General Pharmaceutical Council

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) pharmacy technician qualification interim recognition event report, February 2024

Contents

Event summary and conclusions

Awarding organisation	Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)
Qualification	Pharmacy technician qualification
Names of qualification	Diploma in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7
	The Diploma in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 includes the following qualifications:
	• Professional Development Award, PDA, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 (GR0N 47)
	• Scottish Vocational Qualification, SVQ, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8 (GR2C 24)
Event type	Interim
Event date	1-2 February 2024
Approval period	May 2020 - May 2026
Relevant requirements	<u>Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017</u>
Outcome	The recognition team agreed to recommend to the Registrar of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) that the pharmacy technician qualification provided by SQA should continue to be recognised for the remainder of the recognition period.
Conditions	There were no conditions
Standing conditions	A link to the standing conditions can be **found here**.
Recommendations	There were no recommendations
Registrar decision	The Registrar of the GPhC has reviewed the interim report and considered the recognition team's recommendation.
	The Registrar is satisfied that SQA has met the requirement of continued approval in accordance with Part 5 article 42 paragraph 4(a)(b) of the Pharmacy Order 2010, in line with the Standards for initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017.
	SQA is approved to continue to offer the Diploma in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 for the remainder of the recognition period until the end of May 2026.
Key contact (provider)	Jonathan Gillies, Qualifications Manager

Awarding organisation representatives	Jonathan Gillies, Qualifications Manager, SQA* Laura Gibson, Qualifications Officer, SQA* Suzanne Thompson, Quality Enhancement Lecturer, West College* Scotland* Monica Hunter, Senior Educator, NHS Education for Scotland* Laura McClelland, Curriculum Team Manager, Edinburgh College Carol Neilson, Senior Pharmacy Technician, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Angela Cannon, Lead Pharmacy Technician, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde Colin Sinclair, Lead Pharmacy Technician Education & Training, NHS Fife Yvonne Bayne, Health & Life Sciences Partnerships Manager, Fife College Keiran Stockwell, Quality Assurance Officer, SQA Jodi Jenkins, External Verifier, SQA Aileen Begley, External Verifier, SQA *also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024*
Recognition team	Rebecca Chamberlain (Team leader), Self-employed Pharmacy Technician, Trainer and Associate* Sheetal Jogia (team member - pharmacy technician), London Pharmacy Aseptics Workforce Transformation Project Lead, Royal Marsden Hospital NHS Foundation Trust Shahzad Ahmad (team member - pharmacist), Clinical Lead, NHS England Transformation Directorate Liz Harlaar (team member - lay), Independent Business Consultant *also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024*
GPhC representative	Chris McKendrick, Senior Quality Assurance Officer (Education), General Pharmaceutical Council* *also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024*
Rapporteur	Ian Marshall, Proprietor, Caldarvan Research (Educational and Writing Services); Emeritus Professor of Pharmacology, University of Strathclyde
Observer	Siobhan McGuiness, Director for Scotland, General Pharmaceutical Council* *also attended the pre-event meeting on 19 January 2024*

Introduction

Role of the GPhC

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) is the statutory regulator for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians and registered pharmacy premises in England, Scotland and Wales (the countries of Great Britain). In order to practise in Great Britain, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be registered with the GPhC and have satisfied us that they meet our detailed requirements. If you are a training provider or awarding body, you will need to follow the process set out **Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, October 2017** to have your pharmacy technician competency and knowledge-based course/qualification approved by us.

The powers and obligations of the GPhC in relation to the accreditation of pharmacy education are legislated in the Pharmacy Order 2010. For more information, visit the **website**.

Purpose of this event

The purpose of the interim event is to review the performance of the qualification against the standards for the education and training of pharmacy technicians to ensure that delivery is consistent with the GPhC education standards. The interim event utilises trainee feedback and evaluation together with a review of documentation and a meeting with the awarding organisation representatives and relevant stakeholders.

