

Welcome to Update



Welcome to the fourth edition of our Regulatory Update in 2023.

In this edition we bring you the President's holiday message and reflections on her first year in office.

We congratulate successful candidates at the November Common Registration Assessment.

We highlight important information on applying for the Foundation Training Year 2024/2025. We remind everyone about the closure of the COVID-19 Temporary Register in March 2024

Lastly, we highlight the upcoming Council meeting on Tuesday 05 March 2024 and thank everyone who responded to the Code consultation and to all those involved in the Code Advisory Group.

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Review previous editions

You can read previous editions of our Regulatory Update [here](#)

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Holiday Message from the President of the Pharmaceutical Council NI

The President of the Pharmaceutical Society NI, Dr Geraldine O'Hare, has released her annual holiday message to pharmacists, pharmacy teams and the public in Northern Ireland.

"On behalf of the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society NI, I would like to pay tribute to the exceptional commitment, compassion, and professionalism of pharmacists and pharmacy teams in hospitals, GP practices, in community settings and across education and industry throughout Northern Ireland in 2023. Your invaluable contribution has been instrumental in protecting the health of our community through a year of continuing challenges and change."

"As we approach 2024, the Pharmaceutical Society NI, as the profession's regulator, reaffirms its commitment to public safety by supporting and encouraging pharmacists through the development of practical standards and guidance, by continuing educational development, the modernisation of registration and through regulatory reform."

"The upcoming year will see the introduction of a new positive Code of Practice, further developments in the regulation of pharmacy technicians, changes to supervision, advancements in the guidelines for internet pharmacy, independent prescribing and requirements for the knowledge of English. Next year will also see the publication of the Pharmaceutical Society NI's new Corporate Strategy which we look forward to launching."

"I would also like to take the opportunity to thank pharmacists, representative groups and the public for their collaboration with us to enhance our guidance and consultation methods, making our services more transparent and accessible to everyone. We look forward to continuing this work in the coming year."

"On behalf of the Pharmaceutical Society NI, I wish you and your families a very Happy Christmas and a peaceful, safe New Year."

The Pharmaceutical Society NI and the GPhC have announced the November 2023 Common Registration Assessment Results

The November 2023 Common Registration Assessment Results have been jointly announced by the Pharmaceutical Society NI and the General Pharmaceutical Council. The results can be accessed [here](#).

The Society's Chief Executive, Michaela McAleer, congratulated all successful candidates and looks forward to them joining the Society's Register.

For those candidates in Northern Ireland who were unsuccessful, we recommend referring to the [Guidance on the Pharmaceutical Society NI website](#) which includes advice on next steps and directs you to available help and support within Northern Ireland.

‘Reflections on a year as President’

An interview with Dr Geraldine O’Hare, the Council President



Geraldine was appointed as the President of the Pharmaceutical Society NI in November 2022 by the then Health Minister, Robin Swann.

Geraldine is a Chartered and Registered Forensic Psychologist, Associate Fellow, and a Chartered Scientist with the British Psychological Society (BPS). She is the Chief Assessor with the BPS and Chair Elect for the British Psychological Society Northern Ireland Branch, and recently received the BPS President’s Award for Innovation in Practice for her work following a Churchill Fellowship, completed in the USA. Geraldine has worked with the Probation Board for Northern Ireland for over 25 years as Head of Psychological Services, and the Director of Rehabilitation.

She has extensive experience working with the Health and Justice sector, regulatory bodies and professional boards. Geraldine is an accomplished leader who brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise from the public sector and from her involvement with various health care professional bodies and committees.

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Geraldine, why did you apply to become President of the Pharmaceutical Society?

“I was looking for an interesting role which reflected my deep interest and passion for health care and regulation. This interest developed through one of my previous roles with the Health and Care Professions Council, where I recognised the crucial role a regulatory body in ensuring that good standards are promoted and maintained.

“During the selection process the more I read about the Society, the more interested I became in the history, role and transformation of the Society over the years. I was particularly interested in the Society being the only local Northern Ireland health professional regulator. I believe this local focus is vital for a regulator’s understanding of both public requirements and local pharmacy, and being able to provide local accountability. As I progressed through the selection process, I was very impressed by the potential for the role in working with Council and the Executive staff to further enhance the Society mission of ensuring the safety of the public by supporting pharmacists in their crucial role.”

What does the role of the President entail?

“The President is the public figurehead for Council and leads Council in the guidance and direction of the executive staff of the Society through the strategic areas of work directed in Council’s corporate strategy. This includes addressing emerging challenges like the registration of pharmacy technicians. Part of the role is the leadership of Council in the oversight of the executive arm of the Society which is achieved through regular Council meetings and meetings with the executive team.”

‘Reflections on a year as President’

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What is your Role in Council?

“The President leads Council which consists of 7 lay and 7 registrant members with very different experiences and backgrounds. Council very much relies on the experienced registrant pharmacist members to assist with the technical aspects of Council’s work, and I am very grateful for their knowledge.”

“As President, I am Council's public representative and, on their behalf, I meet with a wide range of stakeholders including the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer and government officials. I am particularly looking forward to meeting with the Assembly Health Committee and the Health Minister when the assembly is reconvened. I also represent Council at pharmacy and health events and very much enjoy hearing the views of registrants and the public on pharmacy, regulation and the roles of Council and the Society.”

What are your plans for the future of the role?

