National Competency Framework
for **Primary Care Pharmacy Technicians**

PCPA

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Pharmacy Technicians are healthcare professionals (HCPs) who are registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) for their license to practise. The title of Pharmacy Technician is protected in law and can only be applied to those who meet and maintain the standards for registration set by the GPhC.

Pharmacy Technicians are professional, skilled and essential members of the multidisciplinary team, who as registered professionals, are responsible and accountable for their own accurate and safe practice.

Healthcare professional leadership bodies play an important part in promoting best practice, providing guidance, directing and maintaining safe and competent practice. Competency Frameworks alongside regulatory standards are an important aspect of supporting patient safety.

The Association of Pharmacy Technicians United Kingdom (APTUK) is the national professional leadership body for pharmacy technicians working in all pharmacy sectors across all countries in the United Kingdom: England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. APTUK was founded in 1952 and are committed to:
1. **Leading** the future of pharmacy and ensuring the professional voice of Pharmacy Technicians is heard. Represent the opinions of our members and respond to the professional needs of pharmacy technicians
2. **Expanding** the influence of APTUK, to increase the membership base ensuring a sustainable organisation for the future
3. **Advocating** the importance of Pharmacy Technicians in the delivery of transformational and sustainable National Health priorities for integrated Patient Centred Care
4. **Progressing** the career pathway and professional development of Pharmacy Technicians and ensuring their future needs are met

APTUK has a key role to play in providing the tools and resources to support the profession in delivering excellence throughout their roles and services provided.

The Primary Care Pharmacy Association (PCPA) was established for the benefit of all primary care pharmacists and pharmacy technicians with an active interest in primary care pharmacy. It is the largest and longest standing independent organisation dedicated to supporting pharmacy professionals working within primary care. PCPA have a key role in actively promoting the sharing of best practice and the advancement of innovation in primary care pharmacy.

This framework aims to support pharmacy professionals and the organisations in which they work to contribute to the ambitions of the NHS England's Long Term Plan[1]; the Welsh Government's A Healthier Wales: our Plan for Health and Social Care[2]; the Scottish Government's Health and Social Care Delivery Plan[3]; and Northern Ireland's Making Life Better[4], in delivery of a high quality health service with particular emphasis on patient safety, clinical effectiveness and patient experience.

These documents recognise the workforce challenges and state that the way forward for the primary care workforce is to develop the skills of the non-medical workforce. The benefits of pharmacists and pharmacy technicians working within general practice, care homes and other settings in primary care have been recognised and identified as key contributors towards meeting service demands across healthcare systems. Pharmacy professionals working as part of a wider team and across the health care system complements and supports the work of the multidisciplinary team in primary care to focus on clinical care.

This NCF is designed to support safe practice and professionalism in primary care, inform the education and training requirements and further the professional development of pharmacy technicians working in primary care.

2.0 Development of the Framework

The development of the National Competency Framework (NCF) for Primary Care Pharmacy Technicians has been led by APTUK in collaboration with PCPA. The National Competency Framework (NCF) for Primary Care Pharmacy Technicians Task and Finish Group, which provided professional representation from all sectors and home countries, were asked to provide comments, input and feedback throughout the process of development. (See page 28 for membership and acknowledgements)

To understand the role and training needs of pharmacy technicians working in General Practice, HEE Wessex collaborated with Pharmacy Workforce Development South (PWDS) to undertake a learning needs survey[5]. This exercise provided a valuable picture of a motivated workforce that demonstrates diverse skills, roles and responsibilities in general practice but a gap regarding training was evident. The results highlight an autonomous practitioner and a role that complements the multidisciplinary team and works as part of the wider health primary care system. This survey was key to identifying the need for a national competency framework to support practice and delivery of training for primary care pharmacy technicians and informed the development of the competencies in line with the roles and responsibilities identified in the survey.

The GPhC Initial Education Standards for Pharmacy Technicians (IETs)[6] were used to inform some of the core practice criteria in this framework. This is in recognition of the legacy pharmacy technician workforce (i.e. those who registered against previous versions of these standards) whose qualification will have not met the current standards. The aim of the inclusion of core practice criteria that align with these IETs is to ensure that legacy workforce pharmacy technicians working in primary care can demonstrate the application and deployment of the core competencies necessary to meet current IETs in registered practice. The breadth of application of the IET knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes informs the scope and level of practice of the pharmacy technician.

This framework provides a set of standard core competencies that underpin the knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes required for pharmacy technicians working in and across primary care roles. It is designed to support the safe practice and professionalism required to meet a portfolio of roles across primary care, not limiting to one particular area of practice. It also informs the education and training requirements and provides a basis to further the professional development of pharmacy technicians working in these roles.
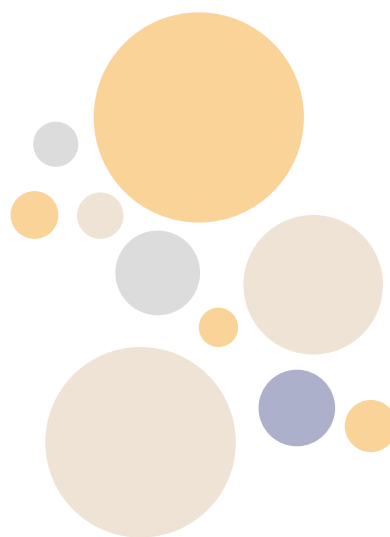
3.0 Purpose and use of the Framework

The NCF outlines the core competencies central to support the safe and effective practice of pharmacy technicians in primary care roles.

The NCF can be used by education and training providers, employers and commissioners as well as individual pharmacy technicians. The NCF may also be of interest to the wider public, to people who use pharmacy and healthcare services, other healthcare professionals working with pharmacy teams in primary care and health care regulators.