Background

The Scottish Qualifications Authority, SQA, is the Awarding Body for pharmacy technician qualifications in Scotland. The SQA was recognised in July 2008 by the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, RPSGB, the then regulator, as an approved provider of the SVQ Level 3 Pharmacy Service Skills and an accredited provider of the National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science. An accreditation and recognition event was held in July 2011 by the General Pharmaceutical Council, GPhC; this event considered the provision against the GPhC 'Standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians, 2010' which at that time reflected the updated qualifications relating to the Level 3 National Vocational Qualification, NVQ, Diploma in Pharmacy Service Skills and Level 3 Diploma in Pharmaceutical Science. The SQA qualification was last recognised against the current GPhC 2017 revised standards by the GPhC in 2020. There were no conditions or recommendations.

The pharmacy NOS, National Occupational Standards, were reviewed and revised by Skills for Health prior to the publication of the 2017 revised GPhC standards. The SVQ, Scottish Vocational Qualification, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF, Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, level 8 has been mapped by Skills for Health to the majority of these revised standards; however, this process identified gaps in the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8, and these gaps, as well as the underpinning knowledge requirements, were addressed by the development of knowledge-only units by the SQA. These knowledge-only units have been packaged together as a PDA, Professional Development Award, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7. Therefore, two qualifications, an SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8, and a PDA in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7, will be studied. These qualifications have been designed to complement each other in order to facilitate holistic delivery and assessment. There will be one overarching certificate for the purpose of registration with the GPhC. Training providers will be

approved by SQA to offer the qualifications only if they are being delivered as part of a two-year pharmacy technician training programme.

The Diploma in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 is being delivered at three centres currently as part of NHS Education for Scotland's new technical apprenticeship training programme. A further centre will come on stream in April 2024. NHS Education for Scotland secured funding totalling £3.4 million from Scottish Government in 2022 to introduce a new centralised training programme for pharmacy technicians. This funding has enabled trainees across all 14 territorial Boards plus the National Waiting Times Centre, Golden Jubilee Hospital, to be fully funded during their training. Discussions are on-going between NHS Education for Scotland and Scottish Government to secure additional funding for future cohorts.

There have been minor amendments to the qualification since the last GPhC event. All of which were submitted to GPhC for approval, which was granted. Thus, 1) Skills for Health reviewed and revised unit Pharm 31 based on feedback from the profession. The revised National Occupational Standard, NOS, was included as a replacement for the previous version. 2) As it is no longer a requirement for trainees working in Scotland, the Assessor's Guidelines for the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 6 and 8 were revised to remove the need for trainees to provide evidence for several performance criteria in unit Pharm 08. 3) Following delivery of the Storage and Use of Medicines unit it was identified that the evidence requirements for outcome 2 needed to be revised as trainees were duplicating work.

Documentation

Prior to the event, the provider submitted documentation to the GPhC in line with the agreed timescales. The documentation was reviewed by the recognition team and it was deemed to be satisfactory to provide a basis for discussion.

Pre-event

In advance of the main event, a pre-event meeting took place via videoconference on 19 January 2024 The purpose of the pre-event meeting was to prepare for the event, allow the GPhC and the provider to ask any questions or seek clarification, and to finalise arrangements for the event.

The event

The event began with a private meeting of the recognition team and GPhC representatives on 1 February 2024. The remainder of the event took place via videoconference on 2 February 2024 and comprised a series of meetings with the provider staff and stakeholders involved in the design and implementation of the qualification.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Schedule

Day 1 Pharmacy technician and pharmacy support staff combined interim event, 2 February 2024

Meeting with awarding organisation

Question-and-answer session based on the standards and their criteria, including short presentation.

Meeting with sample of centre providers and associated IQA representatives

How centre providers work with the awarding organisation in ensuring compliance to the GPhC education standards/requirements.

Meeting with qualification EQA representatives

How the awarding organisation monitors and quality assures assessment decisions made by centre providers provider and supervisors in practice, and how this is ratified.

Deliver outcome to awarding organisation

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Key findings - Part 1 - Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes were not tested at this interim event.

Key findings - Part 2 - Standards for the initial education and training

Standard 1: Selection and entry requirements

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all four criteria relating to selection and entry requirements continue to be met.

