



**Arrangements for:  
NC Pharmacy Services  
at SCQF level 6**

**Group Award Code: GA6P 46**

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## **Acknowledgement**

SQA acknowledges the valuable contribution that Scotland's colleges have made to the development of National Qualification Group Awards.



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# 1 Introduction

This is the Arrangements Document for the **revised Group Award in Pharmacy Services, at SCQF level 6, which was validated in May 2010**. This document includes: background information on the development of the Group Award, its aims, guidance on access, details of the Group Award structure, and guidance on delivery.

The title for this award has been altered to bring it in line with the vocational qualification SVQ Pharmacy Services level 3. The title of the National Certificate is now NC Pharmacy Services.

This National Certificate provides a broad-based study of the range of topics related to Pharmacy Services that are required for progression to areas of study or employment within the Pharmacy Sector. The NC is a stand-alone qualification and provides underpinning knowledge for the SVQ Pharmacy Services Level 3. This NC Pharmacy Services has been accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), the regulator for pharmacists, pharmacy technicians and pharmacy premises in Great Britain.

# 2 Rationale for the revision of the Group Award

The two main purposes for the review of the NC in Pharmaceutical Sciences were to ensure the NC continues to provide the knowledge and understanding for the new SVQ Pharmacy Services level 3, and to where possible ensure that the NC will also meet the regulatory body's accredited training programme criteria ie, Technical Certificate for mandatory registration.

Under the criteria for registration of pharmacy technicians, applicants must complete the S/NVQ Pharmacy Services Level 3 and an underpinning knowledge programme, which has been approved or accredited by the pharmacy profession's regulatory body. The NC in Pharmaceutical Sciences is one of the many underpinning programmes approved by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC).

Since then there have been many changes in pharmacy practice which culminated in the development of a new S/NVQ Pharmacy Services level 3 qualification, which was validated by Skills for Health in June 2009. To ensure the NC continued to be fit for purpose a mapping exercise was carried out by the Qualification Design Team (QDT). The QDT mapped the current NC in Pharmaceutical Sciences to the newly validated S/NVQ Pharmacy Services and the draft Technical Certificate to ensure the new NC Pharmacy Services met the needs of the employers and the regulatory body's accredited training programmes requirement for registration.

The resulting changes were minor and required the replacement of the Information Technology Unit with a Chemistry Unit and amendments to the existing units.

All candidates who successfully complete the award and aim to gain employment in the pharmacy sector have been able to do so.

Colleges also report that they have some candidates that progress to Higher Education. Universities in Scotland that have given candidates places on the Master of Pharmacy Degree (MPharm) course report that they complete the degree course successfully.

### **3 Aims of the Group Award**

#### **3.1 Principal aims of the Group Award(s)**

- ◆ To enable candidates to understand the main systems of the human body and how these contribute to the regulation and co-ordination of the body's activities.
- ◆ To enable candidates to understand the action and uses of medicines and pharmaceutical appliances/devices in the treatment of clinical conditions.
- ◆ To give candidates a basic understanding of the key elements of the practice of pharmacy, including dispensing, sale of over the counter medicines and provision of services outside the pharmacy and health promotion.
- ◆ To enable candidates to understand the pharmaceutical aspects of medicines and the procedures and practices used in the dispensing process.
- ◆ To enable candidates to understand the laws regulating the pharmacy profession.
- ◆ To enable candidates to understand legislation that may affect pharmacy practice eg data protection, equality and diversity, freedom of information.
- ◆ To provide an understanding of the regulation of medicines and health professionals in relation to the public.

*Taken from the General Pharmaceutical Council's underpinning programme requirements*

#### **3.2 General aims of the Group Award**

- ◆ Provide the underpinning knowledge to meet registration requirements.
- ◆ Developing employment skills related to the National Occupational Standards and so enhancing candidates' employment prospects.
- ◆ Support candidates' career development and Continuing Professional Development.
- ◆ Enable progression within the SCQF (Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework).
- ◆ Develop learning and transferable skills.

### **3.3 Target groups**

The NC Pharmacy Services is geared towards those who wish to pursue a career in the Pharmacy sector. The course is suitable for school leavers and adult returners who either have employment in the sector or who wish to gain employment.