It supports individual pharmacy technicians by:
- Helping identify gaps in knowledge and skills and identify training and development needs to meet core competencies for practice
- Facilitating continuing professional development and revalidation
- Demonstrating competency requirements for service delivery in primary care roles

It supports employers by:
- Identifying the competencies required for pharmacy technicians to undertake safe and effective practice in a primary care role
- Informing the development of job descriptions and role specifications for primary care pharmacy technicians
- Acting as an aid for appraisals and setting of personal development plans
- Providing support for the recruitment and induction process for new primary care pharmacy technician roles and appointments.
- Providing a basis for discussions around the professional development of pharmacy technicians to advance practice in primary care, building on the core competencies
- Supporting education commissioners to set out the requirements for education and training for pharmacy technicians working in primary care

It supports education and training providers by:
- Informing the design and delivery of the learning objectives and assessment methodology within their training programme/course provision
- Providing a set of core standards within a framework that can be adopted and embedded into a relevant training programme/course
- Supporting the quality, productivity, efficiency of training and competency assessment across the UK
- Providing the link between GPhC Professional Standards and core competencies for pharmacy technician practice in primary care
- Providing a basis for discussions around the development of training programmes/courses for pharmacy technicians to support development of role and practice in primary care, building on the core competencies

4.0 Scope of the Framework

Primary care is the day-to-day healthcare available in every local area and the first place people go when they need health advice or treatment. Primary care includes general practitioners, pharmacies, care homes, community and practice nurses, community midwives and health visitors, family planning or sexual health clinics, out of hours GP services, dentists and opticians.

The NCF compliments recognition of the diversity of healthcare provision in primary care, and also recognises the need for pharmacy technicians working in primary care to demonstrate core competencies that are transferrable across the wider primary care healthcare system. Pharmacy technicians work as part of the multidisciplinary team in primary care and this is integral to the competencies developed to ensure a transferrable skill set to support a portfolio of pharmacy technician roles across primary care. The development of training programmes/courses that align with this NCF will provide the curriculum and detail in meeting the competencies within the context of more specific pharmacy technician primary care practice.

Pharmacy technicians working in primary care may be new to working in a primary care setting but are not necessarily new to registered practice. The framework takes into account the experienced pharmacy technician workforce that may have existing knowledge and skills from other sectors but provides the basis to ensure that competencies gained in other settings can be deployed in the primary care role. It also provides a baseline for pharmacy technician practice and assurance that core competencies can be identified and met in the primary care role irrespective of their background and/or previous experience.

The competencies within this framework are referred to as 'core practice criteria' and are used to define the set of competencies that represent a baseline for pharmacy technician practice in primary care whether newly appointed or in an existing primary care role. The framework is not intended to limit practice but it acknowledges that a baseline competency is needed. It is the breadth of application of knowledge, skills, behaviours and attitudes that informs the scope and level of practice of the pharmacy technician.

Pharmacy professionals are accountable for meeting the regulatory standards set by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)[7] in Great Britain, and by the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI)[8] in Northern Ireland to provide safe and effective care to patients. Pharmacy technicians should use GPhC Guidance to support the standards for pharmacy professionals[9] to support and help them to meet professional standards. In addition pharmacy technicians should follow good practice guidance developed by professional leadership bodies, and other organisations/bodies, in order to develop, maintain and improve services provided to patients (e.g. APTUK National Education Framework Final Accuracy Checking of Dispensed Medicines and Products).[10]

5.0 The Domains

In the context of this framework a competence can be described as knowledge, skill, attitude or behaviour that is essential to fulfil and perform effectively and safely in a scope of practice in primary care.

The competencies have been developed within four domains (illustrated below) each of equal importance. The domains reflect four areas of practice and are aligned to the GPhC Standards for Pharmacy Professionals[7] where possible to ensure this framework and any subsequent learning provision meet the professional standards and is relevant to the GPhC revalidation process.

1 **Multidisciplinary Team Working** — **Pharmacy Technicians must work effectively within the MDT and across the wider healthcare system/interface in primary care**

2 **Managing Medicines** — **Pharmacy Technicians must undertake effective and safe management of medicines related processes**

3 **Optimising Medicines and Personalised Healthcare** — **Pharmacy Technicians must contribute to effective and safe optimisation of patients' medicines and personalised healthcare**

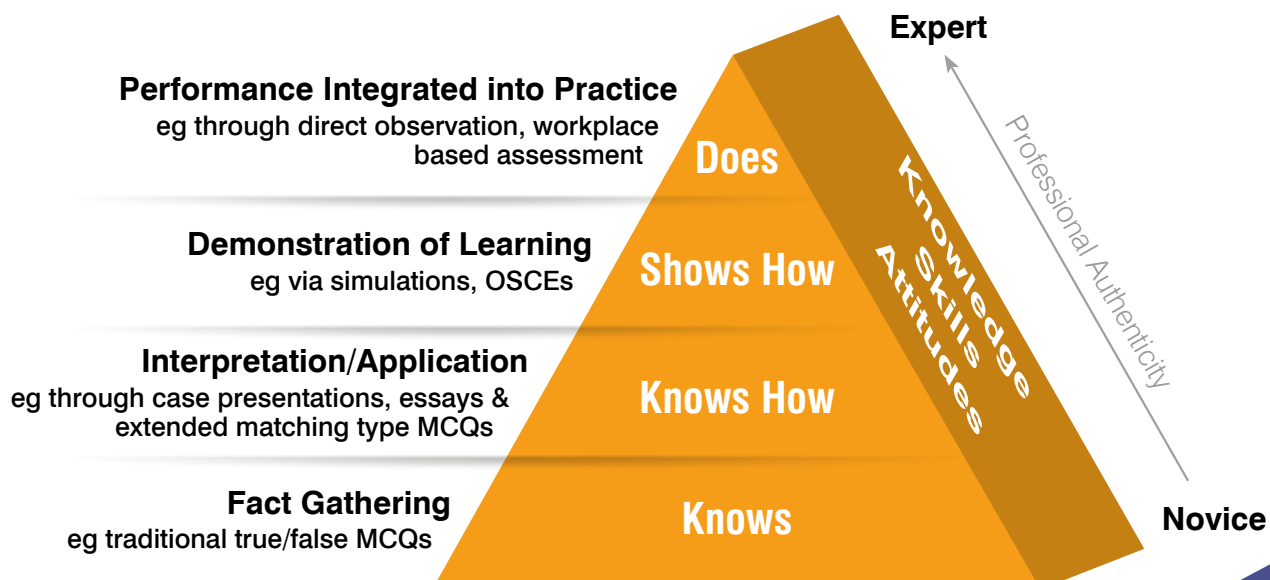**4** **Leadership and Professional Accountability** — **Pharmacy Technicians must demonstrate leadership and professional accountability**

5.1 Competencies within the Domains

There are thirteen competencies across the four domains (illustrated below). Within each of the thirteen competencies there are core criteria statements which describe the activity of outcomes that pharmacy technicians in primary care must meet to support safe and effective practice.