All centres that are approved to offer the Scottish Vocational Qualification, SVQ, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8 and the Professional Development Award, PDA, in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 must have an admissions policy to ensure that their selection processes are fair, legal and designed to make sure they identify suitable applicants who will be fit to practise as trainees. Systems and qualification verification visits by SQA ensure that selection and entry requirements are robust and are applied consistently and fairly. Assessors, internal verifiers and trainees are all interviewed as part of systems/qualifications verification. Employers are also engaged with during these verification visits.

Trainees must be working in a pharmacy environment or have secured a placement as a pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician and be supervised by a pharmacy professional. Selection must be undertaken by pharmacy professionals and include good character checks to ensure trainees have the appropriate characteristics, attitudes and qualities necessary to act professionally, provide person-centred care and prioritise patient safety. Health board representatives told the team that their trainees are all NHS employees and hence have Protecting Vulnerable Groups, PVG, clearance, and that applicants with special needs are offered guaranteed interviews. The team was told that centres have not had many problems of unsuitable applicants. The team learned that employers and centres work together during the recruitment phase with centres advising on entry qualifications. Selection takes into account health and the ability to undertake the academic challenges of the pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician programme as well as the ability to undertake the job role. Centres also ensure trainees have sufficient English language competence for safe and effective practice.

Centres must have a staff development/continuous professional development policy and procedure to ensure that any training needs are identified and actioned for any staff that may be involved in the recruitment and selection of trainees. Centres must also have a process for ensuring that trainees' development needs and prior achievements will be matched against the requirement of the qualification.

Standard 2: Equality, diversity and inclusion

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

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The team was satisfied that all three criteria relating to equality, diversity and inclusion requirements continue to be met.

The submission stated that the SQA is committed to equality, diversity and fairness. Its policy on the equality of access to its qualifications follows the Equality Act 2010 in supporting the principle of equal opportunities in employment, education and training, and opposition to all forms of unlawful discrimination. SQA staff members are trained in equality and diversity to ensure that equality is fully considered and embedded within the qualifications.

The team was told that the course has been designed for flexible delivery to suit individuals and locations, with both on-campus and distance learning used. Centres must scrutinise course materials for equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment. They must have relevant processes and procedures in place to become an approved centre. Centres, including health boards, use specialist departments, for example, a health board Inclusion Department, to work with candidates and recommend reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning or assessment to help those with specific needs. SQA ensures that the process of assessment is rigorous and fair for all trainees and will approve reasonable adjustments in accordance with relevant legislation. It was confirmed that any adjustments such as additional time in assessments must be agreed formally, and that all learning outcomes must be met. As noted under Standard 1, systems and qualification verification visits by SQA ensure that all course documentation is regularly reviewed and processes/procedures are applied consistently and fairly.

The team learned that EDI data are gathered by training providers at college level to help determine services required. Employers also collect such data. The team was told that learning support needs are based on the collected data. Students may self-refer at application and induction but usually delay until they realise the support available. The team was told that there are no barriers to progress for any groups and that there is an equality, diversity and inclusion impact assessment to ensure equity of access opportunity. Under-represented groups, including males, are highlighted in marketing images for the qualification. College representatives told the team that EDI data are not looked at specifically in relation to progression, but is rather done at college level.

Standard 3: Management, resources and capacity

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to management, resources and capacity requirements continue to be met.

The team learned that there are three centre providers currently with extra providers, including colleges and health boards due to come on stream in March/April 2024. Thus far there have been 200 entries to the provisions with 67 trainees now certified; the team was told that this is not a mass market and that the SQA and centres were comfortable with the current numbers of trainees. Centres must have a range of processes and procedures in place to become an approved centre. This includes systems, policies and procedures for managing the centre, for reviewing the learning and assessment materials, assessment environments and equipment, resources and staff, for supporting the delivery of SQA qualifications and learners throughout their qualification. The team was told that centres must have fitness to practise policies and procedures in place before approval. The team learned that the

main risk to the qualification is having enough assessors and external verifiers, EVs; currently there are three EVs. Expert witnesses are also used when trainees are working in hubs, care homes or GP practices.