“I was initially appointed for 4 years, however, there is a possibility that this may be extended to allow me to serve for 8 years. The past year has been spent getting to know people both internal and external to the Society. Internally I have built relationships with the Executive Teams and Council and understand their very impressive mix of skills and experience. Externally, I have met and built relationships with many of our stakeholders, and other healthcare regulator chairs.”

“I want to take Council on the road again, which unfortunately was not possible during COVID, and hold Council meetings in other venues to meet a wider range of stakeholders and registrants. I would like to use this opportunity to personally invite people to Council meetings, we would love to meet you and hear your views.”

“Please watch out for Council meetings on the Society’s website and social media. Please get in touch if you are interested in attending Council meetings or would be in a position to host a Council meeting in your work venue.”

“I would also like to regularly open Society House to the public and registrants and take some of the mystery away of what we do and who we are. We are looking at plans to mark the centenary of the Society in 2025 and would very much welcome stakeholder and registrant views on this.”

“This year will also see the launch of the new Corporate Strategy and we have been working hard in developing a modern strategy, which if fit for purpose for the years to come.”

What is your personal experience of pharmacy been like?

“Like everyone, I have used my local pharmacy on a regular basis for many years and have always found the staff extremely knowledgeable and helpful. I have noted the change in community pharmacy over the years, how many more services are offered and the changing role of pharmacists.”

“I believe pharmacy is an excellent career with so much opportunity and would encourage anyone with an interest to consider applying. Following my experience with all those involved in

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Pharmacy, I have taken this advice to heart, and I am trying to persuade my daughter to study pharmacy at university!”

Do you have an overall vision for the future for the Society?

“I want to demystify the Society and what it does. I want pharmacists to view regulation, standards and guidance not as something to be feared, but a means to ensure patient safety and improve standards of care. Standards, guidance and behaviours that pharmacists agree to and are held accountable for, ensure their status as professionals. Embracing and celebrating these can help pharmacists provide the best possible care for their patients and contribute positively to the healthcare system.”

“Going forward, I look forward to welcoming the public, registrants and pharmacy students to Society House and engaging more widely with the pharmacy profession.”

“Thank you to everyone I have had the pleasure to meet in my first year as President. I have very much appreciated the support and contact.”

Thank you.

Information on applying to join the Foundation Training Year 2024/25

Applications to join the Foundation Training Year 2024/25 will be open from **04 January 2024**.

The application process

The application process for the Foundation Training Year 2024/25 will be in two stages. See [here](#).

Stage 1 requires students to apply to join the Student Register of the Pharmaceutical Society NI. Once Stage 1 is completed, students can then apply for Stage 2.

Stage 2 requires students to apply to NICPLD (Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development) to join the Foundation Training Year (FTY) programme. NICPLD is responsible for the delivery, operation and management of the FTY and will be students’ main point of contact after Stage 1 is complete and throughout the 12-month FTY programme.

Full details of the application process can be accessed [here](#).

The Standards for the Foundation Training Year 2024/2025 can be found [here](#).

Reminder of the COVID-19 Temporary Register closure in March 2024

The Covid-19 Temporary Register, opened in April 2020 under the Coronavirus Act 2020. This enabled the Pharmaceutical Society NI to temporarily register persons, in good standing, who had withdrawn from the register within the last three years. The purpose of the COVID-19 Temporary Register was to provide the maximum support possible to the pharmacy workforce and the health and social care system in unprecedented circumstances.

The Department of Health and Social Care in Great Britain and the Department of Health NI have informed health profession regulators that the conditions warranting the continuation of all Covid-19 healthcare Temporary Registers will no longer apply after the upcoming winter. Consequently, the Department of Health NI has requested a six-month notice period for the closure of our Covid-19 Temporary Register by 31 March 2024. This provides registrants practicing under emergency registration a grace period of six months to apply for full registration if they wish to continue practicing.

Pharmacists who remain on the Covid-19 Temporary Register and do not apply to join the Register, will not be able to practice in Northern Ireland after the 31 March 2024 at which point the temporary registration will be closed automatically.

Commenting on the announcement Michaela McAleer, the Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Society NI stated:

"I want to take this opportunity to thank pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register who supported our pharmacy services and provided vital health care to the public during such unprecedented circumstances."

"I would encourage all pharmacists on the Covid-19 Temporary Register to apply for full registration with the Pharmaceutical Society NI to enable them to continue to provide this vital care and support to our community."

The registration page can be accessed [here](#).

Newsletter Feedback

As always, we welcome your feedback on this Newsletter to make it as effective as possible. If you have any feedback or suggestions, please contact:

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Upcoming Council Meeting

The next public Council meeting will take place on Tuesday 05 March 2024 at 73 University Street, commencing promptly at 09:30 am. Council meetings are open to the public, except in exceptional circumstances.

Council agenda and key papers are available before Council Meetings from [here](#).

Should you wish to attend, please contact the Council Secretary, Zulema Horner (Zulema.horner@psni.org.uk) , at least one working day in advance of the meeting, advising of your attendance and stating any particular access requirements you may have.

The latest approved Council minutes from the meeting of 19 September 2023 can be found [here](#) and a full list of all Council minutes can be found [here](#).

Code Consultation

The Code consultation closed on 18 December 2023. The Pharmaceutical Society NI would like to thank everyone who responded to the general call for evidence and the consultation or who participated in the Code Advisory Group over the past year. We will now examine your submissions and submit a comprehensive report to Council for their consideration.

Thank you all again.