Domain 1 Multidisciplinary Team Working	Domain 2 Managing Medicines	Domain 3 Optimising Medicines and Personalised Care	Domain 4 Professional Accountability and Leadership
a) Communicating Effectively	a) Patient Records	a) Supporting Structured Medication Review	a) Professional Practice
b) Digital Literacy	b) Medication Supply Processes	b) Polypharmacy and Deprescribing	b) Leadership
	c) Safe and Secure Handling of Medicines	c) Clinical Knowledge and its Application	c) Effective Problem Solving and Decision Making
	d) Medicines Safety	d) Effective Consultations	

In alignment with the GPhC Initial Education and Training Standards[6] the competencies in these standards are based on levels of established competence and assessment using 'Miller's Pyramid'.

Performance Integrated into Practice
eg through direct observation, workplace based assessment
Does

Demonstration of Learning
eg via simulations, OSCEs
Shows How

Interpretation/Application
eg through case presentations, essays & extended matching type MCQs
Knows How

Fact Gathering
eg traditional true/false MCQs
Knows

Knowledge Skills Attitudes

Professional Authenticity

Expert

Novice

Domain 10 Multidisciplinary Team Working

Pharmacy Technicians must work effectively within the multidisciplinary team and across the wider healthcare system/interface in primary care

Competency a

Communicating Effectively	Does

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Demonstrates clear and effective communication, relationship building and collaboration across the multidisciplinary team in primary care and the wider health care system

ii. Demonstrates clear and effective communication through different mediums including face to face, electronic, written and virtual

iii. Uses a range of appropriate communication skills:
  • Verbal communication
  • Non-verbal communication
  • Active listening and identification of non-verbal clues
  • Effective questioning techniques
  • Effective negotiation and influencing skills

iv. Identifies individuals with particular communication needs and adapts communication to meet these needs

v. Communicates effectively within the context of challenging situations

vi. Identifies potential barriers and enablers to effective communication within the multidisciplinary team and across the wider healthcare system

Competency b

Digital Literacy	Does

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Demonstrates awareness and application of legislation, guidelines, policies and protocols to protect privacy in the use and sharing of digital information, data and content

ii. Uses digital tools to search and locate information, data and content through simple searches in digital environments and navigates between content in different digital environments

iii. Uses digital tools such as spreadsheets and/or databases to store information and data

iv. Demonstrates effective, secure, appropriate use of information, data and content in order to solve problems, make decisions and fulfil tasks

v. Adopts use of digital devices, technologies, software and applications in order to communicate with patients and the multidisciplinary team (e.g. virtual consultations, remote working and domiciliary roles)

vi. Demonstrates effective and appropriate use of digital technologies in research, audit, quality improvement and/or learning and development activities

vii. Demonstrates appropriate behaviours online and in all digital interactions

Domain 2 Managing Medicines

Pharmacy Technicians must undertake effective and safe management of medicines related processes and adopt safe systems of work that protect from avoidable harm

Competency a

Patient Records	Does

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Accesses appropriate and relevant resources and systems that support tasks and record information relevant to the patients' care

ii. Makes accurate, legible, factual and timely entry of information and endorsements relevant to patients' care into patient records in accordance with standard operating procedures/protocols

iii. Identifies necessary changes and amends patients' records and /or medication, seeking approval where required

iv. Works within scope of job role and individual competence when making changes and amendments to patients' records and/or medication

v. Manages the transfer of patient information from different care settings and across the healthcare system

vi. Resolves queries and unexplained/unintentional issues working within the scope of job role and individual competence

vii. Maintains patient/person confidentiality and understands the procedure that must be followed should patient confidentiality be compromised

viii. Obtains consent from the patient (or carer) where appropriate and takes appropriate action if consent is not obtained, not available due to lack of capacity or declined
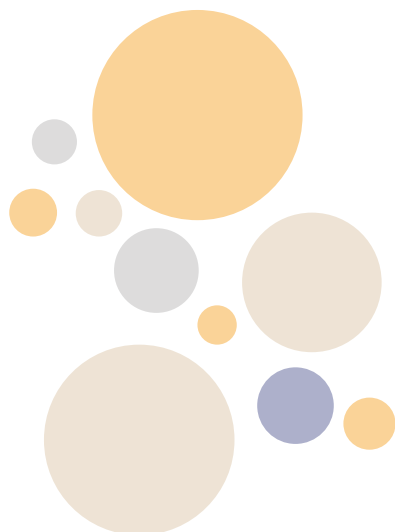
Competency b

Medication Supply Processes **Does**

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i.   Manages requests to supply medication and/or prescription issue according to local standard operating procedures/protocol

ii. Manages different methods of prescription request and issue from a range of sources

iii. Identifies, documents and takes appropriate action with any discrepancies between medication required and the patient's electronic record

iv. Ensures that medicine quantities are synchronised and aligned with local/organisational policy

v.   Takes appropriate action with missing or ambiguous dose directions

vi. Ensures that the medicines or products are provided for the patient in a way that optimises the clinical and cost-effective use of medicines

vii. Applies understanding of local formularies including 'over the counter' medicines and 'hospital/specialist prescribing only'

viii.Applies understanding of shared care guidelines related to medication supply

ix. Identifies the risks associated with medication and/or prescription issue processes

x.   Identifies inappropriate use of medicines suggesting possible medication issues, including excessive usage or under usage

xi. Takes appropriate action regarding request, follow up and interpretation of patient specific results in line with local/organisational policy

xii. Liaises with community pharmacy, the multidisciplinary team and/or other relevant healthcare providers to identify and resolve any prescription and/or medication supply related queries and discrepancies

xiii.Communicates with the patient and/or carer to identify and resolve any medication related queries

xiv.Recognises practice relating to the supply of medicines that can contribute to medication waste and promotes systems and processes that reduce medication waste

xv. Demonstrates appropriate use of systems to identify patients requiring monitoring relating to their medicines

xvi.Demonstrates the use of audit and quality improvement activities to maintain, inform and improve processes relating to medicines supply

