

Foundation Training Year Frequently Asked Questions 2025/2026

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1. About us

The Pharmaceutical Society Northern Ireland (the Society) is the regulatory body for pharmacists and pharmacy premises in Northern Ireland.

Our primary purpose is to ensure that pharmacists are fit to practise and deliver high quality safe care to patients

What we do

It is the organisation's responsibility to protect and maintain public safety in pharmacy by:

- Setting and promoting standards for pharmacists' admission to the Register and for remaining on the Register
- Maintaining a publicly accessible Register of pharmacists and pharmacy premises
- Investigating concerns about the fitness to practise of pharmacists and taking action to protect the public
- Overseeing pharmacist education and training in Northern Ireland, including managing the training and registration pathway for trainee pharmacists. This encompasses approving Foundation Training Year (FTY) providers, maintaining the Student Register, overseeing the Common Registration Assessment, and registering pharmacists upon successful completion
- Providing vital professional leadership functions through the Pharmacy Forum NI

1. What are the roles of the Pharmaceutical Society NI (the Society), Northern Ireland Centre for Postgraduate Learning and Development (NICPLD), and General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) in the Foundation Training Year?

The Society

- The regulatory body for pharmacists and pharmacies in Northern Ireland.
- Approves the provider of the Foundation Training Year (NICPLD) to ensure it meets the joint Pharmaceutical Society NI/GPhC 2021 education standards.
- Maintains the Register for trainee pharmacists and registers you as a pharmacist upon completion of the FTY and successful assessment.

NICPLD

- Approved by the Society and accredited by the GPhC as an FTY provider.
- Delivers and quality manages the Foundation Training Year in Northern Ireland.
- Provides the formal learning programme, workplace support, and assessment oversight.
- Confirms your successful completion of the FTY to the Society.

GPhC

- Collaborates with the Society to set the initial education and training standards.
- Accredits FTY providers across the UK.
- Designs and manages the UK-wide Common Registration Assessment (CRA).

2. How long does the Foundation Training Year last?

The FTY is a minimum of 52 weeks (full-time). For trainees who graduate against the 2021 standards for the initial education and training, this must include at least 90 hours of supervised prescribing practice to be eligible for annotation as an Independent Prescriber (IP).

3. What are the registration requirements with Pharmaceutical Society NI after completing your FTY in Northern Ireland?

To register as a pharmacist in NI, you must:

- Complete the full FTY programme as specified by NICPLD.
- Pass the Common Registration Assessment (CRA).
- Apply for registration with the Society through our [online portal](#).

4. What is the maximum time allowed to complete my pharmacy education and training?

You must:

- Successfully complete your initial pharmacy education and training (MPharm and FTY)
- Be successful in the CRA (please note that you must sit the CRA within 3 years of completing the FTY programme)
- Apply to register with the Society within 8 years of starting your MPharm degree.

5. What happens if I exceed the permitted time limits?

The Society may consider extensions only under special circumstances, including:

- Part-time study
- Maternity/paternity leave
- Long-term illness
- Exceptional life events (e.g. military service, pandemic-related delays)

You'll need to submit evidence to support your application and the Registrar will take this into consideration when applying to join the register.

If you think you may be at risk of exceeding the permitted time limits, it is very important that you contact the Society as early as possible to discuss your individual situation. Early engagement will help us advise you on the evidence required.

6. What are the Society's professional standards for trainee pharmacists?

You are expected to follow [the Society's Code of Conduct and Professional Standards](#), which include:

- Patient-centred care
- Ethical behaviour
- Clinical competence

- Professional integrity

You must uphold these standards throughout the FTY.

7. What is the duty of candour and how does it apply to me?

You must be open and honest:

- With patients when things go wrong - explain, apologise, and support them.
- With colleagues and employers - participate in investigations and raise concerns appropriately.
- With Pharmaceutical Society NI - disclose issues that may affect your fitness to practise.

This is a legal and ethical requirement under [the Society's standards](#).

8. What should I do if my training is interrupted or delayed?

If you are planning a break (e.g. maternity leave or due to health issues), you must contact NICPLD as soon as possible. They will manage the process of applying for an extension to your training and will notify the Pharmaceutical Society. You may also be required to complete an application to remain on the Student Register, if so, we will be in touch with you directly.