However, it must be recognised that candidates may use the qualification as a progression route to Higher Education.

### **3.4 Employment opportunities**

The NC is designed to meet the accredited training programme of the professional regulatory body and the underpinning knowledge and understanding in the S/NVQ Pharmacy Services level 3, which in turn supports pharmacy technician registration.

However, exit data from some colleges suggest that not all candidates seek employment in the pharmacy sector, but use the qualification for personal development or to progress to higher education.

## **4 Access to Group Award(s)**

Admission to the National Certificate Group Award (NC) in Pharmacy Services should be based on a broad approach to candidate selection but, at the same time, should ensure that candidates are chosen who have the potential and ability to complete the award successfully.

Given the nature of the course and the demand the NC places upon the candidates it would be highly beneficial, albeit not essential, that candidates have:

- ◆ *English Standard Grade at General/Credit level*
- ◆ *Mathematics Standard Grade at General/Credit level*
- ◆ *Biology Standard Grade at General/Credit level*
- ◆ *Chemistry Standard Grade at General/Credit level*

The list of formal qualifications above is not exhaustive or mutually exclusive and should be used as guidance only. Consideration should be given to candidates that have achieved qualifications elsewhere following SQA policy on credit transfer.

As with all SQA qualifications, access to the qualification is at the discretion of the Centre, and the above recommendation is for guidance only.

## 5 Group Award(s) structure

### 5.1 Framework

The NC in Pharmacy Services consists of 12 credits and has a total value of 72 SCQF credit points\*

Group Award Classification	SCQF Level	SCQF Credit Points
Higher	6	72

\*SCQF credit points are used to allocate credit to qualifications in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). Each qualification in the Framework is allocated a number of SCQF credit points at an SCQF level. There are 12 SCQF levels ranging from Access 1 to Doctorates.

#### Mandatory Units: 11 Credits

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Pharmaceutics: Good dispensing practice	FH27 12	6	6	1
Pharmaceutics: Legal and Ethical Controls	FH28 12	6	6	1
Pharmaceutics: Preparation and Use of Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms	FH29 12	9	6	1.5
Pharmacology: An Introduction	FH2A 12	3	6	0.5
Pharmacology: Medicines Used in the Treatment of Clinical Conditions	FH2C 12	12	6	2
Pharmacology: Infection and malignant disease	FH2D 12	3	6	0.5
Human Physiological Processes	DC4D 12	12	6	2
Medical Terms Associated with Common Medical Conditions: An Introduction	DC4J 11	3	5	0.5
Microbiology for Healthcare: An Introduction	DC4H 11	6	5	1
Building Blocks	D066 11	6	5	1

## Optional Units: 1 credit required

Unit title	Code	SCQF credit points	SCQF level	SQA credit value
Prepare Pharmaceutical Preparations Aseptically	FH2E 12	6	6	1
Pharmaceutics: Sale and supply of Medicines and related products	FH2F 12	6	6	1

## 5.2 Mapping information

Principal Aims	NC units relevant to the aims
To enable candidates to understand basic scientific principles of chemistry, microbiology and human biology and their relevance to pharmacy.	Human Physiological Processes Building Blocks Microbiology for Healthcare: An Introduction
To enable candidates to understand the main systems of the human body and how these contribute to the regulation and co-ordination of the body's activities.	Human Physiological Processes
To enable candidates to understand the action and uses of medicines and pharmaceutical appliances/devices in the treatment of clinical conditions.	Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice Pharmacology: An Introduction Pharmacology: Medicines Used In The Treatments of Clinical Conditions Pharmaceutics: Preparation and Use of Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms
To give candidates a basic understanding of the key elements of the practice of pharmacy, including dispensing, sale of over the counter medicines and provision of services outside the pharmacy and health promotion.	Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice Pharmaceutics: Sale and Supply of Medicines and Related Products
To enable candidates to understand the pharmaceutical aspects of medicines and the procedures and practices used in the dispensing process.	Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice Pharmaceutics: Preparation and Use of Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms
To enable candidates to understand the laws regulating the pharmacy profession.	Pharmaceutics: Legal and Ethical Controls
To enable candidates to understand legislation that may affect pharmacy practice eg data protection, equality and diversity, freedom of information.	Pharmaceutics: Legal and Ethical Controls
To provide an understanding of the regulation of medicines and health professionals in relation to the public.	Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice

## **5.3 Articulation, professional recognition and credit transfer**

### **Credit Transfer Arrangements**

There should be no hindrance to the student's approach to credit accumulation or the time in which it is achieved, but ultimately the candidate will need to satisfy all assessment criteria established for the course. Consideration should be given to candidates where Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) may be possible and where is appropriate.