Competency c

Safe and Secure Handling of Medicines   **Does**

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Ensures and promotes the safe and secure storage of medicines in line with national guidance and regulatory requirements
ii. Ensures that any stocks of medicines are kept at a level to minimise wastage and reduce stockholding costs
iii. Ensures the safe disposal of surplus, unwanted or expired medicines according to current legislation
iv. Ensures safety and security of medicines when care, and medicines associated with that care, are transferred from one setting to another

Competency d

Medicines Safety   **Does**

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Identifies and manages situations of risk within scope of own competence and raises concerns regarding patient safety and risk management where appropriate
ii. Reports and records errors, near misses and medication safety incidents following local and national processes
iii. Uses audit, quality improvement processes and reflective practice in relation to medication safety and suggests changes to systems and processes in order to reduce risk
iv. Minimises risk to patients by effective handover and documentation of accurate, factual and legible information
v. Responds to Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) alerts and patient safety alerts (CAS) to cascade relevant information and support any necessary action

Domain 3 — Optimising Medicines and Personalised Care

Pharmacy Technicians must contribute to effective and safe optimisation of patients medicines and personalised healthcare

Competency a

Supporting Structured Medication Review   Does

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Identifies and prioritises patients requiring structured medication review and medicines reconciliation
ii. Uses appropriate and validated sources of information to support structured medication review and medicines reconciliation
iii. Identifies unnecessary duplicate or similar repeat medication items and takes appropriate action
iv. Identifies duplicate or missing prescription request and/or issue and takes appropriate action
v. Identifies medications not ordered for a specific length of time or ordered excessively and takes appropriate action in line with standard operating procedures
vi. Identifies medication with missing or ambiguous dose directions and takes appropriate action
vii. Takes appropriate action relating to necessary monitoring requirements
viii. Communicates any relevant issues to the practice dispensary, community pharmacy, GP practice, care home or relevant healthcare professional/team
ix. Identifies the appropriate person to refer to when necessary and liaises with the appropriate people to resolve queries and discrepancies
x. Ensures timely and relevant update of patient documentation and records

Competency b

Polypharmacy and Deprescribing   Knows How

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Explains the terms polypharmacy and deprescribing
ii. Understands how shared decision making and person-centred care supports patients to get the best possible outcomes when they are taking multiple medications
iii. Lists the causes and consequences of polypharmacy and potential triggers

Competency c

Clinical Knowledge and its Application   **Does**

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i.   Demonstrates knowledge of medicines appropriate to the tasks being undertaken
ii. Identifies sources of information and applies knowledge and understanding relating to formularies, medicines supply chain, licensing of medicines and homely remedies/OTC
iii. Identifies sources of information and applies knowledge and understanding relating to the covert administration of medicines
iv. Acts appropriately in response to patients' allergies and intolerances
v.   Identifies and uses appropriate information and reference sources to support medicines knowledge
vi. Understands antimicrobial resistance and the roles of infection prevention, control and antimicrobial stewardship measures
vii. Takes into account the additional precautions and prioritisations required for high-risk medicines and patients with high- risk conditions, in accordance with local/organisational procedure
viii.Identifies and takes appropriate action relating to specific monitoring requirements for patients
ix. Identifies patients requiring escalation due to clinical risk and manages/refers these appropriately

Competency d

Effective Consultations   **Does**

Core Practice Criteria

In addition to the criteria listed in Domain 1 - Communicating Effectively,
the Pharmacy Technician

i. Undertakes consultations in a supportive environment, taking account of safety, comfort, confidentiality, dignity and respect

ii. Encourages and engages patients and their carers to ask questions, raise concerns and seek information or advice to provide personalised care

iii. Listens actively and focusses completely on what the patient/carer is saying

iv. Checks understanding of patient/carer at points during the consultation allowing time to reflect

v. Provides patients/carers with the relevant information in a way they can understand to support effective use of medicines

vi. Respects the individual in relation to diversity, values, beliefs and expectations about their health and treatment

vii. Responds sensitively with patients/carers emotions and concerns

viii. Uses patient records where appropriate to support and accurate record consultation

ix. Recognises and manages any emotions experienced personally from consultations with patients/carers

x. Promotes healthy lifestyle initiatives and choices and makes appropriate referrals to access relevant services to help improve health outcomes

xi. Recognises how consultations conducted via remote media (e.g. telephone, e-mail, text virtual) differ from face to face consultations and demonstrate skills that can accommodate this difference

Domain 4 Professional Accountability and Leadership

Pharmacy Technicians must demonstrate professional accountability and leadership

Competency a	
Professional Practice	**Does**

Core Practice Criteria

The Pharmacy Technician

i. Practices within the organisation's standard operating procedures, protocol and policies (national and local) and legal frameworks

ii. Practices safely within the scope of the role and own level of competence, knowledge and skills; understanding the importance of working within this

iii. Demonstrates appropriate escalation of situations outside of own level of competence, knowledge and skills

iv. Demonstrates compliance with lone working policies and local procedures that are in place for personal protection (e.g. domiciliary roles)

v. Demonstrates responsibility and accountability for own actions and decisions, understanding the potential consequences of these decisions

vi. Effectively identifies and raises concerns regarding patient safety and risk management (whistle blowing)

vii. Uses a reflective approach to inform and improve practice

viii. Actively seeks opportunities and challenges for personal learning and development of knowledge and skills

ix. Recognises the responsibilities to uphold a duty of candour

Competency b

Leadership	Does

Core Practice Criteria

In addition to the criteria listed in Domain 1 - Communicating Effectively, the Pharmacy Technician

i. Contributes to an open and transparent culture in relation to legal, organisational and policy requirements
ii. Demonstrates ability to support, train and contribute to the development of others in the multidisciplinary team acting as a role model for those less experienced
iii. Demonstrates effective relationship building and collaboration within the multidisciplinary team and the wider health care system
iv. Promotes the value of pharmacy across other healthcare professionals and the multidisciplinary team
v. Describes the benefits of patient and public involvement in improving patient safety, patient experience, health outcomes and supporting people to live healthier lives
vi. Challenges others to consider new ideas and approaches to help improve systems and processes
vii. Contributes to the development of standard operating procedures, policies and protocols to support safe practice, systems and processes
viii. Describes national priorities and drivers for change in the NHS, pharmacy services and medicines optimisation and their implications at a local level