9. What is the Common Registration Assessment and why is it important?

The Common Registration Assessment tests your ability to apply knowledge, make professional judgments, and perform pharmacy calculations.

Passing it is required to register as a pharmacist with the Pharmaceutical Society NI.

The assessment ensures a UK-wide minimum standard, regardless of where you trained.

If you would like to know more, please refer to our [information for 2025/26 foundation trainees](#) which will include some information on the Common registration assessment soon.

10. How do I qualify to sit the Common Registration Assessment?

You must:

- Have completed 39 weeks in practice to be eligible to sit.
- Apply via the [Society's Registration Online \(ROL\) portal](#) before the deadline and pay the associated assessment fee

Note:

You must sit the Common Registration Assessment within 3 years of completing your FTY. Extensions may be granted by the registrar in exceptional circumstances, provided you submit supporting evidence.

11. How should I prepare for the Common Registration Assessment?

- Review the assessment framework to understand tested topics, which will be available on [our website](#) soon
- Use [feedback reports](#) from previous sittings
- Practise example question formats. These will also be available on the [our website](#) soon.
- Ensure your study materials reflect current practice and guidelines

12. What if I have a specific need, can I request a reasonable adjustment for the Common Registration Assessment?

Yes. If you have a medical condition or other specific need which may disadvantage you when sitting the assessment, you can apply for a reasonable adjustment.

- The Society will email all trainee pharmacists in advance of each assessment sitting with details of how to apply and the deadlines.
- **Important:** you must submit your reasonable adjustment application before you apply to sit the Common Registration Assessment.

To apply, you must:

- Explain your condition and how it affects your performance
- Provide supporting evidence from a qualified professional
- Submit your request by the deadline stated.

All requests are reviewed by an independent panel.

13. What does 'fit to sit' mean for the Common Registration Assessment?

It is very important that you only sit the registration assessment if you are fit to do so. Being 'fit to sit' means that you do not know of any reason why your performance would be adversely affected on the day of the assessment.

If you are aware of anything that might affect your performance on the day, you should not sit the assessment – even if it is a difficult decision to make.

Our withdrawals, nullification, and appeals guide will help you to make any decisions about your assessment attempt, before, during and after the sitting.

See GPhC's [withdrawals, nullification, and appeals guide](#).

14. What if something goes wrong during the assessment? (Nullification)

If your performance is significantly affected during the sitting:

- Tell an invigilator immediately
- Complete a nullification request using the reference number provided
- Submit the request before results are issued

Again, please refer to GPhC's [withdrawals, nullification, and appeals guide](#) for more information.

15. How will I find out if I passed the Common Registration Assessment?

You will receive your result by email from Pharmaceutical Society NI.

Results are not given by phone or posted letter.

Follow the instructions included with your result carefully, especially regarding next steps.

16. How do I apply for registration as a pharmacist?

Applications to register as a pharmacist are available before the results of the CRA are released. This allows us to process applications in advance and ensures faster registration for those who are successful in the CRA.

To be registered you must:

- Successfully complete all elements of the FTY programme required by the NICPLD Programme Board
- Pass the Common Registration Assessment
- Submit a fully completed online application for registration
- Pay the registration fee

You can apply via the Society's ROL portal.

Important: You must not practise as a pharmacist until your name appears on the Register. Avoid planning/booking any work until you receive written confirmation that you are registered.

17. What happens if I fail the Common Registration Assessment?

You'll receive:

- Information on how to prepare for a resit
- Information on support options, including [Pharmacists' Advice and Support Service \(PASS\)](#)

If eligible, you can apply to resit.

18. Can I appeal my Common Registration Assessment result?

Yes, but only if:

- You became aware of new circumstances after the sitting, or
- There was a procedural error in how the exam was conducted

Appeals cannot be based on known issues you ignored ("fit to sit") or anything covered by nullification.

Please refer to GPhC's [withdrawals, nullification, and appeals guide](#) for more information.

For operational questions regarding the Foundation Training Year please refer to: [NICPLD: Foundation Training Year](#)