

Programme Specification for Postgraduate Certificate Pharmacist Independent Prescribing

This document applies to Academic Year 2022-23

Table 1 Programme Specification for Post Graduate Certificate in Pharmacist Independent Prescribing

1.	Awarding institution/body	University of Worcester
2.	Teaching institution	University of Worcester
3.	Programme accredited by	The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) (approved October 2020)
4.	Final award or awards	Postgraduate Certificate
5.	Programme title	Post Graduate Certificate in Pharmacist Independent Prescribing
6.	Pathways available	NA
7.	Mode and/or site of delivery	Blended delivery including in-class work, directed study, self-directed study and distance learning activities. Learning in practice, supervised by a Designated Prescribing Practitioner
8.	Mode of attendance and duration	Part time over one academic year Delivery comprising learning activities equivalent to 26 days, plus a minimum of 144 hours (72 hours per module) related learning in practice supervised by a Designated Prescribing Practitioner
9.	UCAS Code	N/A
10.	Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement	QAA (2020) Master Degree Characteristics GPhC (2019) Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers RPS (2019) A Competency Framework for all Prescribers RPS (2019) Designated Prescribing Practitioner Competency Framework
11.	Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision	February 2020 August 2020 QAA links updated August 2020 AQU amendment (Section 19 – Fitness to Practice) September 2020 GPhC requirement (Section 18 – RPL) October 2020 reaccreditation confirmed by GPhC. August 2021 – AQU amendments August 2022 – AQU amendments

12. Educational aims of the programme

The course is for registered pharmacists with a least 2 years' appropriate patient-orientated experience post registration in a relevant UK practice setting.

The course is underpinned by four domains of study: person-centred care, professionalism, professional knowledge and skills and collaboration (GPhC 2019). It aims to develop clinical pharmacists who are educated to fulfil advanced roles in person-centred care; encouraging pharmacists to strive for more clinically autonomous roles as prescribers. Early exposure to patients in the work-based learning environment, fosters opportunities for the pharmacist to contextualise their theoretical knowledge of pharmacology and apply it to actual prescribing practice.

The University of Worcester course offers pharmacists an inter-professional educational opportunity, learning collaboratively with members of the multidisciplinary team including nurses, midwives, paramedics, physiotherapists, therapeutic radiographers and podiatrists through joint teaching of the Independent Prescribing programmes.

On completion of this course, pharmacists will have developed skills in health and

social needs assessment and history taking, production of differential and working

diagnosis, prescribing, and review of patient response and optimisation of therapy within their scope of practice.

The programme aims to achieve:

- A flexible, multidisciplinary, student centred route to postgraduate achievement as an autonomous practitioner who demonstrates person-centred care, professionalism, collaborative working and the knowledge and skills necessary for health assessment, diagnosis and independent prescribing.
- Provide a stimulating environment based on the values of academic freedom, ethical awareness and critical appraisal; encouraging intellectual challenge through evaluation, problem solving and functioning at an advanced level of practice.
- An environment in which students gain the confidence to feel they can shape future pharmaceutical policy, provision and delivery by challenging and enhancing current practice and approaches.
- A critical appreciation of how the pharmacist role sits in context with the varying perspectives and values of health and social care professionals, service users, carers and cultures.
- An opportunity for pharmacist prescribers to develop autonomy, self-management, leadership, decision making, collaboration, high level communication and dissemination and clinical competence in a supportive environment.
- Increased opportunities for career advancement and the opportunity to capitalise on emerging new roles for pharmacists within a changing health care economy.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Table 2 knowledge and understanding outcomes and which module/code they relate to

Knowledge and Understanding		
LO no.	On successful completion of the named award, students will be able to:	Module Code/s
1.	Critically explore the concept of autonomy and professional responsibility within advanced practice; the scope and professional boundaries of practice within legal, ethical and professional frameworks; relating to therapeutic interventions and/or prescribing	MACP4014 MACP4015
2.	Apply knowledge of the pathophysiology of the condition being treated, recognition of signs and symptoms of illness, and advanced knowledge of the pharmacology and mechanism of action of the medicines, interactions, side effects and potential adverse drug reactions across the lifespan	MACP4014 MACP4015

