The Society opened the voluntary register for pharmacy technicians in January 2005. The register initially opened for applicants with UK qualifications, and in July 2005 was opened for non-EEA nationals with international qualifications (hereafter overseas applicants). The Society has now opened the register for the remaining applicants, EEA nationals with EEA qualifications (hereafter EEA applicants).

At present there is no requirement for pharmacy technicians in Great Britain to be registered and employers are able to decide whether qualifications gained overseas are acceptable for employment in the UK. However, it will soon become necessary for pharmacy technicians in England and Wales to register with the Society under powers conferred by the Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians Order 2007, expected to come into force in late 2008.

We expect that two years after the start date of the statutory register the title "pharmacy technician" will become protected in law. This means that it will be illegal to continue to use the title without being registered with the Society. Based on the information we have, this will happen towards the end of 2010, dependent on the timing of the legislation.

SECTION ONE: OVERSEAS APPLICANTS

Overseas applicants who wish to register as a pharmacy technician under transitional arrangements are required to have, in addition to an approved overseas qualification, recent work experience undertaking the roles and responsibilities of a pharmacy technician in the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man or Channel Islands. Work experience must have been undertaken under the supervision, direction or guidance of a pharmacist for a period of either

- Not less than 14 hours per week for four out of the last eight years; or
- Not less than 28 hours per week for two out of the last four years.

Overseas applicants who do not meet these criteria will not be able to apply for registration but can at present be employed as pharmacy technicians and gain the necessary work experience but are subject to the minimum competence requirements (see below).

Once the pharmacy technician registration becomes mandatory, any non EEA or Swiss national with an overseas qualification will have to demonstrate their competence against UK standards before they can register with the Society. This will involve them undertaking the currently recommended qualification, i.e. NVQ level 3 in Pharmacy Services. There is no minimum time period specified for completing this qualification and prior learning and experience can be accredited through a process known as Accreditation of Prior Learning or APL. This means that someone with a qualification and/or experience that closely matches the UK qualification should be able to achieve the qualification in a few months, i.e. much faster than if starting from scratch which would normally take two years.

Please note Employers who employ overseas qualified staff must ensure they comply with the minimum competence requirements. Although the level of their overseas qualification may be higher than the S/NVQ2 in Pharmacy Services, the scope of their qualification will be different as their qualification has not been developed to meet the requirements of UK pharmacy practice. To comply with the requirements, employers will therefore need to enrol overseas qualified staff on appropriate accredited training within three months of the commencement of their role unless they have previously been grandparented.
SECTION TWO: EEA APPLICANTS

EEA applicants have rights under European Union Directives that govern the mutual recognition of professional qualifications. These Directives define and limit what the Society can require from an EEA applicant. For example, the Society cannot test the applicant’s English language skills or require UK work experience or knowledge of UK pharmacy practice.

The European Economic Area (EEA) comprises the 25 Member States of the European Union (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and the United Kingdom) plus Iceland, Norway, and Lichtenstein. Switzerland is not a member of the EEA but is party to the relevant European Union Directives. Romania and Bulgaria are due to join the European Union in 2007.

Under EU Directives the Society cannot require EEA applicants to possess knowledge and professional experience that is not a compulsory part of the education and training of pharmacy technicians in the United Kingdom. The Society’s assessment of an EEA applicant’s qualification is therefore based on the core underpinning knowledge and core standards of practice in the NVQ level 3 in Pharmacy Services (These are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2). The Society will compare an applicant’s qualification and professional experience against these requirements. If there is a substantial difference between their qualifications and professional experience and the core components of a pharmacy technician’s education and training in the UK, EEA applicants may be required to complete a Period of Adaptation.

Due to the requirements of the EU Directives, employers and training providers need to be aware of the following issues which may affect them if they are contacted by, wish to employ or already work with EEA applicants:

EEA applicants requiring a Period of Adaptation

EEA applicants who have substantive differences between their qualification and professional experience and the requirements for registration will have the option of either taking an Aptitude Test or undergoing a Period of Adaptation. From the experience of other healthcare regulators it is likely that the majority of applicants will choose to undertake a Period of Adaptation. Once applicants have successful completed their Period of Adaptation they will become registered pharmacy technicians. There is no time limit on when applicants need to commence their Period of Adaptation after assessment.

Applicants who are required to undertake a Period of Adaptation will be given specific criteria which they will need to complete during a set period. If the substantial differences relate to practice, the applicant will be required to undergo a period of practice under the supervision of a pharmacist. If the substantive differences relate to knowledge the applicant will be required to complete the relevant module(s) of the NVQ level 3.