Competency c

Effective Problem Solving and Decision Making	Does

Core Practice Criteria

In addition to the criteria listed in Domain 1 - Communicating Effectively, the Pharmacy Technician

i. Demonstrates awareness of where to seek information to solve problems and make decisions
ii. Draws upon existing knowledge and appropriate guidance/resources and reference texts to effectively make appropriate decisions
iii. Makes appropriate decisions using professional judgement and ensures that the care of the person is the first concern
iv. Identifies and prioritises queries and tasks within scope of competence and practice
v. Recognises limits of authority and knowledge, refers and escalates appropriately when necessary
vi. Engages with the multidisciplinary team to support problem solving and own decision making
vii. Recognises uncertainty in decision making and manages any risks appropriately
viii. Prepares concise, relevant and logical responses that meet the needs of the enquirer and documents responses appropriately

5.2 Mapping of Competencies to Professional Standards

The framework has been mapped to the GPhC Standards for Pharmacy Professionals7 as an assurance that these are a baseline requirement for all pharmacy technicians, but the context and application varies according to career stages. Education and training providers should aim to align their training provision to the standards.

Domain 1
Multidisciplinary Team Working

Pharmacy Technicians must work effectively within the multidisciplinary team and across the wider healthcare system/interface in primary care

Mapped to GPhC Professional Standards
Standard 2: Pharmacy professionals must work in partnership with others
Standard 3: Pharmacy professionals must communicate effectively
Standard 7: Pharmacy professionals must respect and maintain a person's confidentiality and privacy

Domain 2
Managing Medicines

Pharmacy Technicians must undertake effective and safe management of medicines related processes and adopt safe systems of work that protect from avoidable harm

Mapped to GPhC Professional Standards
Standard 1: Pharmacy professionals must provide person centred care
Standard 2: Pharmacy professionals must work in partnership with others
Standard 3: Pharmacy professionals must communicate effectively
Standard 4: Pharmacy professionals must maintain, develop and use their professional knowledge and skills
Standard 5: Pharmacy professionals must use their professional judgement

Domain 3
Optimising Medicines and Personalised Care

Pharmacy Technicians must contribute to effective and safe optimisation of patients medicines and personalised healthcare

Mapped to GPhC Professional Standards
Standard 1: Pharmacy professionals must provide person centred care
Standard 2: Pharmacy professionals must work in partnership with others
Standard 3: Pharmacy professionals must communicate effectively
Standard 4: Pharmacy professionals must maintain, develop and use their professional knowledge and skills
Standard 5: Pharmacy professionals must use their professional judgement
Standard 7: Pharmacy professionals must respect and maintain a person's confidentiality and privacy

Domain 4
Professional Accountability and Leadership

Pharmacy Technicians must demonstrate professional accountability and leadership

Mapped to GPhC Professional Standards
Standard 2: Pharmacy professionals must work in partnership with others
Standard 4: Pharmacy professionals must maintain, develop and use their professional knowledge and skills
Standard 5: Pharmacy professionals must use their professional judgement
Standard 6: Pharmacy professionals must behave in a professional manner
Standard 8: Pharmacy professionals must speak up when they have concerns or when things go wrong
Standard 9: Pharmacy professionals must demonstrate leadership

6.0 Application of the Framework

The key aims in the application of the framework are:

- To provide a consistent approach to the quality, productivity, delivery and efficiency of primary care pharmacy technician training and assessment programmes/courses across the UK
- To ensure quality assurance is embedded in the design and delivery of training and assessment
- To ensure the pharmacy technician has the skills, knowledge and competence to undertake the tasks associated with a primary care role and to provide safe, effective and person-centred care in primary care
- To enable practice to be transferable across areas of primary care (e.g. GP practice, care homes, community pharmacy)

On successful completion of a programme/course meeting the NCF, the pharmacy technician will have achieved the competencies as outlined in section 5.1 to support safe and effective practice.

The requirements for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programme/Course providers in the application of the NCF are described in the following sections:
6.1 - Application and Entry Criteria
6.2 - Management Plan and Learning Agreement
6.3 - Monitoring and Evaluation
6.4 - Programme/Course Design and Delivery
6.5 - Access to Assessment
6.6 - Assessment Strategy Introduction
6.7 - Assessment
6.8 - Sources of Evidence
6.9 - Access to Support

6.1 Application and Entry Criteria

Education and training providers of Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must:
- Ensure the applicant is a registered pharmacy technician
- Confirm that the applicant has authorisation and support from their employer(s) to undertake the training including access to appropriate supervision
- Confirm that the necessary governance structures are in place in the applicant's place of employment, to enable pharmacy technicians to be adequately supported and supervised throughout the training programme/course. It is essential that safe processes are in place and the pharmacy technician has access to current Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and/or protocols that detail their roles and responsibilities
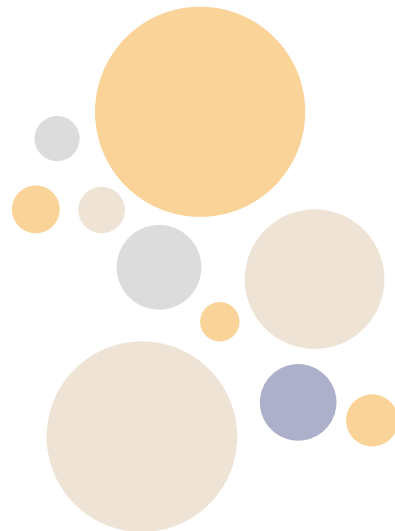
6.2 Management Plan and Learning Agreement

