



**Royal
Pharmaceutical
Society**
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News release

For immediate release

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COUNCIL AGREES FRAMEWORK FOR MEETING THE MINIMUM STANDARD OF COMPETENCE FOR DISPENSARY ASSISTANTS

The Council of the Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain has now agreed a framework for the implementation of its existing policy, that by January 2005 all staff involved in the assembly of a prescription, including the generation of labels, should be trained to a minimum standard equivalent to S/NVQ level 2 or be undertaking training in this respect.

The S/NVQ is a universally recognised qualification for the assessment of competence and is part of the national qualifications framework. The Society fully supports dispensary assistants undertaking this qualification. However, the Society recognises that many employers and organisations already have excellent training programmes in place.

It has therefore been decided that an alternative to the S/NVQ framework should be made available. This alternative will use the set of standards developed for the S/NVQ Level 2 and require training providers to demonstrate that their programmes are of an equivalent level in delivering the underpinning knowledge and assessing competence. The Society, or its agent, will determine this equivalence and accredit training programmes as equivalent to S/NVQ level 2.

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The Society also recognises that dispensary assistants form a very transient population, many of whom are employed part time. The roles and tasks assigned to this level of staff can vary greatly between each member.

The Society's function as a regulator is to ensure that all staff working in the pharmacy have the knowledge and competencies to perform the tasks and roles assigned to them. The Society would expect dispensary assistants to have completed all the units from the S/NVQ Level 2 or equivalent course related to the roles and tasks they perform. The standard operating procedures for each pharmacy will indicate the level of competence expected for each function performed by dispensary assistants.

Therefore, from January 2005, the minimum standard of competence for dispensary assistants can be met in one of four ways:

- 1) Successful achievement of the S/NVQ level 2 in Pharmacy Services.
- 2) Successful achievement of the units in the S/NVQ level 2 that are relevant to the roles and responsibilities undertaken by the dispensary assistant.
- 3) Successful achievement of a training programme accredited to be of an equivalent level to S/NVQ level 2.
- 4) Successful achievement of the units of an accredited training programme equivalent level to S/NVQ level 2 that are relevant to the roles and responsibilities undertaken by the dispensary assistant.

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Nigel Graham, the Society's head of practice, said: "We are delighted that the Council has agreed a framework for meeting the minimum standard of competence for dispensary assistants. This will enable employers or training providers to develop training programmes for dispensary assistants that ensures their competence in the roles they perform. The Practice division, in consultation with employers and training providers, will shortly begin work on the detailed issues surrounding the minimum standard such as models for accreditation, the grandparent clause, reciprocity and time limits for commencement and completion. Further details will be presented to Council in due course."

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