The Society requires evidence from the applicant that they have successfully completed their Period of Adaptation. If this relates to underpinning knowledge, this would be a letter from the module assessor confirming the successful completion of the module. If this relates to practice, this would be a letter from the supervising pharmacist. If they have substantive differences in both knowledge and practice, applicants will be required to submit two letters. Letter templates are available from the Society. Please contact the Support Staff Regulation Division by telephone on 020 7572 2610 or by email at pharmacytechnician@rpsgb.org
Pharmacy technician registration and fitness for purpose

As with all registered pharmacy technicians, registration does not guarantee that a registrant is fit for purpose. For instance, a registered technician who has only worked in community pharmacy would not be considered fit for purpose in a hospital pharmacy without further training. Employers are therefore advised to evaluate an applicant’s qualification and experience on a case-by-case basis and decide if they are fit for purpose or whether further training may be required, particularly in areas not covered by the Society’s registration criteria. These include:

- Knowledge of UK practice, pharmacy law and ethics
- Communication skills
- Specific requirements for hospital/community pharmacy

Any training required can be addressed as part of their Continuing Professional Development (CPD) which is required for pharmacy technicians who are registered as practising.

If you have any further questions regarding overseas or EEA applicants, please contact the Support Staff Regulation Division:
- by telephone on 020 7572 2610; or
- by email at pharmacytechnician@rpsgb.org
Appendix 1: Core underpinning knowledge for pharmacy technicians

Science for pharmacy technicians

Structure and function of cells and tissues
- Cells in the body
- Epithelial tissue
- Connective tissue
- Muscle tissue
- Nerve tissue

The structure and classification of inorganic chemicals
- Nuclear and electronic structure of atoms
- The periodic table
- Chemical bonding

The basic structure and function of biological chemicals
- Water
- Carbohydrates, fats and proteins
- Nucleic acids
- Enzymes
- Basic principles including the various units used in science, solution properties, pH

The principles of chemical reaction
- Principles and processes by which chemicals react
- Chemical and molar quantities
- Balanced equations for chemical reactions

The basic principles of hygiene
- Control of micro-organisms in the daily working environment
- Contamination and cross contamination

Basics of pharmacy practice

Customers in pharmacy
- Range of customers including all service users
- Colleagues as customers

Communication
- Principles of good communication
- Identification of customer needs
- Appropriate responses to different types of customer and different needs
- Confidentiality issues

Policies and procedures
- Understand the importance and application of Standard Operating Procedures
- Understand and apply organisational policies

Ordering, receiving, disposal and return of stock
- Ordering and receipt of stock
- Storage requirements for stock
- Stock control
- Procedures for dealing with breakages / spillages of materials
- Stock rotation and dealing with expiry of stock items
- Returns and disposal of stock

Supporting Learning
- Different learning styles
- Learning environment
Instructional techniques
Structuring demonstrations

Laws relating to pharmacy

Please note, EEA applicants may not have knowledge of UK laws relating to pharmacy but their equivalent in their Home Member State.

Legislation relating to medicines
- Supply of medicines
- Misuse of drugs
- Supply of poisons
- Supply of methylated spirits

Structure and function of organisations affecting pharmacy
- Regulatory and professional organisations within pharmacy
- Other organisations within pharmacy
- Healthcare systems, for instance the National Health Service

Roles in pharmacy and health
- Roles undertaken by pharmacists and pharmacy support staff
- Roles of other healthcare professionals

Legislation affecting pharmacy
- Trade descriptions
- Consumer protection
- Weights and measures
- Data protection
- Control of substances hazardous to health
- Chemicals hazard information and packaging for supply
- Health and safety at work
- Equal opportunities
- Disabilities

Factors affecting standards within pharmacy and pharmacies
- Clinical governance
- Risk assessment and management
- Standard operating procedures
- Professional ethics

Pharmaceutics

Dispensing procedures and practices
- Principles and practices for dispensing including the use of standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Reading and interpretation of prescriptions
- Equipment used in the dispensing of medicines

Calculation and weighing and measuring techniques
- Percentages, dilutions, displacement values, weight per ml etc.
- Appropriate doses based on age, weight and surface area
- Weighing and measuring equipment
- Procedures for weighing and measuring
- Metric system and the SI units
- Quantities of pharmaceutical materials in various medicines formulae
- Amounts of medicines to be supplied on prescription based on the number of prescribed doses and time intervals

Medicines formulation
- Types of water used in pharmaceutical products
Appendix 1

Non-UK qualified pharmacists and technicians: Guidance for employers and training providers (March 2006)