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must have a structured and transparent programme/course management plan that includes:

- Clarity of the roles, responsibility and accountability of all those involved in all aspects of the programme/course delivery
- Systems and processes that will be used to deliver training
- Systems and processes that will be used to identify and manage any risks

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must:

- Deliver a learning agreement for the pharmacy technician that covers all aspects of the learning environment and includes the support available for the pharmacy technician and allocation of an educational supervisor who monitors progress
- Ensure pharmacy professionals with appropriate experience in primary care pharmacy roles are involved in the design and delivery of the programme/course

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must ensure all learning and training environments have:

- Appropriately trained and experienced staff to deliver the programme/course
- Sufficient resources and facilities to deliver the programme/course

6.3 Monitoring and Evaluation

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must monitor and maintain the quality, consistency and integrity of the delivery and assessment and must:

- Include a system for evaluating the standard of teaching materials, learning and assessment
- Confirm who is responsible for reporting, reviewing and taking action when appropriate
- Include a system for raising concerns so they are resolved in a timely manner and documented
- Include the pharmacy technician as part of the monitoring, review and evaluation process

6.4 Programme/Course Design and Delivery

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must design and deliver programmes/courses in any way which:

- Use coherent teaching and learning strategies which bring together knowledge, competence and practice activities that reflect the primary care pharmacy technician role
- Use the GPhC's standards for pharmacy professionals or PSNI professional standards of conduct, ethics and performance for pharmacists in the design and delivery of programmes/courses (see section 5.2 for mapping of domains to GPhC standards for pharmacy professionals)
- Have a programme/course teaching and learning strategy which sets out how pharmacy technicians will achieve the competencies in section 5.1 of the framework
- Develop the skills, knowledge, understanding and professional behaviours required to meet the competencies in section 5.1 of the framework
- Use initiatives which are known to reduce the incidence of inadvertent and/or deliberate plagiaristic activity
- Take into account the views of a range of stakeholders - including pharmacy professionals, other primary care health care professionals, patients, the public and employers
- Align with the responsibility and accountability of the primary care pharmacy technician role

- Meet the requirements of this framework
- Are responsive to significant changes in practice to ensure that programmes/courses remains current and fit for purpose
- Ensure an educational supervisor is assigned to oversee pharmacy technicians in all aspects of the programme/course local delivery and implementation
- Ensure that educational supervisors have a full understanding of programmes/courses and their roles and responsibilities
- Ensure that on successful completion the pharmacy technician has a transferrable skill set that enables them to work competently across roles within primary care
- Ensure that the pharmacy technician, the educational supervisor and the appropriate manager are informed when the pharmacy technician has successfully completed a programme/course and met (or not met) the assessment strategy
- Provide a certificate of achievement to pharmacy technicians who successfully complete a programme/course and meet the assessment strategy

When designing and delivering programme/courses, education and training providers and employers might wish to incorporate other teaching and learning that is not assessed as part of the assessment strategy included in this framework. This could include the following:
- Literacy, language and/or numeracy
- Personal learning, thinking/judgement skills and problem solving
- Enhanced clinical knowledge and skills related to practice

6.5 Access to Assessment

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must:
- Embed equality and diversity into the programme/ course design
- Ensure that those with protected characteristics are not discriminated against in accessing and completing the training
- Make reasonable adjustments to teaching, learning and assessments, when necessary, to help pharmacy technicians who require specific needs without altering the competences that need to be demonstrated
- Deliver teaching, learning and assessments within timescales that reflect the requirement to provide and maintain the consistency, currency and validity of the learning and assessment process
- Make reasonable adjustments to the training duration for pharmacy technicians with periods of absence such as maternity/paternity/ adoption leave, long term ill health absence and circumstances where training may be interrupted due to responding to a pandemic and/or a national emergency
- Ensure that pharmacy technicians have equal access to assessment regardless of geographical location, work setting and patterns of work
- Ensure all individuals involved in the process demonstrate their commitment to equality of opportunity

6.6 Assessment Strategy Introduction

To complement the competency framework an assessment strategy has been developed.
The assessment strategy aims to encourage the pharmacy technician to take an active part in their own training and to apply their knowledge to practical situations related to their role in primary care.

The assessments are also designed to show that the pharmacy technician has achieved the competencies defined in section 5.1 of this framework.
The assessment strategy also takes into account the strengths and benefits of reflective practice in building resilience, improving wellbeing and deepening professional commitment as identified in the joint regulators statement on the benefits of becoming a reflective practitioner.[11]

This assessment strategy has been produced to ensure that the assessment of competence for pharmacy technicians undertaking education & training programmes/courses are applied in a standardised approach thus providing consistent outcomes for the knowledge, skills and competencies for pharmacy technicians working in primary care.

The assessment strategy also sets out the mix of methods used for assessing knowledge and competence and outlines a mix of assessment methods that are robust and appropriate for assessing knowledge and competence for pharmacy technicians working in primary care roles. The assessment strategy must also assess whether a pharmacy technician's practice is safe.

The assessment strategy outlines assessment and evidence under the following headings:
6.7 - Assessment
  • Trainee Supervision
  • Focus of Assessment

6.8 - Sources of Evidence
  • Work Based Observation of Practice
  • Witness Testimony
  • Reflective Accounts
  • Case Studies
  • Case Based Discussion
  • Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

6.7 Assessment

Trainee Supervision
Pharmacy Technicians working in primary care must have appropriate supervision of activities to ensure patient safety whilst working within the parameters of an education and training programme/course.

An educational supervisor is someone who is selected, appropriately trained and responsible for the overall supervision and management of the trainee's progress whilst undertaking a programme/course.

