



Pharmacy technician registration: Answers to some frequently asked questions

You should read this document if you are intending to apply for registration as a pharmacy technician. This document gives answers to questions you may have about registration.

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We recommend that you also read the guidance notes in the application packs and *Guidance on relevant work experience*. These documents are on the pharmacy technician page of our website www.rpsgb.org

If you still cannot find an answer to your question in our documents you can:

- Email us at pharmacytechnician@rpsgb.org or
- Phone us on **020 7572 2610**

Terms that we use

What is the difference between voluntary registration, statutory registration and mandatory registration?

We started our voluntary register of pharmacy technicians in January 2005. The voluntary register will become a statutory register on 1 July 2009. The statutory register will be voluntary for another two years until 30 June 2011. The register will then become mandatory (compulsory). Under mandatory registration it will be a legal requirement for pharmacy technicians to be registered with us.

What do you mean by grandparenting, transitional and post-transitional arrangements?

Grandparenting is a process used to recognise the skills and experience of those already working in a role before new requirements (such as registration) begin.

Transitional arrangements set the entry requirements for voluntary registration. Under transitional arrangements we have four application types (see page 2) that recognise different qualifications and work experience.

After the register becomes mandatory the entry requirements will change and these are called post-transitional arrangements

What is route a and route b?

Under transitional arrangements we have four types of application, route a and route b for applicants with UK qualifications, overseas (non-EEA) and EEA for applicants with overseas qualifications.

- To apply through route a you must have an acceptable UK qualification and relevant work experience as a pharmacy technician of
 - at least 14 hours a week for four out of the last eight years or
 - at least 28 hours a week for two out of the last four years.
- If you have an acceptable UK qualification but do not meet the work experience requirements for route a you may still be able to apply through route b. To apply through route b you must have two years relevant work experience as a pharmacy technician and have worked at least 14 hours per week during that time.

If you are applying through route b you will be required to provide additional information about your work as a pharmacy technician. This information is then assessed by our evaluators to see if you meet our requirements.
- To apply as an overseas (non-EEA) applicant you must have an overseas pharmacist or pharmacy technician qualification and relevant work experience as a pharmacy technician in the United Kingdom of
 - at least 14 hours a week for four out of the last eight years or
 - at least 28 hours a week for two out of the last four years.
- To apply as an EEA applicant you must be a European (EEA) national with a European pharmacy technician qualification and work experience.

What do you mean by relevant work experience?

We define relevant work experience as carrying out the roles and responsibilities of a pharmacy technician in the United Kingdom, Isle of Man or Channel Islands under the supervision, direction or guidance of an accountable pharmacist. This may include work experience during your pharmacy technician course but cannot include work experience before the start of your course.

I think I've been grandparented but I haven't got a qualification. Can I register?

You are not able to apply to register with us unless you have a pharmacy technician qualification. You may have been grandparented as a dispensing/pharmacy assistant in 2004. This means that your pharmacist completed a declaration of competence for you and sent it to us. If they did, you meet our minimum competence requirements for working in a pharmacy as a dispensing/pharmacy assistant but you can't apply to register as a pharmacy technician.

Mandatory registration

When do I need to register by?

You will need to apply to register with us before registration becomes mandatory (compulsory) to continue working as a pharmacy technician. This will be on 1 July 2011.

What happens if I don't register?

If you don't apply to register before 1 July 2011 you will not be able to call yourself or work as a pharmacy technician. If you want to register after mandatory registration starts you will also need to meet our post-transitional entry requirements. This may mean that you will need to complete further qualifications before you can register with us.

Qualifications

I have a UK pharmacy-related qualification but this is not listed in the qualifications you accept. I would like to register as a pharmacy technician. What should I do?

We only accept the following UK qualifications under transitional arrangements:

- 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 Pharmaceutical Sciences
- 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
- SANCAD Pharmacy Technicians Certificate (2 year)
- SCOTEC 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 programme completed prior to 1993
- Boots 1 year dispensing assistants' course completed after 1993 plus accredited top-up training module plus assessment of competence
- 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, Edinburgh Telford College 1984-1992
- National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, James Watt College 1991-1992
- University of Sunderland National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Services (BTEC) 1994-1998

We also accept current or recent UK registration as a pharmacist.

If you do not have one of these qualifications you cannot apply to register with us, even if you have been employed as a pharmacy technician. If you still wish to register you will need to complete a pharmacy technician qualification, such as the S/NVQ level 3 in Pharmacy Services. To do this qualification you need to be working under the supervision of a pharmacist. If you are not working you will need to find employment or arrange work experience first.

The awarding bodies for the S/NVQ3 qualification are City and Guilds, Edexcel and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The following links should help you to find training providers that offer the qualification:

- www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
- www.edexcel.org.uk/
- www.sqa.org.uk

If you think you will qualify after the end of transitional arrangements you will need to complete an accredited underpinning knowledge programme as well as the S/NVQ level 3 in Pharmacy Services to meet our post-transitional entry requirements.