- Forms of pharmaceutical products and their properties
- Pharmaceutical techniques including mixing, comminution, filtration, clarification, sieving
- Microbial aspects of medicines formulation
- Physical and chemical properties of medicines
- Routes of administration of medicines
- Packing materials and containers
- Stability of medicines and the factors that affect stability

Preparation of pharmaceutical products
- Preparation of a range of dispensed medicines
- Labelling of dispensed medicines, including additional labelling
- Storage of medicines including stock rotation
- Advice to patients on administration and storage of medicines

Human physiology

Structure and function of major organs and body systems
- Digestive
- Cardiovascular
- Lymphatic
- Respiratory
- Nervous
- Endocrine
- Reproduction and foetal development
- Muscular
- Urinary
- Skin
- Ear, eye, oropharynx
- Blood

Regulation of body systems
- Nutrition
- Metabolism and excretion
- Homeostasis and homeostatic disorders

Actions and uses of medicinal products

General action and use of medicines
- Nature and causes of diseases
- Medical terms relevant to medical treatments
- Drug administration, delivery and excretion
- Interactions and adverse drug reactions

Action and uses of drugs in the treatment of various body systems and clinical conditions
- Gastro-intestinal system
- Cardiovascular system
- Respiratory systems
- Central nervous system
- Infections
- Endocrine drugs
- Obstetrics, gynaecology & urinary-tract infections
- Malignant disease & immunosuppression
- Nutrition & blood
- Musculoskeletal & joint disorders
- Eye
- Ear, nose & oropharynx
- Skin
- Immunological products & vaccines
- Anaesthesia
Appendix 2: Core standards of practice for pharmacy technicians

Dispense medicines and products

Receive prescription
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that client confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Check the client details on the prescription and confirm that they are clear and correct.
- Give the appropriate information to the client.
- Carry out all transactions promptly and correctly.
- Ensure that the declaration on the prescription is completed by the client, when applicable in accordance with government requirements.
- Forward the prescription for validation and preparation.

Validate prescription
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Check that prescription is correctly written in respect of meeting BNF, hospital, local formulary requirements.
- Confirm that the prescriptions are appropriate for the client.
- Refer the prescriptions to the appropriate authority if they are unsure about any aspect, they must make the appropriate annotation on the prescription.
- Make all referrals in a courteous manner.
- Confirm that prescriptions are valid and are not a forgery.

Assemble and label required medicines or products
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that the medicine or product matches the prescription.
- Ensure that the medicine or product will remain in date for the course of treatment (as stated on the prescription) or take the appropriate action.
- Prepare the medicine or product using the correct equipment and process.
- Label the medicine or product correctly, checking it against the prescription.
- Ensure that the medicine or product is packed appropriately.
- Endorse the prescription appropriately.
- Complete all relevant records legibly and accurately.
- Follow the health, hygiene and safety procedures.
- Forward the prescription for checking.

Prepare extemporaneous medicines for patient use
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Select the correct formula in respect of the prescription/ward order.
- Ensure the preparation area and equipment are clean and ready for use.
- Select and use the correct equipment for the process and the product.
- Produce the required labels that meet all the legal and local requirements.
- Ensure that the ingredients they select and quantity they calculate and measure meets the formula requirements.
- Ensure that their work is checked by the appropriate person.
- Prepare the product according to the correct formula, using the appropriate process and equipment.
- Complete all relevant documentation clearly and accurately.
- Endorse the prescription/ward order appropriately.
- Ensure that they pack and label the product correctly.
- Ensure the work area and equipment is cleaned and maintained ready for use.
- Follow the relevant Health and Safety and COSHH procedures at all times.

Issue prescribed medicine or product
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that patient confidentiality is maintained at all times.
- Confirm the patient’s identity and that this correctly matches with the prescription.
- Identify if the patient has previously used the medication or product.
• Establish whether the patient is taking any other medication either prescribed or OTC.
• Provide to the client advice and information relating to the use of the prescribed **medicine or product** clearly and accurately and in the most appropriate **format**.
• Confirm the client’s understanding of any advice or information they give.
• Correctly identify the patient’s needs and assess when the client should be referred to a pharmacist.
• Demonstrate they understand the limits of their job role.
• Refer the client to the pharmacist in a polite and courteous manner, passing all the relevant information to the pharmacist.
• Issue the **medicine or product** correctly, checking it matches the prescription, all details are correct and all the necessary **consumables** are provided.

