispenser, dispensing assistant, pharmacy assistant and healthcare assistant. Within the hospital sector the titles pharmacy assistant and assistant technical officer (ATO) are more commonly used. The policy covers dispensing/pharmacy assistants working under the supervision of a pharmacist in the community, hospital or other pharmacy sector.

From January 1st 2005 onwards pharmacists will have a professional obligation to ensure that dispensing / pharmacy assistants are competent in the areas in which they are working to a minimum standard equivalent to the new Pharmacy Services Scottish/National Vocational Qualification (S/NVQ) level 2 qualification or undertaking training towards this and will apply to staff working in the following areas:

- Sale of over the counter medicines and the provision of information to customers on symptoms and products
- Prescription receipt and collection
- The assembly of prescribed items (including the generation of labels)
- Ordering, receiving and storing pharmaceutical stock
- The supply of pharmaceutical stock
- Preparation for the manufacture of pharmaceutical products (including aseptic products)
- Manufacture and assembly of medicinal products (including aseptic products)

The requirement can be met by completing a training programme relevant to the job role and there are four acceptable ways of doing this:

- (a) Successful achievement of Pharmacy Services S/NVQ level 2
- (b) Successful achievement relevant units of the Pharmacy Services S/NVQ level 2
- (c) Successful achievement of a training programme accredited to be of an equivalent level to S/NVQ level 2
- (d) Successful achievement of relevant units of an accredited training programme of an equivalent level to Pharmacy Services S/NVQ level 2.

Dispensing/pharmacy assistants should be enrolled on a training programme within three months of them commencing their role (or as soon as practical within local training arrangements) and the programme should be completed within a three-year time period.

Existing staff do not have to undertake further training to comply with this policy if they met the requirements of the “grandparent clause” and a declaration of competence was sent by their supervising pharmacist to the Society during the grandparenting period.

Pharmacy technicians

The current definition of a pharmacy technician is a person who holds a S/NVQ pharmacy services Level 3 qualification or a qualification that has previously recognised by employers as a valid qualification for pharmacy technicians

The Society opened a voluntary register of pharmacy technicians in January 2005. Registration is currently voluntary but the Society is seeking statutory powers (under the Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Order 2006) and once the necessary legislation is in place registration will become a requirement for those wishing to use the title “pharmacy technician” (which will become protected in law).

During an initial transitional period, a number of other qualifications, formerly recognised as pharmacy technician qualifications will be acceptable for registration purposes under the “pharmacy technician grandparent clause”. These are:

- Pharmacy Services NVQ level 3 (City & Guilds)
- Pharmacy Services NVQ level 3 (Edexcel)
- Pharmacy Services SVQ level 3 (Scottish Qualifications Authority)
- BTEC National Certificate in Science (pharmaceutical)
- BTEC National Certificate in Applied Science (pharmaceutical)
- BTEC National Certificate in Pharmacy Services
- SCOTEC National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science
- SCOTEC Pharmacy Technicians Certificate (2 year)
- SANCAD Pharmacy Technicians Certificate (2 year)
- SCOTVEC National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science
- SQA National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science
- City & Guilds of London Institute, Dispensing Technicians Certificate
- Certificate of the Society of Apothecaries
- Dispensing Certificate of the Royal Army Medical Corps or the Royal Air Force
- NPA 2-year Dispensing Technicians correspondence course completed prior to 1998
- Boots 2-year dispenser training course completed prior to 1993
- Boots 1 year dispenser training course completed after 1993 plus accredited top-up training module plus assessment of competence
- Current or recent UK registration as a pharmacist
- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, Stow College 1984-1992
- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, Aberdeen 1990-1991
- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, Dundee 1985-1987

- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, James Watt College 1991-1992
- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, Edinburgh Telford College 1984 – 1992
- BTEC National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Sunderland 1994 -1998

Anyone with a qualification listed under the pharmacy technician grandparent clause will have exceeded the Society's minimum competence requirement.

The transitional (grandparenting) arrangements will cease two years after the commencement of statutory registration.

Further information on the registration of pharmacy technicians is available from the Society's website www.rpsgb.org/pharmacysupportstaff or from the following address:

Support Staff Regulation Section
Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain
1 Lambeth High Street
London SE1 7JN.

Specific queries can be e-mailed to pharmacytechnician@rpsgb.org.