

Independent and Supplementary Prescribing Programme

Information Sheet for Managers

The aim of this information sheet is to help managers of students (nurses, pharmacists, and allied health professionals) understand the implications associated with it.

Background

The prescribing programme at Medway is an 8 month, principally 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. Nurses and pharmacists will have the same legal prescribing rights as that of doctors. For this reason, the programme is accredited by 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.

Programme composition

Students are required to attend nine study days at the university. These are organised in trios of study days on alternate months these will be Tuesday, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The programme has several start points per year and details are found on the Medway School of Pharmacy website programme structure tab:

https://msp.ac.uk/postgraduate/?course_id=740&course_level=postgraduate

The programme consists of four courses of study. Each course has associated assessment. Assessments are: a Clinical Review audio narrative, a numeracy examination (with a pass mark of 100%), a pharmacology/BNF exam (with a pass mark of 80%), a 40 minute practical assessment of prescribing practice (PAPP) exam, a VIVA focused on the applied evidence base of their scope of practice and a comprehensive portfolio detailing the placement experience throughout the programme.

Employer support

Students will need support from you to undertake the study days, the placement days and additional days for their personal study. They will not be successful unless they are awarded dedicated study time. Students who rely on evenings, weekends and holidays to study are usually unsuccessful.

Description	Amount of time
Mandatory University Study Days	9 days
Placement	90 hours (12 X 7.5hr days) minimum throughout duration of the programme
Individual study time	12-18 days (or equivalent)
Total time away from workplace	39 days (minimum of 33)

Students must undertake at least 12 days (90 hours) on placement, overseen by a Designated Prescribing Practitioner/Practice Supervisor/Practice Educator. For clarity, the hours for the clinical placement learning must be supported without the student being counted as part of the staffing required for safe and effective care in that setting (supernumerary). This should not be taken as 12 full days but should be planned blocks of time spread across the duration of the programme with a variety of practitioners. The students will need to spend a number of those hours working outside their normal work environment, for example primary healthcare, community services etc.

Students will need to have the equivalent of between 12 and 18 days of individual study time, which has been agreed by their manager and signed for on their application form. We understand the pressures in releasing staff for study and as a minimum, students must have the equivalent of 12 days' study time. The student will ask you as their manager to include within the portfolio that they submit, a form signed by you as evidence that they have been released for this study time. This form is audited by the professional regulators. All students are offered a Tutor meeting at the start of the programme. During the meeting the tutor will be asking the student whether they have had a discussion with their manager and started timetabling the required leave. We encourage the student to take responsibility for the discussion with their manager and only in exceptional circumstances do we need to intervene.

Students also undertake 3 Prescribing Progress Review Meetings while on the programme to ensure that they are on track for their placement.

Students are required to be externally invigilated for an online MCQ exam on the BNF. This will usually last around 45 minutes unless the student is entitled to extra time for examinations. Student access the exam using our Virtual Learning Environment.

Attendance at study days

Students must attend all sessions on all study days. If they miss more than one session, it is unlikely that they will be able to complete their studies with that cohort. There may be a possibility for the student to extend their study period by 'going over 2 cohorts'. This might have implications in terms of their workplace and we will urge the student to discuss this with you.

Juggling work, study and home life

This programme of study is exacting. 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 the employer will contribute time, students will need to use their 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 each student. It is important however, to recognise that the programme will impact on other areas of their life. We advise students that if they 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 fee is £2750 for the academic year.

There are some national contracts for funding for this programme for students delivering NHS services.

Things to consider

- Have you made arrangements for the student to be released for the study leave for nine face to face mandatory university days (requires 100% attendance) PLUS at

least 90 hours placement PLUS the equivalent of 12-18 days of study time? This will need planning to cover the eight months that they are undertaking the programme of study. Ensure that consideration has been given to the impact on clinical workload during their period of study. The student will need to negotiate time to spend with the local hospital setting, GP practice, pharmacist, registered NMPs etc. to inform their placement visits.

- On completion of this programme of study the student will need to access Continued Professional Development ensuring that they remain competent and meet the standards and competencies that are required by their 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 the student needs to complete all assessments successfully. Sometimes students do not pass assessments on their first attempt. The university permits the examination board to award resits in certain circumstances. If the student needed to undertake a resit they may be required to extend their study period over two cohorts (i.e. it would take an additional period of time to complete). In rare cases students fail the programme.

On a more positive note

This information sheet may seem somewhat negative. We have found that students are often struggling to secure the required study time and by explaining this to their managers from the outset we are hopeful that this issue might improve overall. We have qualified some excellent practitioners and have many on our existing prescribing cohorts. It is important that you have a realistic idea of what the programme entails so that the student can tackle any potential barriers before they commence this training. We hope this sheet has been helpful.

Prescribing Programme Team

Medway School of Pharmacy