

AMERICAN SOCIETY OF HEALTH-SYSTEM PHARMACISTS
ACCREDITATION COUNCIL FOR PHARMACY EDUCATION



ASHP / ACPE ACCREDITATION STANDARD FOR PHARMACY TECHNICIAN EDUCATION AND TRAINING PROGRAMS

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Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC)

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INTENT

The Accreditation Standard for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs were developed to:

- protect the public by ensuring the availability of a competent workforce;
- describe pharmacy technician education and training program development;
- provide criteria for the evaluation of new and established education and training programs; and
- promote continuous improvement of established education and training programs.

The ASHP/ACPE Standard for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training (Standard) was developed with input from a broad range of constituents interested in or affected by pharmacy technician education and training. The intent is to establish a national standard for the preparation of the pharmacy technician workforce. The Standard focuses on the competency expectations required of pharmacy technicians completing training programs and the assessment of those competencies by the program. The Standard also addresses the structural and process-related elements within training programs necessary to implement evidence-based outcome measures that document achievement of the Standard. ASHP/ACPE expects pharmacy technician education and training programs to be following all elements outlined in the Standard.

BACKGROUND

ASHP (American Society of Health-System Pharmacists) has been accrediting pharmacy residencies since 1963 and pharmacy technician education and training programs since 1983 (www.ashp.org). The Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) was established in 1932 for the accreditation of professional degree programs in pharmacy, and in 1975, its scope was broadened to include accreditation of providers of continuing pharmacy education (www.acpe-accredit.org). In 2014, a collaboration was formed between ASHP and ACPE with the goal of working together in the accreditation of pharmacy technician education and training programs. The Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC) is a collaboration between ASHP and ACPE to promote, assure, and advance the quality of pharmacy technician education and training programs in the United States. The responsibilities of the PTAC include recommending changes to the accreditation Standard, surveying programs for accreditation, modifying the standards and regulations, and making recommendations for accreditation of programs to the ASHP and ACPE Boards of Directors. The ASHP and ACPE Boards of Directors ratify the recommendations made by the PTAC and have the final vote for accreditation of programs and other work performed by the PTAC.

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

- There is now one level of pharmacy technician education and training program, replacing the option for Entry-level and Advanced-level pharmacy technician education and training standards.
- The Standard has been restructured from 15 standards with key elements of each standard that need to be met, into five standards focused on specific areas related to the technician education and training program.
- Minimum hour requirements have been edited to reflect education and training needs, translating into one type of program, with the program director's discretion to add more hours if desired.
- More emphasis has been placed on describing the responsibility of the sponsoring organization that is supporting and/or operating the pharmacy technician program(s), to be able to provide/support the program.
- More flexibility and description in the criteria for serving as the program director and faculty for the program.
- Change in the frequency of the requirements of conduct of Advisory Committee meetings.

APPLICATION OF THE STANDARD

The requirements defined in the Standard serve as the basis for evaluating all pharmacy technician education and training programs. The Standard describes the criteria used in evaluation of programs that apply for accreditation and reaccreditation of their programs. The policies governing the accreditation process and procedures for seeking and maintaining accreditation are described in the ASHP/ACPE Regulations on Accreditation of Pharmacy Technician Education and Training Programs. The accreditation process is conducted under the authority of the ASHP and ACPE Boards of Directors.

OVERVIEW OF THE STANDARD

STANDARD 1: Required Program Structure and Resources

Standard One provides guidance to pharmacy technician education and training programs to describe what the sponsoring organization that is supporting and/or operating the pharmacy technician program(s) must be able to provide/support for the program to function. The proper conduct of a program's advisory committee is illustrated. Program structure, including required hours for the program, as well as components of the program that are required for successful accreditation are part of this Standard. Tools, such as composition of the certificate of completion and description of credit for prior experience are provided in this Standard. To ensure that the goals of the program are met, programs are required to track and report program quantity and quality metrics of students.

