

Studying pharmacy

This page provides an overview of the things to consider if you are thinking about applying to train as a pharmacist, what you can expect during training and your next steps after training.

Pharmacists [1] are experts in medicines and how they are used. Most work in hospital pharmacy, community pharmacy (for example high street chemists) and primary care [2] pharmacy.



Entry requirements will vary depending on the university so check with the universities.

Applying to become a pharmacist

The first step to becoming a pharmacist is to take a Master's degree (MPharm) course in pharmacy accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) [3]. You can search for GPhC-accredited courses using our course finder [4].

Applications for courses are made through UCAS [5].

Entry requirements

Entry requirements for pharmacy degree courses vary because each university sets its own entry criteria, but you are likely to need three A-levels or equivalent qualifications at level 3, plus supporting GCSEs. Contact universities directly to find out whether qualifications equivalent to A-levels or GCSEs are acceptable.

You need to aim for as high grades at A-level or equivalent as possible. Courses specify certain subjects such as chemistry, and perhaps biology or another science subject, or maths.

- Your application

Universities will normally expect you to attend an interview. You will also need to demonstrate that you have found out about the role of a pharmacist and understand what the work involves. This is possible through relevant experience [6]. Experience in any healthcare setting is useful but if you can gain it in a pharmacy, so much the better. Work experience placements can be difficult to find, so alternatives would be to shadow a pharmacist or talk to a pharmacist about their role. Find out exactly what is required for your chosen courses and get organised as soon as possible.

The UCAS website [7] allows you to search for courses and view entry requirements. More detailed information about specific courses can be found in university prospectuses and on their websites.

An alternative route into pharmacy is to take an accredited foundation degree and (if successful) progress to the second year an MPharm degree.

- Recruiting for values

If you're applying for a university programme leading to a role providing NHS healthcare, you'll be asked to show how you think the NHS values would apply in your everyday work.

Find out more about NHS values [8].

- Your training as a pharmacist

Accredited pharmacy degree courses last for four years although there are a couple of five-year sandwich courses which include a year in the workplace. The course combines learning theory with gaining practical skills.

Courses cover:

- origin and chemistry of drugs
- preparation of medicines

- action and uses of drugs and medicines including physiology [9], biochemistry, microbiology, pathology and pharmacology
- pharmacy practice, covering laws and standards, managing symptoms, promoting healthy lifestyles and advising on drug therapy and medicines use

Accredited courses must meet the GPhC's standards but programmes vary in their content, the way they are structured, and how they are taught and assessed. The facilities available and amount of support and supervision may also differ from course to course. Find out more by looking at university websites and prospectuses, attending university open days and contacting admissions staff.

Support at university

See our information about the support available [10] while on your course.

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What happens after your training?

After passing your MPharm degree, to register with the GPhC [11] and practice as a pharmacist, you must:

- undertake a 12-month pre-registration training period in community pharmacy, hospital pharmacy or other settings, or a combination of these (sandwich degrees include this). For pre-registration hospital pharmacist training in England and Wales, you should apply through Oriol [12]
- pass the GPhC registration exam

Job vacancies for qualified pharmacists are advertised on the NHS Jobs website [13] and elsewhere. General information on looking for work can be found in the Career planning [14] section and under Looking for a job [15].

Once registered as a pharmacist, you can progress from one grade or band to another and, in community pharmacy, self-employment is an option. You'll need some experience first, but you can specialise in certain aspects of the work, such as providing information on medicines or radiopharmacy. You can also train as an independent prescriber.

To remain registered with the GPhC you have to maintain its set standards. This includes taking part in continuing professional development [16] (CPD).

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/studying-pharmacy>

Links

- [1] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/explore-roles/pharmacy/pharmacist>
- [2] https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Primary_care
- [3] <http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/>
- [4] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/looking-course>
- [5] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/applying-university-through-ucas>
- [6] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/gaining-experience>
- [7] <http://www.ucas.com/>
- [8] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/about/working-health/nhs-constitution>

- [9] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/glossary#Physiology>
- [10] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/considering-or-university/support-university>
- [11] <http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/registration/registering-pharmacist>
- [12] <https://www.oriel.nhs.uk/Web/Account/LandingPage?ChangeStaffGroupSetting=true>
- [13] <http://www.jobs.nhs.uk/>
- [14] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning>
- [15] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/secondary-school-or-fe-college/looking-job>
- [16] <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/i-am/working-health/professional-development>