### **Articulation**

Although there is currently no formal articulation agreement with any universities, some universities in Scotland recognise the NC Pharmacy Services, as being equivalent to one Higher. They will accept the NC Pharmacy Services as one Higher if candidates do not have the traditionally recognised Highers for entry into a degree programme.

### **Professional Recognition**

The regulatory body has stated in the S/NVQ Pharmacy Services Pharmacy Assessment Strategy, that to be allowed to assess candidates in the workplace the assessor must be able to register with the regulatory body. The NC Pharmacy Services is one of the underpinning knowledge training programmes approved by the regulatory body as meeting one of the registration requirements.

Secondly, to support candidate continued professional development (CPD) and career progression, candidates who successfully complete the NC Pharmacy Services could progress to the HNC Pharmacy Services Development and Management, the HN Unit: Procedures for Pharmacy Dispensary Checking Technicians and the HN Unit: Procedures for Pharmacy Aseptic Checking Technicians, depending on their role in the workplace.

## **6 Approaches to delivery and assessment**

The Units in the Group Award provide a thorough understanding of the basic concepts of pharmacy practice relevant to the role of the student pharmacy technician, working within the modern pharmacy sector.

### **Delivery Criteria**

Specific subject expertise is required to deliver this qualification. The following Units must be delivered by a Pharmacist or a Pharmacy Technician:

FH27 12  
FH28 12  
FH29 12  
FH2E 12  
FH2F 12

The following Units must be delivered by a Pharmacist, a Pharmacy Technician or a Pharmacologist:

FH2A 12  
FH2C 12  
FH2D 12

To gain approval for this qualification centres should complete and submit a Qualifications Approval Application Form.

## **6.1 Content and context**

Throughout the design and development of the NC Pharmacy Services award a high priority was placed on producing that allows candidates to develop appropriate knowledge, understanding and practical skills which will meet the requirements of employers and the regulatory body for pharmacy practice.

### **Knowledge and Understanding**

Candidate should develop the ability to recall and understand facts and principles detailed in Unit specifications.

### **Problem Solving**

Problem solving skills should be developed so that candidates can:

- ◆ select relevant information from reference sources and other texts, charts, graphs and diagrams
- ◆ present information appropriately in a variety of forms, including written/oral summaries, tables and graphs
- ◆ process information accurately, using calculations where appropriate
- ◆ plan, design and evaluate practical procedures
- ◆ draw valid conclusions and give explanations supported by evidence

### **Practical Abilities**

Practical work is essential to develop the basic skills required for pharmacy technicians. Candidates develop familiarity with equipment, its use and limitations as essential preparation for employment within the pharmacy sector. Practical work is also essential to underpin theoretical work, re-enforcing the understanding of concepts and principles.

Practical skills should be developed so that candidates can:

- ◆ describe experimental procedures
- ◆ record relevant measurements and other information in appropriate formats
- ◆ analyse and present experimental information in appropriate formats
- ◆ draw valid conclusions
- ◆ transfer knowledge into practice

## **6.2 Delivery and assessment**

## 6.2.1 Delivery

The NC may be delivered by a variety of modes of delivery. It can be delivered by day release if candidates are employed in the pharmacy sector over two years of academic study, full-time over one year academic study or by blended learning (distance learning) provided the candidates can attend the centre to complete any practical components of the course.

**Please Note:** a stipulation of GPhC accreditation is that the Pharmaceutics Units must be taught by either a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician, and the Pharmacology Units must be taught by a pharmacist, pharmacy technician or a pharmacologist. If the Unit is taught by a pharmacologist, the Unit must be planned with input from a pharmacist or a pharmacy technician to ensure that the Unit is placed within a pharmacy context.