STANDARD 2: Student Recruitment, Acceptance, Enrollment, and Representation

Standard Two provides guidance to pharmacy technician education and training programs for the recruitment and selection of students by defining candidate eligibility requirements along with the policies and procedures necessary to the recruitment process. Details of specific requirements for program policies; materials to be provided to candidates invited to interview; financial support and other essential resources that need to be transparent are illustrated. The goal of the selection process is to ensure selected candidates will be successful in the education and training environment, attain professional competence, contribute to the advancement of the profession of pharmacy technicians, and obtain sufficient tools within the program to gain employment as a pharmacy technician after completing the program.

STANDARD 3: Program Director

Standard Three defines eligibility and qualification requirements for pharmacy technician education and training directors (TPDs) as well as requirements for program oversight, continuous program improvement, and preceptor development. RPDs are critical to the success of both pharmacy technicians and the pharmacy technician education and training program. They serve as role models for students through their professionalism and commitment to advancing the profession of pharmacy.

STANDARD 4: Faculty and Preceptors-of-record

Standard Four defines eligibility and qualification requirements for pharmacy technician education and training program faculty and preceptors-of-record. Faculty members support the program director in teaching classes or facilitating simulation laboratory sessions for the program, while preceptors-of-record work at an experiential site and coordinate or oversees students' activities while they are on rotation. Faculty and preceptors-of record are essential in supporting the TPD to the success of both pharmacy technicians and the pharmacy technician education and training program. They also serve as role models for students through their professionalism and commitment to advancing the profession of pharmacy.

STANDARD 5: Curriculum

Standard Five provides evidence of contemporary pharmacy technician education and training knowledge, skills, and abilities that pharmacy technicians will need to be competent members of the pharmacy workforce. Through didactic, simulation, and externship training, the student will gain experience and knowledge to have ability to demonstrate professional behaviors and ethical conduct; process and handle medications and medication orders; demonstrate patient care, quality, and safety knowledge and skills; and understand regulatory and compliance knowledge and skills.

Standard 1: Required Program Structure and Resources

- 1.1** The sponsoring organization that is supporting and/or operating the pharmacy technician program(s) must be able to provide/support the following:
- 1.1.a Adequate space to conduct and maintain a pharmacy technician program in the learning environment.
 - 1.1.b Pharmacy technology to support the technician learning environment.
 - 1.1.c Personnel to support the pharmacy technician learning program outcomes desired.
 - 1.1.d Pharmacy simulation equipment and supplies.
 - 1.1.e Administrative structure and record-keeping processes to support the ongoing operation of the pharmacy technician program(s). Records related to program operation and accreditation should be maintained and stored for the previous four years (if the program has been in existence for at least four years).
 - 1.1.f Assessments of enrolled students and records of students who've completed the program are actively maintained.
 - 1.1.g Verifies that any student participating in virtual education components is indeed the same student attending the clinical experiential portion of the program, who in-turn is receiving credit.
 - 1.1.h Continuous quality improvement (CQI) efforts for the ongoing operation and improvement of the program are pursued and any assessment data used in the CQI process are actively maintained.
 - 1.1.h.1 Information gained from evaluations of program faculty members, including the program director, instructors, and preceptors, are analyzed to determine areas for improvement, and actions are implemented for continuous quality improvement.
 - 1.1.h.2 Processes for measuring program effectiveness and implementation of improvement plan(s), using the program data on student completion and employment rates, programs should evaluate the program structure and educational modalities, to optimize student outcomes and gain efficiencies in their program.

Advisory Committee

- 1.2** An Advisory Committee, comprised of a broad-based group of pharmacists, faculty, pharmacy technicians, and others as deemed appropriate, is established and meets at least once a year (virtual meetings are acceptable). The Advisory Committee plays an important role for the

program and the program director, in the oversight and feedback on program operation, outcomes, and continual program improvement.

1.2.a Comprehensive meeting minutes for the Advisory Committee must be produced and maintained in the program records.