Centres must have evidence of systems, policies and procedures to ensure that all assessment decisions will be consistent with qualification standards, and how they will maintain records of the internal verification process. The detailed roles and responsibilities for those delivering the course must be evident and, where appropriate, agreements between the college and the employer outlining roles and responsibilities. The team learned that course planning takes place almost a full year before delivery, allowing capacity issues to be managed appropriately. The team was told that there had been a large increase in interest in the qualification subsequent to the 2022 NHS Education for Scotland support funding, and learned of the appointment of a peripatetic member of staff that could be used as a back-up to cover absences.

All centres must also have a range of processes and procedures in place to be approved to offer the qualification. These must include qualifications and experience for each member of staff who will be an assessor and/or an internal verifier, the suitability of delivery sites, learning materials and equipment, the details of any partnership with another organisation or centre for qualification delivery. New centres coming on stream must meet all SQA criteria, including staffing.

Centres must describe how learners' development needs and prior achievements will be matched against the requirement of the award, how it will be ensured that learners will meet regularly with their assessor to review their progress and to revise their assessment plans accordingly, and how all of the Vocational Qualification units they intend to offer will be assessed, including the assessment materials they will be using for a minimum of six units.

SQA carries out approval visits and external verification takes place on an annual basis to quality assure the processes and procedures and to monitor all learning and training environments. Where issues are identified during a verification visit, sanctions can be placed on the centre and these outcomes must be addressed and approved by SQA prior to the centre submitting any results to SQA.

Standard 4: Monitoring, review and evaluation

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all five criteria relating to monitoring, review and evaluation requirements continue to be met.

SQA is responsible for the review and maintenance of the PDA in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7, while Skills for Health is responsible for the review and maintenance of the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8.

SQA has external quality assurance processes and procedures in place to ensure that courses are monitored, reviewed and evaluated systematically. These comprise systems approval, systems verification, qualification approval, and qualification verification. Qualification verification is to ensure that centres are assessing their trainees in line with national standards, and that assessment decisions comply with SQA quality assurance criteria. Qualification verifiers, external verifiers, are experienced subject experts, registered with the GPhC, who are appointed by SQA to undertake visiting qualification verification on behalf of SQA. External verifiers, EVs, told the team that they had

good access to college policies and found strong evidence of conformation to SQA requirements. EVs confirmed that they checked the qualifications of recruitment staff, including training in EDI, along with those of teaching staff, including CVs, CPD records and pharmacy experience.

Centres will have a systems verification visit within the first year after gaining approval as a centre, if they have trainees registered with SQA. Thereafter, the visits will be scheduled according to the level of need established from the previous visit. Systems and qualifications approval requires the centre to demonstrate its processes, including those for reviewing learning and assessment materials, the assessment environments and equipment, resources and staff, assessment modes, internal verification, and how the centre supports trainees throughout their qualification.

The Diploma in Pharmacy Services at level 7 was designed and developed in partnership with a number of pharmacy stakeholders. The qualification is monitored and reviewed on an ongoing basis, and is refined based on the views and feedback of relevant stakeholders to ensure that advances in pharmacy practice, changes to national standards/frameworks and developments within a wider healthcare context are considered.

The SQA pharmacy Qualifications Support Team, QST, meets two to three times per year to discuss the SQA portfolio of pharmacy qualifications and to consider feedback, advice and guidance. The team was told that all SQA-approved centres, employers, external verifiers and NHS Education for Scotland are members of the pharmacy QST. The QST has strong links to Skills for Health. The QST was described as the initial sounding board for any decision-making. Issues arising from the QST will be taken forward, having consulted the NHS Education for Scotland representative, and all parties informed of any changes to the provision

Centres and health boards have nominated course leads who have oversight of the whole provision. Trainees meet regularly with their assessor to provide feedback on the training programme. The team learned that tripartite meetings involving the trainee, the employer and centre staff take place at 12-weekly intervals. In addition, the team was told that anonymous surveys are issued to trainees seeking feedback on their training programme to ensure that the student voice is heard.

The team was told that Skills for Health engages with local and national stakeholders to ensure that the qualification is fit for purpose. Consultations on the pharmacy NOS and the SVQ structure are made available online to allow key stakeholders, including patients and the public, to respond. However, it was explained to the team that although SQA depends on Skills for Health for patient and public involvement, the NOS are not designed with patients and the public in mind, and that responses from these groups have been virtually non-existent. SQA itself has only limited involvement with patients, but encourages centres to engage with patients wherever possible. Where any issues are identified from the above consultations, national steering groups and working groups are established.