This information is also noted under the 'Guidance on learning and teaching approaches' section within each Unit.

Ideally the pharmacy specific units should be taught holistically ie, Pharmaceutics: Legal and Ethical Controls, Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice, Pharmaceutics: Preparation and use of Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms. These should be taught in first year if delivered over a two year period. Likewise the Pharmacology units should start with Pharmacology: An Introduction. Followed by Pharmacology: Medicines used in the treatment of clinical conditions and finally, Pharmacology: Infections and malignant disease.

### Example of assessment delivery:

	Months									
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Pharmaceutics: Good Dispensing Practice									✓	
Pharmaceutics: Legal & Ethical Controls								✓		
Pharmaceutics: Preparation and Use of Pharmaceutical Dosage Forms		✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	
Pharmacology: An Introduction			✓							
Pharmacology: Medicines Used in the Treatment of Clinical Conditions					✓				✓	
Pharmacology: Infection and Malignant Disease										✓
Human Physiological Processes						✓				✓
Medical Terms Associated with Common Medical Conditions: An Introduction										✓
Microbiology for Healthcare: An Introduction									✓	
Pharmaceutics: Prepare Pharmaceutical Preparations Aseptically									✓	
Pharmaceutics: Sale and supply of Medicines and related products					✓					

Building Blocks									✓	
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## 6.2.2 Assessment

From the outset of the NC in Pharmacy Services an appropriate assessment strategy has been put in place for this award. This strategy can be found below.

### Aims

The aims of the strategy are to ensure that:

- 1 Consistent, rigorous and efficient approaches are adopted to the development and administration of NC Pharmacy Services assessment instruments, which satisfy nationally agreed standards;

Achievement of Outcomes 1 and 2 could be demonstrated by use of a cut-off score. Any cut-off score must be commensurate with the minimum evidence requirements of the Unit Specification. The recommended cut-off score is 60%

- 2 The assessment load on candidates and staff is sensible and that assessments be integrated wherever possible to support the candidates not being over assessed. Assessment should also not unduly detract from teaching and learning;
- 3 As far as possible reliable and rigorous moderation processes are put in place in order to ensure that consistent national standards are achieved for all NC Pharmaceutical Unit assessments.

### Objectives

Listed below are the measures that have been put in place to meet the aims:

- 1 Adopt a holistic approach to Unit assessment. The implications of this are that a Unit assessment strategy has been adopted, where possible, to produce a single assessment instrument for the whole Unit. Where this was not possible the assessment strategy sought to ensure that the minimum number of assessment instruments were required consistent with maintaining agreed national standards.
- 2 Whilst not seeking to be entirely prescriptive with regard to the time spent on assessment in NQ Units, it is believed that over assessment should be avoided if assessment in individual NQ Units is no greater than 2 hours.
- 3 The centres approved by SQA to deliver the NC have worked in partnership to review and amend the pharmacy specific units to ensure assessment reflect any changes made to the NC. This approach supports the delivery of nationally agreed standards, reducing the workload on staff in the individual colleges.
- 4 Ensure that consistent and rigorous internal and external moderation procedures operate for NQ Unit assessment processes. This places a clear responsibility on both centres and SQA.

### **6.2.3 Independent Assessment**

The regulating body for the pharmacy profession has decreed in the assessment strategy for Pharmacy training programmes must use independent assessment. The definition they use for independent assessment is:

‘This will be administered either by the centre or a supervising pharmacist. The completed assignments will be marked by the Awarding Body or Training Provider, using independent markers. Instructions for administering the assignment will be given to the centre or supervising pharmacist by the Awarding Body or Training Provider. These guidelines must be clearly stated as part of the independent assessment criteria. The centre will be responsible for ensuring that when the assignment is administered outside the centre then it is within the guidelines. The supervising pharmacist will sign a declaration stating that the guidelines were followed and the work is that of the candidate. This flexibility is vital to accommodate the location of pharmacies in respect to training providers and the mode of delivery of the underpinning knowledge programmes, ie distance learning and possibly e-learning’.