Table 3 cognitive and intellectual skills outcomes for module code/s

Cognitive and Intellectual skills		
3	Critically reflect on the legal and ethical aspects of an advanced level of accountability, autonomy and limits of own competence and professional scope of practice, including when working with complexity, risk, uncertainty and incomplete information	MACP4014
4.	Adopt a shared approach to decision making by assessing patients' needs for medicines, taking account of their wishes and values and those of their carers when making prescribing decisions	MACP4015

5.	Synthesise and disseminate knowledge on the influences that can affect prescribing practice at individual, local and national levels including safe, clinically appropriate and cost-effective prescribing and evaluate how their own prescribing practice will be managed	MACP4014 MACP4015
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Table 4 learning skills and capabilities related to employability outcomes for module code/s

Skills and capabilities related to employability

6.	Critically explore the application of independent prescribing skills within the context of holistic health and social needs assessment, public health and professional practice	MACP4014
7.	Utilise person-centred approaches to take a detailed history and apply clinical decision-making skills in selecting which body systems are appropriate to examine for each patient	MACP4014
8.	Formulate an appropriate treatment plan using relevant diagnostic and measurement tools, following holistic patient assessment, based on scientific and evidence-based rationale and individual needs	MACP4014
9.	Critically explore the roles and relationships of others involved in the supply and administration of medicines and prescribing, and demonstrate how to contribute and lead in the context of a team approach	MACP4015

Table 5 transferable/key skills outcomes for module code/s

Transferable/Key skills

10.	Demonstrate effective communication, working in partnership with the multidisciplinary team, individuals, families and carers to make informed decisions relating to their health and social care	MACP4014
11.	Evaluate and synthesise how to maintain individual and other practitioners' regular participation in personal and continuous professional development and audit of prescribing practice within clinical governance frameworks.	MACP4015

Learning, teaching and assessment

The programme adopts a student-centred approach to learning, teaching and assessment, supporting students to achieve the course learning outcomes. These are mapped to the GPhC (2019) learning outcomes within four domains: patient centred-care, professionalism, professional knowledge and skills, and collaboration. It incorporates, a balance of approaches, including *constructivist*, where construction of knowledge occurs through experiences and engagement, students are encouraged to take the initiative for their own learning experiences *and* behaviours, which focuses on learning that is observable. It uses a blended learning approach with modules being delivered by a blend of face to face and online activities. The modules are further complemented by supervised work-based learning in the students' placement of employment, self-directed learning via the VLE and reflective assessment through a pebble pad portfolio. The modules are delivered alongside similar modules for nurses, midwives and AHPs (MACP4002 Health and Social Needs Assessment and MACP4007 Independent and Supplementary Prescribing); enabling interprofessional learning with, from and about each other.

Teaching

Learning activities include: Lectures, flipped classroom, web based learning using Blackboard to support an online discussion forum, Blackboard Collaborate, seminars and workshops, problem-based learning, observed and supervised learning, practical sessions, independent self-study. Students will undertake learning in practice, developing their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills under the supervision of other healthcare

professionals, including their designated prescribing practitioner (GPhC 2019). Students can also utilise specialist resources such as the clinical skills laboratory for simulated practice, alongside their nursing, midwifery and AHP peers.

The University places emphasis on enabling students to develop the independent learning capabilities that will equip them for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as academic achievement. A mixture of independent study, teaching and academic support from Student Services and Library Services, and also the Personal Academic Tutoring system enables students to reflect on progress and build up a profile of skills, achievements and experiences that will help them to flourish and be successful.

Contact time

The course requirements are *at least*:

- 26 days of structured learning activities
- 144 hours learning in practice

Part-time students can expect to have 6 hours contact time each week,

For example:

MACP4014 (30 credits) is 12 x 6 hours structured learning activities spread over semester 1 and 2

MACP4015 (30 credits) is 14 x 6 hours structured learning activities spread over semester 1 and 2

6-hour day might include:

- 1-hour lecture
- 2-hour Problem Based Learning launch
- 3-hour workshop

Independent self-study

In addition to the contact time, students are expected to undertake around 6-10 hours of personal self-study per week. Typically, this will involve searching for evidence, reading, making notes, practising academic writing in preparation for assessments and reflecting on development. Independent learning is supported by a range of excellent learning facilities, including the Hive and library resources, the virtual learning environment, and extensive electronic learning resources.