I undertook a dispenser training programme with Boots the Chemists. Will I be able to register?

We accept the two-year Boots dispenser training programme if you completed this before 1993. If you completed the Boots one-year dispenser training programme between 1993 and March 2005 you are able to register as long as you have also completed the Boots top-up module.

In 2005, Boots had a dispensers training programme accredited with the College of Pharmacy Practice as a level 2 dispensing assistants course. This is not the same as the one year course from 1993 to 2004. If you completed this course you cannot apply for registration.

Work experience

I have a pharmacy technician qualification but have not worked as a pharmacy technician for some years and now work in a non-pharmacy role. I would like to register as I may want to work as a pharmacy technician in the future. What should I do?

If you want to register you must meet the work experience requirements for route a or route b (see page 2). If your current job is not within healthcare then it is unlikely to be accepted as relevant work experience. If you are unsure about your work experience you should read our guidance on relevant work experience. If you think that some of your recent work experience is relevant then you may consider applying to register. If not, and you still want to register, we would advise you to gain some work experience in a pharmacy before applying to us.

I am only recently qualified but have the required number of hours of work experience working under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist. I gained most of it while I was working towards my qualification. Can I register?

We accept work experience from the start of your pharmacy technician course as part or all of the required relevant work experience. To apply through route a you need two years experience if you worked at least 28 hours a week or four years work experience if you were working between 14 and 28 hours per week. If you do not meet the route a requirements you can still apply through route b if you have two years relevant work experience and were working at least 14 hours per week.

I have a pharmacy technician qualification, but in the last four years I have taken a career break and have reduced my working hours. Can previous full-time work experience compensate for current work experience and my career break so I can apply through route a?

No, if you want to register through route a you must meet the work experience requirements (see page 1). Route b is more flexible and accommodates people who have reduced their working hours and taken career breaks.

I have recently qualified but was working less than 28 hours per week. I completed the course in two years but I have been working in pharmacy for over four years. Do I apply via route a or route b?

You may include work experience from the start of your pharmacy technician course but you cannot include work experience before this. If you completed your course in less than four years and have worked less than 28 hours per week you will need to apply through route b.

I have recently qualified but took less than two years to complete my pharmacy technician course. I was working in pharmacy before I started my course. Does this count towards my work experience?

You may include work experience from the start of your pharmacy technician course but cannot include work experience before this. If you completed your course in less than two years you will need to wait until you have at least two years relevant work experience before you apply.

I meet the work experience requirements for registration but have only been working in my current role for a few months. Do I need to obtain a statement from my previous employer confirming my previous experience?

No, you don't need a statement of work experience from a previous employer but this is something that your countersigning pharmacist might ask for if there any doubt as to whether your previous work experience meets our requirements.

Supporting documents

Do I have to send my original certificates or can I send copies?

We recommend that you send certified copies rather than original documents. All copies must be signed by a UK registered pharmacist with the words "*I certify that I have seen the original document and that this is a true copy*". The pharmacist must sign, date and state their RPSGB registration number on each photocopied document they are countersigning.

I do not have a passport. Can I provide alternate documentation?

If you do not have a passport then we can accept a certified copy of your photo driving licence (full or provisional) together with the counterpart licence plus a certified copy of either your National Insurance Card (UK) or NHS Card (UK) instead. All of these documents must be in date.

I wish to register under my current married name. My qualification certificate is in this name, however, I have been married before and so my current marriage certificate has my first married name which is different to the name on my birth certificate. What do you advise?

You can be registered under whatever name you choose as long as you send the relevant evidence of identity to us. This must include evidence to show where you have changed your name. If you want to be registered in a different name to that on your birth certificate (and/or passport) you must send a marriage certificate or other legal document (for instance a Change of Name Deed, Certificate of Civil Partnership), or see a solicitor to complete a statutory declaration form. A statutory declaration form is on the pharmacy technician page of our website www.rpsgb.org.

If you have remarried once, your second marriage certificate will normally have your maiden name, previous married name and current married name (unless you went back to your maiden name after your first marriage). If this is the case, you do not need further evidence.

A divorce certificate on its own is not acceptable evidence of a change of name, as these usually only show a married name with no reference to a maiden name or other former name.

Applicants with overseas qualifications

Do I need to register with the Society before I can work as a pharmacy technician in the UK?

No, registration is currently voluntary. However, if you are not registered when mandatory registration starts you will not be able to call yourself or work as a pharmacy technician.

I am an overseas qualified pharmacist/pharmacy technician. Are there any other requirements I have to meet before I can apply?

Unless you are an EEA (European) applicant, you must also have relevant work experience as a pharmacy technician in the United Kingdom of

- at least 14 hours a week for four out of the last eight years or
- at least 28 hours a week for two out of the last four years.

I wish to work as a pharmacy technician in the UK. Can the Society provide me with details of employers and technician job vacancies?

No. We do not provide information about UK employers or pharmacy technician job vacancies.

