I have been asked to be a Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP) – Frequently Asked Questions

Dear Prospective DPP,

So you have been asked by a Pharmacist to be their DPP on the **University of Bath Independent Prescribing course**. You may have a number of questions, and this quick FAQ guide is designed to answer them. If you have any other questions, just drop us an email and we can arrange a discussion: tt715@bath.ac.uk or et236@bath.ac.uk

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What is a Pharmacist Independent Prescriber?

At present to become a registered Pharmacist, individuals are required to:

1. Complete an undergraduate MPharm degree that has been accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)

However, Pharmacists graduating in the UK prior to 2025 ***do not have automatic prescribing rights***, and must complete an additional GPhC-accredited post-graduate qualification in order to gain ANNOTATION on the GPhC register as an Independent Prescriber. Applicants must have relevant experience in a relevant setting and be able to recognise, understand and articulate the skills and attributes required by a prescriber. Applicants must also identify an area of clinical or therapeutic practice on which to base their learning.

The University of Bath offers just such a course!

A Pharmacist Independent Prescriber is able to prescribe any medicine within their clinical competence (with a few subtle legal exceptions).

What is a DPP exactly?

DPP stands for Designated Prescribing Practitioner. It is a requirement of the GPhC that a Pharmacist training as an Independent Prescriber be supervised by a Designated Prescribing Practitioner (DPP) who has agreed to supervise their learning in practice. The student's DPP 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. This is a requirement within the Competency Framework (see below) and we require you to state that you have this attribute on one of the students' application forms.

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Previously, DPPs were referred to as DMPs (Designated Medical Practitioner) who had to be a medic in order to fulfil this supervisory role. This has now been changed to include other prescribing professionals.

The Royal Pharmaceutical Society published a Competency Framework for DPPs which outlines the competencies required of the role regardless of the type of profession they are supervising. Other non-medical prescribers (e.g. nurses, physiotherapists etc) also require a supervisor of their learning in practice and this competency framework applies to all.

The competency framework outlines that all DPPs must be:

'an experienced prescriber* in a patient-facing role'

And

'Is an active prescriber** in a patient-facing role, with appropriate knowledge and experience relevant to the trainee's area of clinical practice'

* This means that the DPP would have suitable experience as a prescriber. The RPS framework suggests 3 years, however people can gain suitable experience if they are making prescribing decisions frequently enough to build competence.
** this means that the DPP consults with patients and makes prescribing decisions based on clinical assessment with sufficient frequency to maintain competence. They also reflect and audit prescribing practice to identify developmental needs.

The competency framework is available at https://www.rpharms.com/resources/frameworks/designated-prescribing-practitioner-competency-framework and all prospective DPPs are advised to read this as this explains the competencies required. We will be using this framework for ensuring that DPPs have the required competencies for the role as well as identifying any specific learning needs of the DPP. The framework is separated into three parts:

Section 1 – these are the competencies that a DPP must have before taking on the role.
Section 2 – these are the competencies that a DPP must show during the course of the role.
Section 3 – these competencies are about the learning environment and governance of the DPP role.

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What is my role as a DPP?

There are three main aspects to the DPP role:

1. Facilitating access to a patient-centred environment in which the Pharmacist can start to practice and hone the skills of a prescriber under safe supervision

2. Provide preceptorship (i.e. providing structured support and training so that they develop confidence and competence) and tutoring to the Pharmacist in order that they can develop key skills such as:
    a. Effective communication and consultation
    b. Physical Examination skills
    c. Clinical reasoning in context

3. Assessing the Pharmacist against a range of these skills (using a standardised Assessment Guide) at the end of the programme. More on this later…

How much time do I need to spend with the Pharmacist as their DPP?

The Pharmacist training as an Independent Prescriber is required to accrue 90 hours of "Learning in Practice" time over the period of the 6-month course. This time must be purposefully planned and consist of activities relevant to the development of the Pharmacist. The Pharmacist keeps detailed logs of their activities, and we (at the University) assess these for appropriateness and give the student feedback.

You as the DPP are NOT required to directly supervise ALL of the 90 hours of learning in practice, but you MUST have a reasonable oversight, as at the end of the course you will be required to confirm that the Pharmacist has completed these hours.

In general, we suggest that you aim to supervise at least 50% of the 'learning in practice' hours.

As part of the Learning in Practice time that you DO spend with your student, there are a number of tasks that the student is required to complete with your observation and/or input. These include:

- An initial meeting to discuss the learning outcomes of the course
- Student observations of consultations with patients that you conduct
- The student taking a full history from patients
- The student conducting a number of consultations with patients in their nominated clinical area (one of your roles is to help facilitate access to suitable patients for this)
- One interim assessment checking the student's progress.

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- Observing and (at the end of the course) assessing the student completing physical examination skill of taking a manual blood pressure (they will receive instruction at the University and you can delegate this to another suitably trained person).

I have been a DPP before on a different course – is it the same thing?

Not necessarily! There are standard requirements set for the skills/experience of a DPP, and all non-medical prescribing courses require that a DPP play a role in the supervision and assessment of students, BUT different courses will require different activities as part of the DPP role.

Past experience on other courses/for other professions is great, and will help you in your role as DPP, and there will be differences in what you are expected to do in your role.

In addition (and as explained above), the role of the DPP has been broadened to include supervisors who are not medics. The DPP competency framework has been developed to ensure consistency of the competencies required of a DPP for all prescribing students.

What will I be required to assess?

Students are required to demonstrate all of the Learning Outcomes set by the General Pharmaceutical Council, and to do this there are MULTIPLE assessment elements. Most of these assessment elements are administered by us at the University of Bath, but we feel that it is really important that there is an additional assessment element that is overseen by the DPP in practice – this is your role.

As part of the assessment at the end of the course you will be required to:

1. Confirm that 90 hours of 'learning in practice' have been completed by the student
2. Assess a range of clinical and professional skills (including some Physical Examination skills such as taking a manual blood pressure)
3. Confirm that the Pharmacist is (in your opinion) suitable for annotation with the General Pharmaceutical Council as an Independent Prescriber (as long as you are happy to!) subject to successful completion of the other assessment elements.

What support can I draw on?

There are a range of things that we offer to support you in your role as DPP:

- There is access to online training if you feel that this would be useful if you are new to the role of a DPP.

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- The university team can set up a one-to-one chat with you via MS teams, Zoom or telephone depending on your preference. We can also be contacted via email tt715@bath.ac.uk (Terri Turner course co-load), et236@bath.ac.uk (Emma Taylor course co-lead). We also work in clinical practice so understand the challenges of the current clinical environment.

Do I get paid for this? Or any other benefits?

There is NO financial reward from the University of Bath for being a DPP.

However, there are a number of definite benefits:

- You are helping to develop the local workforce – and hopefully will be involved in producing a Pharmacist Independent Prescriber who may work for your organisation in the immediate or near future
- You will have the opportunity to learn more about what a Pharmacist professional can do in the healthcare team – novel ways of working are essential in the challenging times we are facing at present; Pharmacist Independent Prescribers are well placed to complement healthcare teams in all sectors!

Your role as a DPP can be included in the Teaching and Learning component of your CV, and is a great example of preceptorship

Useful Links?

NHS England guidance:
https://www.hee.nhs.uk/pharmacy/transforming-pharmacy-education-training/initial-education-training-pharmacists-reform-programme/pharmacy-integration-programme-super/dpp-2

DPP training:
https://propharmace.com/est/

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