Teaching staff

Students will be taught by a teaching team whose expertise and knowledge are closely matched to the content of the modules on the course. The team includes experienced academics, PhD students, pharmacists, independent prescribers, advanced clinical practitioners, and registered healthcare professionals from a variety of backgrounds. Teaching is informed by research and consultancy, and 85% lecturers on the course have a higher education teaching qualification or are Fellows of the Higher Education Academy.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assignments. Each module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessment which is graded and counts towards the overall module grade. Miller's triangle is used to set the outcome level for each of the GPhC (2019) Learning Outcomes within the four domains. This is a knowledge and competence hierarchy describing four levels of outcome, 'knows', 'knows how', 'shows how' and 'does' (GPhC 2019, p. 7). Assessment methods include essays, E-portfolio, Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCE), assessment of clinical competence, exams.

The summative assessment pattern for each module is typically:

MACP4014: E- portfolio, OSCE

14 Assessment strategy

The assessment strategy meets the requirements of the [University's Assessment Policy](#). Students and teaching teams are partners in the learning, assessment and feedback process and engagement in a dialogue about these processes is essential. Peer and self-assessment strategies are incorporated across the course, supporting students to make judgments about their own and others' work. It is recognised that students require opportunities to discuss their assessments and feedback with the module teaching team and therefore group and individual tutorials are available throughout the course.

Module leaders help the student to apply the module learning outcomes to their assignment through written guidance in the module guide and in tutorials.

All students are working in clinical practice in a variety of sectors and specialities. Students 'learn in practice', developing their clinical, diagnostic and prescribing skills under the supervision of other healthcare professionals, including their designated prescribing practitioner who is responsible for signing off a pharmacist independent prescriber in training as being a competent practitioner (GPhC 2019, p.6). Students will need to complete an E-portfolio, which is aligned to the GPhC (2019) standards and the RPS (2019) Competency Framework.

This course applies and utilises the [Generic Masters Grade descriptors](#) for assessment of the assignment, competence document and portfolio of evidence.

15. Programme structures and requirements

The award is completed by taking and passing two modules of study, both of which are mandatory.

PG Certificate in Pharmacist Independent Prescribing, normally taken part-time over 1 academic year (Maximum registration period is 2 years)

Table 6 award map for each level of the course

Module Code	Module Title	Status	
		Credits	PG Cert
MACP4014	Health and Social Needs Assessment for Pharmacists	30	M
MACP4015	Principles and Practice of Independent Prescribing for Pharmacists	30	M
Total Credits		60	
PG Certificate			
To be awarded the PG Cert Pharmacist Independent Prescribing students must successfully complete 60 credits at Level 7 (MACP4014 & MACP4015).			

Both mandatory modules (MACP4014 Health and Social Needs Assessment for Pharmacists and MACP4015 Principles and Practice of Independent Prescribing for Pharmacists) require the student to undertake an assessment of competence and capability, in the workplace. Students undertaking these modules are supervised by other healthcare professionals, including their designated prescribing practitioner who is responsible for signing off a pharmacist independent prescriber in training as being a competent practitioner (GPhC 2019, p.6). Students' work-based learning takes place in their place of employment.

Please see the course handbook for a detailed schedule for the course showing how modules are delivered over the academic year and detailed information about part-time study.

The two modules MACP4014/MACP4015 will be undertaken in parallel across semesters 1 and 2.

16. **QAA and professional academic standards and quality**

The award is located at Level 7 of the FHEQ and the course is aligned with the FHEQ Descriptor for a Higher Education qualification at Level 7.

The following sources have been used throughout the programme:

- [QAA \(2020\) Master Degree Characteristics](#)
- [GPhC \(2019\) Standards for the education and training of pharmacist independent prescribers](#)
- [RPS \(2019\) A Competency Framework for all Prescribers](#)
- [RPS \(2019\) Designated Prescribing Practitioner Competency Framework](#)
- [NHS \(2019\) The Long Term Plan](#)
- [NHS England \(2017\) Multi-professional framework for Advanced Clinical Practice](#)

17. **Support for students**

University based support is available from:

<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/firstpoint/your-student-support.html>
<https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>

Programme specific support:

Induction

Students are invited to attend an induction day that will familiarise them with the University, the Department, the Three Counties School of Nursing and Midwifery and the course. They meet representatives from Student Services, Registry Services, Library Services and ICT and hear more about their services as well as meeting the programme team.