**Control stock of pharmaceutical materials and equipment**

**Order stock**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that stock requirements are identified correctly.
- Ensure that the stock order accurately details the stock requirements.
- Ensure that stock is ordered from the correct supplier/location.
- Monitor the progress of outstanding orders.
- Ensure that particular attention is paid to any special requirements.
- Complete all documentation correctly.

**Receive and store stock**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure they sign for the correct number of parcels/items.
- Check and confirm deliveries against the original order.
- Identify accurately any discrepancies and delivery problems and take prompt action to remedy them.
- Check expiry dates and take any action necessary.
- Identify correctly storage areas and conditions, ensuring stock is stored promptly and safely.
- Ensure that they store stock in manner that allows stock rotation.
- Ensure that the appropriate people are informed promptly of stock availability.
- Ensure all Health and Safety procedures are followed at all times.
- Complete all documentation accurately and process it promptly.

**Maintain stock**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that stock checks are carried out regularly and correctly.
- Identify correctly any discrepancies in the stock levels paying particular attention to local requirements.
- Take the **appropriate action** when discrepancies have been identified.
- Take **appropriate action** in respect of out dated or redundant stock.
- Ensure that waste matter is stored or disposed of safely.
- Clearly and accurately record details of stock levels.
- Ensure that **storage areas** are maintained fit for use following all Health and Safety procedures.
- Correctly deal with any company recalls or drug alerts.

**Issue stock**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that items issued, match the request.
- Ensure that stock is issued in line with stock rotation.
- Ensure all stock issued is in date and fit for purpose.
- Take remedial action when any item is out of stock.
- Ensure that stock is **packed** correctly.
- Ensure that stock is labelled correctly for carriage.
- Complete all **documentation** correctly and neatly.
- Issue stock to the correct **destination** using the correct delivery methods.
- Follow Health and Safety procedures.
Providing pharmaceutical information and advice

**Receive a pharmaceutical query**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Establish the identify of the **enquirer**.
- Identify what and why the information is needed.
- Ensure that they obtain all the relevant details from the enquirer.
- Record the receipt of the request accurately and clearly.
- Establish what, if any, information the **enquirer** already has.
- Ensure that the **enquirer** is treated in a courteous manner and in a way that is sensitive to their needs.
- Agree a timescale for the response and agree a format.

**Prepare a response**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Identify correctly the relevant **source** of information.
- Seek approval to access the information when necessary.
- Take account of legal, confidentiality and ethical issues.
- Evaluate the information that has been accessed.
- Prepare **response** in a structured manner and in a **format** that meets the needs of the enquirer.
- Ensure that their response is checked by the appropriate person.
- Ensure they maintain the security of the information.

**Respond to a pharmaceutical query**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Respond to the **enquirer** within the agreed timescale or give them an update on the progress made.
- Ensure that the information and/or advice offered is accurate, relevant and complies with statutory requirements.
- Provide their response in a clear and concise manner, in a **format** that is appropriate.
- Ensure their response has met the requirements of the enquirer.
- Treat the enquirer courteously and in a manner that is sensitive to their needs.
- Correctly complete all relevant documentation and store appropriately.

**Ensure own actions reduce the risks to health and safety**

**Identify the hazards and evaluate the risks in the workplace**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that they correctly name and locate the persons responsible for health and safety in the workplace.
- Ensure that they identify which workplace policies are relevant to their working practices.
- Ensure that they identify those working practices in any part of their job role that could harm themselves or other persons.
- Ensure that they identify those aspects of the workplace that could harm themselves or other persons.
- Ensure that they evaluate which of the potentially harmful working practices and the potentially harmful aspects of the workplace are those with the highest risk to they or others.
- Ensure that they report those hazards that present a high risk to the persons responsible for health and safety in the workplace.
- Ensure that they deal with hazards and low **risks** in accordance with workplace policies and legal requirements.

**Reduce the risks to health and safety in the work place**
Qualified pharmacy technicians should be able to:
- Ensure that they carry out their working practices in accordance with legal requirements.
- Ensure that they follow the most recent **workplace policies** for their job role.
- Ensure that they rectify those health and safety risks within their capability and the scope of their job responsibilities.
Appendix 2

- Ensure that they pass on any suggestions for reducing risks to health and safety within their job role to the responsible person.
- Ensure that their personal conduct in the workplace does not endanger the health and safety of themselves or other persons.
- Ensure that they follow the workplace policies and suppliers’ or manufacturers’ instructions for the safe use of equipment, materials and products.
- Ensure that they report any differences between workplace policies and suppliers’ or manufacturers’ instructions as appropriate.
- Ensure that their personal presentation at work a) ensures the health and safety of themselves and others, b) meets any legal, duties c) is in accordance with workplace policies.