Standard 5: Course design and delivery

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course design and delivery requirements continue to be met.

The Diploma in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 contains the PDA in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 7 and the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at SCQF level 8.

The PDA in Pharmacy Services at level 7 was designed to be delivered alongside the SVQ in Pharmacy Services at level 8 to ensure the integration of knowledge, competency and work experience. Delivering the two qualifications simultaneously allows trainees to learn while experiencing clinical, operational and scientific practices and procedures.

The PDA qualification at level 7 is designed to meet both the underpinning knowledge requirements of the SVQ at level 8 and contributes to the satisfaction of the revised standards for the initial education and training of pharmacy technicians. Both qualifications must be undertaken concurrently while working in a pharmacy environment.

Both the SVQ at level 8 and the PDA at level 7 group award must be delivered and assessed by a registered pharmacist or a pharmacy technician who is a specialist in this field. Trainees are monitored, assessed and supported throughout to ensure that they are able to practise safely and effectively. The team was told that centres seek feedback from employers both during and after the course. The feedback is used to inform the QST in its discussions on course development. In response to the team's query about any inappropriate supervision, it was told that EVs check for this, including interviewing learners, and every unit has direct observation of practice, but no such situations had arisen.

The standards for pharmacy professionals are embedded throughout the SVQ at level 8 and the PDA at level 7, to ensure that trainees contribute to delivering and improving the health, safety and wellbeing of patients and the public throughout their training.

Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians are supervised using an agreed system in learning and training environments to ensure patient safety. Trainees are supported by educational supervisors and workplace mentors. The training provider, employer and NHS Education for Scotland have a service level agreement that outlines the commitment from each party to the supervision of trainees. This ensures that they only carry out tasks for which they are competent and that patient safety is not compromised.

Intelligence gathered from the internal and external quality assurance processes, regular meetings of the pharmacy QST and Skills for Health consultations is used to ascertain whether any amendments are required. This will include consideration of whether advances in pharmacy practice, changes to national standards/frameworks and developments within a wider healthcare context will impact on the delivery of the training programme. As described in the introduction there have been minor amendments to the qualification since the last GPhC event. All of the proposed changes were submitted to GPhC for approval, which was granted.

Standard 6: Course assessment

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all ten criteria relating to the course assessment requirements continue to be met.

The assessment of the qualification at level 8 must follow the requirements of the Skills for Health Assessment Strategy for the SVQs in Pharmacy Services. The assessment strategy outlines the various roles within the assessment and verification process, including assessors, co-ordinating assessors, expert witnesses, internal verifiers and external verifiers. The assessment strategy also outlines acceptable sources of evidence in the workplace. There are currently three EVs. The team learned that EVs are all registered pharmacy professionals with no conflicts of interest in respect of the trainees or centres. EVs are contracted on a yearly basis and it was acknowledged that it is a challenge to recruit sufficient EVs to cover the three centres.

SQA has developed Assessor's Guidelines for the qualification at level 8 to support centres delivering and assessing the SVQ. Each SVQ unit, NOS, has its own statement of standards which details the knowledge, understanding and competencies that must be demonstrated. The assessor's guidelines for the SVQs in Pharmacy Services state the marking criteria.

The PDA at level 7 Group Award Specification outlines the requirements for educational supervisors and assessors. Each knowledge unit has its own statement of standards which details the learning outcomes and knowledge and/or skills. This includes the evidence requirements in terms of type, quantity and conditions.

A variety of assessment methods are used across the qualification at level 7, relevant to the knowledge and skills required to be evidenced, including the use of evidence generated in the workplace whilst undertaking the qualification at level 8. This is designed to strengthen the connection between both academic and experiential learning as well as reducing the assessment burden for the trainee. Workplace mentors and expert witnesses are issued with guidance handbooks on assessment along with information sessions on Teams, and NHS Education for Scotland CPD modules on required skills. The diverse assessment strategy supports independent learning, personalisation and choice. The qualification includes a mixture of assessment methods including: direct observation of practice in the workplace, examination, case study, portfolio, project, oral questioning, personal statements, professional discussion, and reflective discussion.