*Pharmacy Assessment Strategy 2010*

### **6.2.4 Formative Assessment**

Formative assessment should be used throughout the delivery of NC Units to reinforce learning, build candidates’ confidence and prepare candidates for summative assessment.

### **6.3 Core Skills**

There is not automatic certification of Core Skills in the new NC Pharmacy Services as there are no Core Skills embedded in any of the units. However, candidates may have opportunities to develop some of the Core Skills whilst undertaking the programme.

### **6.4 Open learning**

Advice on the use of open and distance learning is given in individual NQ Unit specifications where it is considered that these modes of delivery are appropriate.

However, where open and distance learning is used due regard must be paid to assessment. Planning would be required by centres to ensure the sufficiency and authenticity of candidate evidence. Arrangements would be required to be put in place to ensure that the assessment or assessments were conducted under the conditions specified in the Unit specification. For example, in the case of a Unit which involved an end test a centre would have to make arrangements for the test to be conducted under controlled, supervised conditions. Likewise, where a Unit involves a practical based assessment, a centre would have to make arrangements for candidates to come into the centre to undertake the assessment under the conditions specified in the NQ Unit specification.

## 7 General information for centres

### **Disabled candidates and/or those with additional support needs**

The additional support needs of individual candidates should be taken into account when planning learning experiences, selecting assessment instruments, or considering whether any reasonable adjustments may be required. Further advice can be found on our website [www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements](http://www.sqa.org.uk/assessmentarrangements).

### **Internal and external verification**

All instruments of assessment used within this/these Group Award(s) should be internally verified, using the appropriate policy within the centre and the guidelines set by SQA.

External verification will be carried out by SQA to ensure that internal assessment is within the national guidelines for these qualifications.

Further information on internal and external verification can be found in SQA's *Guide to Assessment* ([www.sqa.org.uk](http://www.sqa.org.uk)).

## 8 General information for candidates

SQA have developed a revised National Certificate in Pharmaceutical Science, and renamed it NC Pharmacy Services to meet the requirements of employers and of the professional regulatory body for pharmacy practice.

The NC award at SCQF Level 6 has been designed to allow candidates to develop the knowledge, understanding and skills to work now, or in the future, as student/pharmacy technicians, provided they meet the other registration requirements of the pharmacy practice regulatory body. More information on registration may be found on the RPSGB website.

### 8.1 Progression pathways

The NC is designed to meet the accredited training programme of the professional regulatory body and the underpinning knowledge and understanding in the S/NVQ Pharmacy Services level 3, which in turn supports pharmacy technician registration.

However, exit data from some colleges suggest that not all candidates seek employment in the pharmacy sector, but use the qualification for personal development or to progress to higher education.

## 9 Glossary of terms

**SCQF:** This stands for the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework, which is a new way of speaking about qualifications and how they inter-relate. We use SCQF terminology throughout this guide to refer to credits and levels. For further information on the SCQF visit the SCQF website at [www.scqf.org.uk](http://www.scqf.org.uk)

**SCQF credit points:** One SCQF credit point equates to 10 hours of learning. NQ Units at SCQF levels 2–6 are worth 6 SCQF credit points, NQ Units at level 7 are worth 8 SCQF points.

**SCQF levels:** The SCQF covers 12 levels of learning. National Qualification Group Awards are available at SCQF levels 2-6 and will normally be made up of National Units which are available from SCQF levels 2–7.

**Dedicated Unit to cover Core Skills:** This is a non-subject Unit that is written to cover one or more particular Core Skills.

**Embedded Core Skills:** This is where the development of a Core Skill is incorporated into the Unit and where the Unit assessment also covers the requirements of Core Skill assessment at a particular level.

**Signposted Core Skills:** This refers to the opportunities to develop a particular Core Skill at a specified level that lie outwith automatic certification.

**Qualification Design Team:** The QDT works in conjunction with a Qualification Manager/Development Manager to steer the development of the National Certificate/National Progression Award from its inception/revision through to validation. The group is made up of key stakeholders representing the interests of centres, employers, universities and other relevant organisations.

**Consortium-devised National Certificates/National Progression Awards** are those developments or revisions undertaken by a group of centres in partnership with SQA.