Do I require an International English Testing System (IELTS) for registration?

No. You do not need to complete IELTS for registration under transitional arrangements. However, we may review this once the register becomes mandatory and the requirements change.

Does my academic transcript need to be sent to you directly from the institution as it is for the pharmacist registration?

Yes, we require the academic transcript be sent directly from the institution.

My certificates are not in English. Do I need to provide an English translation?

Yes, you will need to send the original officially certified English translations and certified copies of the certificates in your language.

I have an overseas pharmacy technician qualification and would like to convert it to a NVQ Level 3 in Pharmacy Services. Is this possible?

If you wish to convert your overseas qualification to a NVQ3 you need to be working in the United Kingdom under the supervision of a pharmacist. If you are not working you will need to find employment or arrange work experience first. You are unable to do the qualification overseas.

The awarding bodies for the qualification are City and Guilds, Edexcel and the Scottish Qualifications Authority. The following links should help you to find training providers that offer the qualification:

- www.city-and-guilds.co.uk
- www.edexcel.org.uk/
- www.sqa.org.uk

It may be possible to have your overseas qualification accredited against parts of the NVQ3 through a process known as accreditation of prior learning (APL). Training providers will be able to advise you on whether APL is possible for your qualification.

Is it possible for the Society to confirm if my overseas pharmacy technician qualification is equivalent to the NVQ Level 3 in Pharmacy Services?

No. We only assess overseas qualifications as part of the application process.

I have just got the letter from NARIC stating that my studies are comparable with a Bachelor degree in UK. Does it make any difference to the procedure?

No. You are still required to submit all the relevant documents with your application.

What is the procedure for obtaining a work permit?

A work permit will normally be obtained for you by your employer. You need to contact UK Border Agency if you have any questions about work permits. Their website address is www.ukba.homeoffice.gov.uk

What will be the procedure for overseas pharmacists and pharmacy technicians wanting to work in Great Britain after registration becomes mandatory?

Unless you are an EEA applicant, you will need to meet our post transitional entry requirements. These are:

- a UK qualification (or qualifications) meeting our requirements. The current requirement is the S/NVQ level 3 in Pharmacy Services and an accredited underpinning knowledge programme.
- work experience as a pharmacy technician or student technician carried out under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist of an accountable pharmacist for at least 14 hours per week for at least two years.

The EEA application route will continue after mandatory registration starts, but you must register with us before you can start working as a pharmacy technician in this country.

Applicants working in dispensing doctors practices

I have trained as a Dispensing Doctors Assistant. Am I able to register as a pharmacy technician?

You are able to register as long as you meet our entry requirements. You will not be able to register with us if you have one of the following qualifications:

- Edexcel BTEC Intermediate Certificate for Doctors Dispensers, People's College Nottingham,
- Edexcel Foundation (Science) BTEC Continuing Education Certificate, People's College
- Edexcel BTEC Dispensing Doctors Assistants Professional Development Award.

We understand that the Dispensing Doctors Association (DDA) has set up its own register of dispensers. For more information you should contact the DDA directly, www.dispensingdoctor.org, at DDA Ltd, PO Box 160, Helmsley, York YO62 5WZ or call the DDA administration office on 01439 770262.

I completed my pharmacy technician qualification in a dispensing doctors practice but I was not working under the direction, guidance or supervision of a pharmacist. Am I able to apply for registration?

To be able to apply for registration you must meet the work experience requirements for route a or route b. If you have not completed a period of relevant work experience to meet our requirements you are not able to register.

I currently work in a Dispensing Doctors' practice but before that I worked as a pharmacy technician in a community/hospital pharmacy. Can I apply through route a?

As long as your previous experience working in a pharmacy meets the route a requirements you can register through route a but your current work experience in a dispensing doctors practice will not count towards this.

I completed the one year Boots Dispenser Course but now work as a dispenser in a GP practice. Is there any way I can undertake the Boots top-up training programme and apply for voluntary registration?

You can only complete the Boots top up training programme if you are working in a community pharmacy. If you want to complete the top up you should contact Boots directly for further advice.

Being on the register

I am on maternity leave. Am I practising or non-practising?

That is your decision. Practising may be the best option for you if you are planning to return to work within a short period of time, particularly if you are already taking part in Continuing Professional Development (CPD). By registering as practising, you are required to take part in and record CPD whether or not you are working. Non-practising may be the best option if you are intending to take an extended career break. By registering as non-practising you won't be required to take part in and record CPD until you return to the practising register.

Further information is provided in Practising or non-practising pharmacy technician? Guidance for registrants on the pharmacy technician page of our website www.rpsgb.org

I am a registered pharmacy technician. Do you recommend that I should take out personal professional indemnity insurance?

Under our Code of Ethics you must ensure that all activities done by you, or under your control, are covered by appropriate professional indemnity arrangements. You are strongly advised to check what type of cover is available within their workplace. Further advice on this issue is available from the Association of Pharmacy Technicians UK. Their website address is www.aptuk.org