

Independent and Supplementary Prescribing

Standard Programme Information Sheet

Nurses, Midwives, Community Pharmacists, GP Pharmacists, Allied Health Professionals.

The aim of this information sheet is to help applicants who are considering the prescribing programme, and their employers, understand the implications associated with it.

Background

The prescribing programme at Medway runs over eight or 12 months and is principally a distance learning programme that leads to either a certificate of completion with 45 academic credits if undertaken at level 6 (nurses only) or the award of a full postgraduate certificate (PGCert) with 60 academic credits at level 7 (pharmacists, nurses and AHPs). Successful completion of the programme gives the student the legal rights to prescribe. For this reason, the programme is accredited by these three regulatory bodies: the NMC, GPhC & HCPC. It is consequently very exacting and requires a significant level of commitment from the applicant and support from the employer. Careful consideration must be given prior to application to the programme.

Programme composition

Students are required to attend nine study days at the university. These are organised as pairs of study days on alternate months. The programme has several start days per year and details are found on the Medway School of Pharmacy website <http://www.msp.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/supp-independent-prescribing/index.html>. The programme consists of four courses of study. Each course has associated assessment. Assessments: Three written assignments, a numeracy examination (with a pass mark of 100%), a pharmacology/BNF exam, a 40 minute practical assessment of prescribing practice and a detailed portfolio. Students must undertake at least 12 days on placement, overseen by a Designated Medical Practitioner (DMP) and have an additional 18 days study release, agreed by their manager.

Entry criteria

- i) Pharmacists: Two years' post registration clinical experience, of which at least one year immediately preceding your application to the training has been in the practice area in which you will be prescribing.**
- ii) Nurses: Three years' post registration clinical experience, of which at least one year immediately preceding your application to the training has been in the practice area in which you will be prescribing.**
- iii) Advanced Paramedic Practitioners: A minimum of five years' post registration clinical experience (or part-time equivalent) of which at least three years' experience immediately preceding your application to the training has been in the clinical area in which you will be prescribing.**
- iv) Other eligible AHPs: Three years' post registration clinical experience, of which at least one year immediately preceding your application to the training has been in the practice area in which you will be prescribing.**

Successful candidates will usually have many years' experience. The experience has to be relevant to the area of proposed prescribing practice. The prescribing programme requires the applicant to apply the generic learning of the programme to their own scope of practice – we do not teach them their own clinical area – they would need to acquire that knowledge for themselves and without having attended specific training beforehand, (or having that experience of running a specific therapeutic service), they would find it very hard to upskill themselves to the level required alongside completing the very exacting requirements of the prescribing programme itself.

ii) Identified need for prescribing. One of the entry criteria for the programme is that the applicant has an identified need for their prescribing. This is an idea of how prescribing will work in your practice area. You will not be offered a place on the programme unless you have considered these matters. Our experience has taught us that if these arrangements are not in place before the applicant starts the programme, it is very unlikely they will go on to prescribe. Unlike many programmes of study, this programme is not one that is done in order to open up opportunities for future work. It is to support an experienced practitioner in their current place of work to provide access to medicines for a defined patient group.

Points to consider:

- Discuss intention of undertaking the programme with your local non-medical prescribing (NMP) lead prior to completing the application (non-medical prescribing has to be appropriate for your role and the service).
- Have you considered how the patient group you prescribe for will be followed up and how you will communicate your plan of care to the patient's GP? What are the time and cost implications of this?
- Have you undertaken recent academic study? If you are a nurse, you will need to determine at which academic level you will undertake the programme.

Designated Medical Practitioner (DMP)

You must have the support of a suitably qualified DMP for the duration of the programme. This should ideally be someone who you will be working with once you qualify as a prescriber and they should have knowledge of your chosen area of prescribing. You will not be spending all the 12 days in placement with this person, but they have a key role to play in signing off competencies for you as part of your portfolio. We do not expect or want you to have all your placement visits with your DMP, there should be a variety of types of placement that will inform your future prescribing practice.

Employer support

You must have the support of your employer. You are going to require support to undertake the study days, the placement days and be allowed additional days for completion of personal study and assignments. You will not be successful unless you are awarded dedicated study time. Students who rely on evenings, weekends and holidays to study are usually unsuccessful. You will not be able to introduce prescribing into your practice without your employer's agreement. If you work for yourself, you must think very carefully about who will assist with the running of your business whilst you undertake this programme and seek advice from your indemnifying insurers before you introduce prescribing into your practice. Being a prescriber/running a service which incorporates prescribing carries greater risk and requires significantly higher premiums.

Locum/bank/agency staff

This programme of study is not suitable for locum, bank or agency staff unless they have a regular place of work, which will support their prescribing.

Attendance at study days

You must attend all sessions on all study days. If you miss more than one session, it is unlikely that you will be able to complete your studies with that cohort. There may be a possibility to extend your study period by 'going over 2 cohorts'. This has implications in terms of your workplace.

Juggling work, study and home life

This programme of study is extremely demanding. It represents 45/60 academic credits. Each academic credit equates to 10 hours of student effort. That is a lot of work to undertake in 8 months. Whilst your employer will contribute time, you will need to use your own time too. Many students say this

programme is the hardest thing they have ever done. We make no apology for this. We are upholding the requirements of the NMC, HCPC and GPhC. No-one would want someone to prescribe for them if they did not have the requisite skills and knowledge. We are used to working with postgraduate students at Medway and will do everything to help you. It is important, however, that you recognise that the programme will impact on other areas of your life. If you have any other major commitments or are undertaking any other study programme this may not be the best time to consider qualifying as a prescriber.

Cost of the programme

The programme fees went up to £2,550 in August 2018. Please also bear in mind that there are many additional costs associated with the programme (e.g. travel, work cover).

Things to consider

- Have you made arrangements for indemnity insurance and has the insurer agreed your scope of practice. What cost implication is this personally to you? There is also a registration cost that you will need to make to the NMC or GPhC on qualification.
- Have you arranged study leave for nine face to face mandatory university days (requires 100% attendance) PLUS 12 placement days PLUS 18 protected study days (supported by your employer)? This will need planning to cover the eight (or 12) months that you are undertaking the programme of study. Ensure that consideration has been given to the impact on clinical workload during your period of study. You will need to negotiate time to spend with the local hospital setting, GP practice, pharmacist, registered NMPs etc. to inform your placement visits.
- On completion of this programme of study you will need to access Continued Professional Development (CPD) ensuring that you remain competent and meet the standards and competencies that are required by your regulatory body. This will require regular updates and time to attend relevant study sessions.

Successful completion of the programme

In order to pass the programme you need to complete all assessments successfully. Sometimes students do not pass assessments on their first attempt. The university permit the examination board to award resits in certain circumstances. If you need to undertake a resit you will be required to extend your study period over two cohorts (i.e. it will take an additional eight months to complete). In rare cases students fail the programme.

On a more positive note

This information sheet may seem somewhat negative. We are not trying to put you off from applying. We have qualified some excellent practitioners and have many on our existing prescribing cohorts. It is important to have a realistic idea of what the programme entails so you can tackle any potential barriers before you commence this training. We hope this sheet has been helpful and that we will hear from you soon with regards your application

Prescribing Programme Team

Medway School of Pharmacy