A significant proportion of assessment decisions of competence will take place in the workplace for the work-based SVQ at level 8. To pass a work-based unit, trainees must be able to demonstrate all of the required knowledge and performance statements included in the NOS. All 12 mandatory units must be passed, with five having learning log requirements. Each knowledge unit in the PDA has its own statement of standards which details the learning outcomes and knowledge and/or skills. This includes the evidence requirements in terms of type, quantity and conditions. The workplace assessor determines when the trainee's evidence from training logs is considered sufficient to initiate assessment. Where a cut-off score is used in an examination-based assessment, the cut-off score will be 60%. For all other assessments, 100% is required to achieve a pass. To achieve the PDA at SCQF level 7, all 11 mandatory units must be passed. The team was told that the number of errors that a trainee may make in their log assembling prescribed items is not defined formally. Errors committed during the early stage of the course require the trainee to reflect on their mistakes, with more intervention if errors are made towards the end of the list of items. It was clarified to the team that the log is not used as evidence of competence but rather as a readiness tool.

SQA's Guide to Assessment has been developed to provide support for everyone who assesses SQA qualifications. It is based around the principles of assessment and covers the full range of SQA qualifications. In addition, the team was told that assessment guidance sessions are run, followed by standardisation meetings. In the event that trainees do not complete the whole qualification, the team wished to know if trainees are certificated for individual units. It was told that although each unit is a qualification, trainees have to select units for full qualification and certification. Trainees are issued a record of achievement, with dates, which will indicate any individual units that have been achieved. Trainees that pass all the requisite units receive a group award certificate to which they can add further units if they change role.

Condonation, compensation, trailing and multiple re-sit opportunities are not permitted. There should normally be one, or in exceptional circumstances two, re-assessment opportunities. Any decision on exceptional circumstance rests with the professional judgment of the assessor. Learners should not be given the same assessments repeatedly or be asked identical questions. Centres should have alternative assessments available and ensure that other learners have also not undertaken the assessment recently. In all cases of re-assessment, the assessment must be of equal demand to the original assessment.

Ongoing systems and qualification verification visits by SQA ensure that all assessment documentation and decisions are regularly reviewed and national standards are being maintained across all centres. All assessment decisions must also be internally verified by the delivering centre.

Standard 7: Pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience

Standard met/will be met? Yes ☒ No ☐

The team was satisfied that all seven criteria relating to pre-registration trainee pharmacy technician support and the learning experience requirements continue to be met.

All trainees receive an induction from the centre when they start their training programme outlining the support available covering academic study, general welfare and career advice. This includes the GPhC guide to raising concerns about pharmacy education and training.   Centres must also provide evidence of how they will support trainees throughout their qualification. Evidence includes a complaints policy and associated procedures, and an induction checklist covering all SQA requirements. The team was told that centre course leads will work with trainees in any difficult situations, and that there is easy access for trainees to the SQA.

Trainees are supported by educational supervisors and workplace mentors. Dedicated workplace educational supervisors will be in place to co-ordinate the training programme and to liaise regularly with the centre. Trainees are supervised using an agreed system in learning and training environments to ensure patient safety. Trainees will meet regularly with their assessor to review their progress, revise their assessment plans accordingly and to provide feedback on the course. The team was told that there are quarterly tripartite process meetings along with regular meetings to discuss the development of competence. External verifiers look for evidence that such meetings are occurring.

Employers complete a pre-enrolment candidate information pack for each trainee, describing the sector or role and support arrangements in place for the trainee as well as confirmation of the allocated protected learning time each week. The pack will also confirm the named employer contact

to allow discussions to take place with regard to the time and opportunities required by trainees to meet the course requirements.

The PDA at level 7 Group Award Specification states that any person supporting pre-registration trainee pharmacy technicians must be familiar with the General Pharmaceutical Council guidance on tutoring pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. Centres must ensure there is the necessary infrastructure and support for the learner including the use of service level agreements where a work placement is to be used. Service level agreements outline the expectations of the centre and the employer in relation to resources, responsibilities, monitoring, assessment and partnership review to support the learner to meet the requirements of the programme.