Personal Academic Tutors

All students are allocated a Personal Academic Tutors (PAT) for the duration of the course and are encouraged to meet with them at least once each semester to discuss their individualised learning plan and feedback on assignments.

18. **Admissions**

Admissions policy

The University aims to provide fair and equal access to university education to all those who have the potential to succeed or benefit from it. The course benefits from a diversity of students working together and alongside one another. To that end students from a broad range of experience, cultures, ethnicity, ability, faith and personal background are encouraged.

The PG Cert Pharmacist Independent Prescribing course seeks to recruit students who are registered Pharmacists with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), with at least 2 years' experience (see c. below). Applicants will be interviewed by the course team and must meet the GPhC entry requirements as stipulated below.

Entry requirements

Course Specific Entry Requirements

In order to undertake this course students must meet the following requirements as set out by the [General Pharmaceutical Council \(2019\)](#)

The entry requirements for a pharmacist independent prescriber course are that:

- a. Applicants are registered as a pharmacist with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) or, in Northern Ireland, with the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI)
- b. Applicants are in good standing with the GPhC and/or PSNI and any other healthcare regulator with which they are registered.
- c. Applicants must have at least two years' appropriate patient-orientated experience post registration, in a relevant UK practice setting.
- d. Applicants have an identified area of clinical or therapeutic practice in which to develop independent prescribing practice. They must also have relevant clinical or therapeutic experience in that area, which is suitable to act as the foundation of their prescribing practice while training.
- e. Applicants must have a designated prescribing practitioner who has agreed to supervise their learning in practice.

The applicant's designated prescribing practitioner must be a registered healthcare professional in Great Britain or Northern Ireland with legal independent prescribing rights, who is suitably experienced and qualified to carry out this supervisory role, and who has demonstrated CPD or revalidation relevant to this role. Although an applicant may be supervised by more than one person, only one prescriber must be the designated prescribing practitioner. The designated prescribing practitioner is the person who will certify that successful pharmacists are competent to practise as independent prescribers

See [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements

The postgraduate certificate in pharmacist independent prescribing requires students to undertake work-based learning in areas, where they are already employed/self-employed. All applicants must have a declaration of good character. Where a student seeks to utilise an alternative workplace or environment to undertake 'learning in practice' they should follow the guidance of the provider and seek the appropriate disclosure and barring service clearance as necessary.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Recognition of Prior Learning is not normally permitted by GPhC.

Admissions procedures

- Following completion of the UW Application Form and Regional Prescribing Application form applications are submitted via the work-based learning unit, reviewed by a member of the course team and assessed against the GPhC and course entry requirements.
- Students will be invited to interview either in person or by telephone or via video conference to ensure all admission criteria from the University and the GPhC standards are complied with.

Admissions/selection criteria

Following interview, the students will be offered a place when a member of the course team confirm they meet all the criteria for entry and are successful at interview.

19. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's [Taught Courses Regulatory](#)

Framework

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and a pass mark in each item of assessment is required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- A student is entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module; the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

This course is subject to the University's fitness to practice procedures.

Requirements for Awards

Table 7 requirements for awards

Award	Requirement
PG Cert	Passed a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7, as specified on the award map

PG Cert awards are unclassified.

20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

Graduate destinations

On receipt of the practice certificate students may apply to the GPhC for annotation on the register as an independent prescriber. Only upon confirmation of their annotation on the register and agreement from their employer, will successful students be allowed to practice as an independent. Students have the opportunity to progress onto the [MSc/PG Dip Advanced Clinical Practice /PG Cert in Professional Practice \(Healthcare\)](#)

Student employability

The provision offered through this course is developed in partnership with the GPhC and employers/Practice Partners and Service Users and Carers and as such is closely mapped to both the needs of the student, the patients, the profession and the needs of the employer. Student may only prescribe once their prescribing qualification has been annotated on the appropriate GPhC register and they may only prescribe from the formulary they are qualified to prescribe from and within their competence and scope of

practice. To that end, students exiting have specific, focused skills desirable to both local employers, but also in the wider health and social care community.

Links with employers

The course leader and course team work closely with partners in the local NHS economy to ensure the course is current and meets national and local policy drivers. The relationship between University and practice partner/employer is a mature one that has developed over a number of years. Employers and commissioners are closely involved in course management initiatives, course development and curriculum design. Employers also contribute to the annual review process and the periodic review of course provision.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications.