

Independent and Supplementary Prescribing

Programme Information Sheet

Nurses, Midwives, 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 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 and midwives only) or 40 credit module available to students studying the MSc in Advanced Practice through the University of Greenwich, or the award of a full postgraduate certificate (PGCert) with 60 academic credits at level 7 (pharmacists, nurses, midwives 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. The study days are organised in groups of three days at a time. There are several start days per year and details are found on the Medway School of Pharmacy website under "Course Structure" <http://www.msp.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/supp-independent-prescribing/index.html>.

The programme consists of four courses of study. Each course has associated assessments. Assessments: a Clinical Review audio narrative, a numeracy examination (with a pass mark of 100%), a pharmacology/BNF exam, a 40 minute practical assessment of prescribing practice, a VIVA focused on the applied evidence base of your scope, and a detailed portfolio. Students must undertake at least 12 days (90 hours) on placement, overseen by their Practice Supervisor (nurses & midwives)/Designated Prescribing Practitioner (Pharmacists)/Practice Educator (AHPs) and have the equivalent of 12 to 18 days of individual study time, agreed by their manager. Students will also have three meetings while on the programme with themselves, their PS/DPP/PE and their Academic Tutor (Pharmacists and AHPs)/Practice Assessor (nurses and Midwives) to discuss their progress on the programme. Placement should not be taken as 12 full days but should be planned blocks of time spread cross the duration of the programme with a variety of practitioners. Students need to spend a number of those hours working outside their normal work environment, for example primary healthcare, community services etc.

Entry criteria

- i) Pharmacists: must demonstrate relevant patient oriented experience in a UK Pharmacy setting
- ii) Nurses, midwives or SCPHN: NHS, Non-NHS and self-employed with one years' post registration clinical experience, and confirmation that you are capable of safe and effective practice at a level of proficiency appropriate to the programme and your intended area of prescribing practice in the following areas; clinical/health assessment; diagnostics/care management; planning and evaluation of care in their intended area of prescribing practice. Nurses and Midwives must have a DBS check dated from within the last 3 years, evidence of this will need to be provided to the university.
- 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.

v) Identified need for 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.

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.

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 or midwife, you will need to determine at which academic level you will undertake the programme.

Practice Supervisor (PS) (nurses and midwives)/Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP) (Pharmacists) /Practice Education (PE) (AHPs)

You must have the support of a suitably qualified PS/DPP/PE 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 at least three years' prescribing knowledge, experience and responsibility for a group of patients/clients within your chosen scope of prescribing practice. You will not be spending all the 90 hours 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 PS/DPP/PE, there should be a variety of types of placement that will inform your future prescribing practice. Placement hours can only take place while a student is active on the programme and need to be spread across the duration of the programme. The PS/DPP/PE Guide, which gives more details about this role, can be sent to prospective PS/DPP/PEs upon request at any time prior to application.

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 protected learning 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 and support. If you are self-employed, 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 40/45/60 academic credits. Each academic credit equates to 10 hours of student effort. That is a lot of work to undertake in eight 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 may be updated at the start of each academic year. As of August 2024, the tuition fee is £2750. 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 the equivalent of between 12 and 18 days for individual study (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.
- Students need to be in active clinical practice for the duration of the programme. This means the programme cannot be completed while a student is on maternity leave, sabbatical or secondment. The longest period a student can be out of clinical practice without extenuating circumstances is two consecutive weeks.
- 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 a longer period (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