Educational supervisors are responsible for the pharmacy technician's educational/learning agreement or plan. This will include the formal assessment and sign off of the pharmacy technician as competent and meeting the assessment strategy. The educational supervisor should have an understanding of the range of learning, assessment and support opportunities for learning in the workplace, work collaboratively with colleagues (including any practice/clinical supervisors) and the multidisciplinary team to monitor and support the pharmacy technician's progression and foster learner autonomy.[12]

Educational supervisors for Pharmacy Technicians undertaking training and education programmes/courses must:
  • Be a practising pharmacy professional who has sufficient experience, knowledge and understanding to be considered competent in the area of primary care pharmacy practice
  • Have knowledge of other multidisciplinary team roles within primary care and how they interface with pharmacy roles, the regulation, legislation and codes of practice for the service (where applicable), and the requirements of NCF at the time any assessment is taking place
  • Have experience which is clearly demonstrable through continuing learning and development
  • Be able to meet with the trainee on a regular basis to discuss progress; they do not necessarily need to be at the same site with the trainee

The framework recognises a flexible approach to the delegation of educational supervision of trainees which takes into account the diversity of models for programme/course delivery and access to pharmacy professionals working in primary care but aims to ensure adequate, safe and appropriate supervision of trainees.

A practice/clinical supervisor can supervise the day-to-day practice of a pharmacy technician and provide developmental feedback whilst undertaking a training programme/course. Practice/clinical supervisors will support trainees to identify opportunities for learning in the workplace and identify when trainees require additional support.

The framework recognises that on occasion, supervision may be best placed with registered professionals outside of the pharmacy profession. For example, a GP supervising a medicines reconciliation but requires any practice/clinical supervision to be carried out by a registered health care professional.

Focus of Assessment
The framework outlines the requirements for inclusion of assessment methods for each domain of the competency framework. This guidance is categorised as 'must include' and 'could include'. Where guidance 'must' be included, assessment of these core practice criteria in these domains must feature in the programme/course assessment strategy. Where the framework states 'could include', this recognises the varying scope of practice in primary care and provides flexibility for training providers to develop their programmes/courses to meet the requirements of their delivery models and learners.

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must ensure the assessment strategy is robust, reliable and valid and guarantees patient safety and includes:
• Assessment of all of the competencies in Section 5.1
• The methods that will be used to assess competence
• A system for monitoring the assessment processes
• An independent quality assurance system of the assessment process that is carried out by an appropriately experienced person
• The methods in which the pharmacy technician will receive feedback on their performance in a timely manner

There should be a system in place to allow pharmacy technicians to appeal against any decision or conduct of any assessment process associated with any programme/course that meets this framework. Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must ensure that programme/course assessment strategies include:
• A requirement for assessments to be carried out by appropriately trained and qualified health care professionals who are competent to assess the performance of a pharmacy technician working in primary care
• A portfolio of evidence which is completed under normal working conditions and includes information on the pharmacy technician's scope of practice in primary care (e.g. job description / role specification)
• Assessment of the pharmacy technician's understanding of local standard operating procedures and protocols relating to their primary care role
• Assessment of the pharmacy technician's professionalism and ability to accept responsibility as a primary care pharmacy technician
• A requirement for the pharmacy technician's progress to be reviewed at regular intervals by their educational supervisor and on a minimum of three occasions
• A review of the pharmacy technician's portfolio of evidence to ensure that the assessment strategy has been met and they have demonstrated competence to practice independently

6.8 Sources of Evidence

Sources of evidence submitted for assessment should demonstrate the appropriate application of knowledge and skills through the quality and types of evidence in an e-portfolio and to the core practice competencies as outlined in Section 5.1.

Holistic Assessment

Holistic assessment of competence is vital in demonstrating the development of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to support competent practice.

> The requirement for trainees to submit multiple sources of evidence in order to support robust and holistic assessment **MUST** be included in the assessment methodology

Work-based Observation of Practice

Evidence should be gathered wherever possible from the work place. Direct observation must be undertaken by the educational supervisor, practice/clinical supervisor or a registered healthcare professional with occupational competence in the area being assessed. Performance observed is formally recorded and used as part of the overall assessment for the competency and/or wider competencies within the domains. The observation of performance could relate to a specific activity or provide a more holistic view of the pharmacy technicians performance as it covers a range of work responsibilities and tasks.

> Work based observation of practice **MUST** be included in the assessment methodology and **MUST** be included within the following domains:
> Domain 1 - Competency a
>   - Communicate Effectively
> Domain 2 - Competency b
>   - Medication Supply Processes
> Domain 3 - Competency a
>   - Supporting Structured Medication Review
> Domain 3   -
> Competency d
>   - Effective Consultations

Witness Testimony

Witness testimony in this framework is defined as a form of observation, but differs from work based observation of practice in that performance is observed by an individual other than the educational supervisor or other registered health care professional. Witness testimony therefore allows for members of the practice team with experience in the task being assessed (e.g. prescription clerks) to undertake observations of practice. In recognition of a person-centred approach, witness testimony also enables the option for a patient to act as an expert witness and feedback from patients to be used to support demonstration of competence in domains where this is evident.

> Witness Testimony **MUST** be included in the overall assessment methodology and **COULD** be included within **ANY** of the competency domains
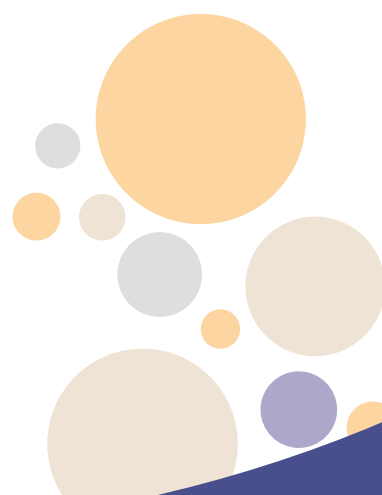
Reflective Accounts (RA)

Reflective accounts can support the assessment of competence and contribute to knowledge and understanding by providing an insight to the thoughts and considerations associated to behaviour. Including reflective accounts into an assessment methodology supports pharmacy technicians to continually improve the way they work or the quality of care they give to people and aligns with the General Pharmaceutical Councils (GPhC) requirement for pharmacy technicians to include reflective accounts in their revalidation submissions.

> Reflective Accounts (RA) **MUST** be included in the overall assessment methodology and **MUST** be included within **ALL** of the competency domains

Case Studies

Case studies must be based on workplace practice and should provide evidence of the use of different skills in appropriate situations. They should describe actions, findings, the significance of findings and any action plan. Case studies can support assessment of competence through narrative which demonstrates the application of a holistic skill set, professional decision making and reflection.

> Case Studies **MUST** be included in the overall assessment methodology and **COULD** be included within **ANY** of the competency domains

Case Based Discussion

The Case Based Discussion (CBD) is a retrospective evaluation of the pharmacy technician's impact into patient care. It should assess professional judgement and decision-making and the application of appropriate pharmaceutical knowledge in the role. This form of assessment involves the educational supervisor asking questions about the activity that was undertaken where competencies were demonstrated and allows the pharmacy technician to discuss why they acted as they did and to reflect on the application of their skills in situations. Case based discussion should also identify strengths and areas for development.

> Case Based Discussion **MUST** be included in the overall assessment methodology and **COULD** be included within **ANY** of the competency domains

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs)

Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) are objective test questions and are good for assessing lower order cognitive processes, such as the recall of factual information. They are included in the assessment strategy as they are an appropriate method to assess knowledge content. MCQs could be included in the assessment strategy of a programme/course where knowledge based competencies are delivered (e.g. Polypharmacy).

> Multiple Choice Questions (MCQs) **COULD** be included in the overall assessment methodology and **COULD** be included within **ANY** of the competency domains

6.9 Support

Education and training providers for Primary Care Pharmacy Technician Training Programmes/Courses must ensure that a range of systems are in place to support the pharmacy technician to demonstrate achievement of the competencies in Section 5.1 including:

- Adequate introduction to learning by provision of induction to the programme/course
- Educational supervision from a pharmacy professional with knowledge and understanding of the pharmacy technician profession and their roles and responsibilities in primary care and appropriate practice/clinical supervision in the workplace
- Time to learn in the workplace but recognition that some commitment to learning outside of work may be required
- Access to resources to support learning, opportunities for learning and exposure to relevant practice in the workplace to support the completion of the programme/course
- Provision of training for the educational supervisor so they fully understand the programme/course components, their area of accountability and how to effectively support the pharmacy technician
- Ensuring that the employer has systems in place for the pharmacy technician to meet regularly with their educational supervisor to discuss their progress, to provide support, guidance and constructive feedback
- Clear procedures for the pharmacy technician to raise concerns. Any concerns must be dealt with promptly, with action taken when appropriate

Glossary

Term	Meaning
Advanced practice	An expert level of practice
Antimicrobial resistance	Loss of effectiveness of any anti-infective medicine
Antimicrobial stewardship	Approach to promoting and monitoring judicious use of antimicrobials to preserve future effectiveness
Clinical effectiveness	The application of the best knowledge derived from research, clinical experience and patient processes to achieve optimum processes and outcomes of care
Clinical Governance	A systematic approach to maintaining and improving quality of patient care
Clinical queries	Queries which involve the therapeutic use of medicines and require expert knowledge to resolve
Competency	An ability to consistently successfully perform a task or activity to an agreed standard
Consent	Permission from a person before treatment, tests or examination is undertaken
Consultation	A formal meeting with a patient to discuss their medicines (this may or may not be documented)
Covert Administration of Medicines	Covert administration is when medicines are administered in a disguised format. For example; the medicines could be hidden in food, drink or through a feeding tube without the knowledge or consent of the person receiving them. As a result, the person is unknowingly taking a medicine
Deprescribing	The process of stopping or reducing medicines with the aim of reducing problematic polypharmacy
Duty of candour	Open and honesty with patients when something that goes wrong with their treatment or care causes, or has the potential to cause harm or distress
Foundation practice	The first two years of professional practise.
Healthcare professional	A person who is qualified and allowed by regulatory bodies to provide a healthcare service to a patient
High risk medicines	Medicines with a high risk of causing injury or harm if misused or used in error
Homely Remedy	A homely remedy is a medicinal preparation used to treat minor ailments. It is purchased over the counter and does not require a prescription. Homely medicines are kept as stock in the care home to allow access to products that would be available in any household. Policies for the administration of homely medicines should be in place and agreed by the GP(s) caring for the residents in the care home
Medicines Optimisation	A person-centred approach to safe and effective medicines use
Medicines reconciliation	The process of accurately listing a person's medicines when admitted to a service or when treatment changes
Methodology	A system of methods used for a particular area of study or activity
Multidisciplinary team	A group of health care workers from one or more clinical disciplines who work together to make decisions regarding care for patients

Term	Meaning
Must	In the context of this framework the term 'must' is used to indicate a requirement for compliance to the standard
Person Centred Care	An approach to care that responds to and respects the persons individual needs and circumstances
Pharmacy professional(s)	Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians registered with the General Pharmaceutical Council in England (GPhC), Scotland and Wales. Pharmacists registered with the Pharmaceutical Society in Northern Ireland (PSNI) Pharmacy technicians working in Northern Ireland
Polypharmacy	Polypharmacy is generally understood as referring to the concurrent use of multiple medication items by one individual
Professionalism	The combination of all of the skills, qualities and behaviours that are expected of a professional
Professional judgement	The use of accumulated knowledge and experience, in order to make an informed decision
Quality Improvement	A systematic process using methods and tools that improves patient care
Reflective practice	The process of reviewing a specific task or day-to-day practice, identifying successes and weaknesses, and planning and taking action to address areas for development
Resilience	Capacity to adapt in the face of challenging circumstances, whilst maintaining a stable mental wellbeing
Risk management	The identification, evaluation and prioritisation of risks followed by actions to minimise, monitor and control the probability of the risk occurring
Safeguarding	The protection of health, wellbeing and human rights of individuals so people live free from abuse, harm and neglect
Shared-care	An arrangement where the responsibility for a person's care is shared between specialist and primary care, this may include prescribing medicines
Shared-decision making	An approach where healthcare professionals and patients work together. The patient is fully informed regarding risks and benefits of treatments available and a decision is reached together
Should	In the context of this framework the term 'should' is used to provide an explanation of how to meet the requirement and may also indicate a recommendation
Stakeholders	An individual, group or organisation with an interest who can affect or be affected by the project
Structured Medication Review	A critical examination of a person's medicines with the aim of reaching an agreement with the person about treatment, optimising the impact of medicines, minimising the number of medication-related problems and reducing waste

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Acknowledgements

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