Program Curricular Structure and Educational Modalities

1.3 Pharmacy technician students are required to complete a minimum of 400 hours as outlined below. Pharmacy technician programs are responsible for documenting the method of calculating student learning and participation time, which determines the overall program structure and attribution of education and training hours, for all learning modalities and instructional components comprised within a program. Programs must describe program policies to prospective students. Pharmacy technician education and training programs include the following educational modalities: Didactic; Simulation; and Experiential.

1.3.a Students must be introduced to curriculum components as described in these standards prior entering experiential training.

1.3.b The **Didactic** educational modality provides a foundation that prepares students for the Simulation and Experiential learning modalities to follow.

- **Didactic modality = 100 hours of student participation and learning.**

1.3.c The **Simulation** educational modality is a hands-on practice of pharmacy technician skills and a demonstration of student learning and ability to prepare students for the Experiential learning modalities to follow.

- **Simulation modality = 50 hours of student participation, learning, and demonstration.**
- The Simulation modality provides students repetitive opportunities to practice skills and make mistakes in the process that fosters feedback for learning, leading to confidence and competence.
- While each distinct pharmacy technician task and skill in the Simulation modality may be taught in isolation (taught separately from other tasks), by the end of the Simulation component of the educational program, students must be able to perform each task/skill in the proper sequential manner which it is performed in an actual pharmacy setting.

1.3.d The **Experiential** educational modality allows students to utilize the skills and tasks learned in the didactic and simulated portions of the training program, related to the

role of a pharmacy technician, in a professionally operating and licensed pharmacy setting.

- **Experiential modality = 120 hours of student participation, learning, and demonstration.**
- Students enrolled in a pharmacy technician training program complete appropriate aspects of the program's curriculum, where students can adequately demonstrate competency and the active performance of the proper skills and tasks representative of the pharmacy technician role (according to the sponsoring organization and educational program's state and local regulations).
- Students must perform a minimum of 2/3rds of the total hours (e.g., 80 hours of 120 hours total) in a dispensing pharmacy setting to demonstrate competency, consistency, and proficiency with the pharmacy technician role.

1.3.e **The remaining 130 (and any additional) education and training hours may be allocated to the three educational modalities listed above, based on the discretion of the program director and faculty.**

Experiential

1.4 For the experiential component of the program, the program director:

- 1.4.a Maintains a list of appropriate experiential site(s);
- 1.4.b Documents that each experiential site has proper licensure;
 - Ensure that affiliation agreements for all sites are completed and current (if applicable);
- 1.4.c Prior to students being assigned/active in an experiential training site:
 - Ensures that the preceptor of record has received instruction regarding the requirements of the program and the responsibilities of the site.
 - Maintains documented communication with the student and the experiential site to verify assignment of the experiential rotation.

1.5 The sponsoring organization must allow dedicated time for the program director to administer the program.

- 1.6** The program conducts regular, ongoing, formative and summative assessments of student competencies and program effectiveness that are used in the continuous quality improvement process. Student learning assessments must comply with the following:
- 1.6.a Documented criteria-based assessment of students' competencies occurs in the didactic modality.
 - 1.6.b Documented criteria-based assessment of students' competencies occurs in the simulation modality.
 - 1.6.c Documented criteria-based assessment of students' competencies occurs in the experiential modality.
 - 1.6.d Student evaluation is ongoing, systematic, and assesses students' progress toward meeting the requirements for graduation. Students receive frequent criteria-based feedback on their performance, that enables them to identify strengths and weaknesses, while providing students direction on how to improve.

Certificate Requirements

- 1.7** Programs recognize only those pharmacy technicians who have successfully completed the pharmacy technician training program by awarding an appropriate certificate.
- 1.7.a The program director ensures that a process for determining requirements and conditions for graduation is documented and implemented.
 - 1.7.b The certificate is signed by the program director and a superior of the program director of the institution.
 - 1.7.c The certificate contains the name of the organization, program name and location, student name, completion date, and confirmation that the program is ASHP/ACPE-accredited or in ASHP/ACPE candidate status.
- 1.8** Programs are required to track and report program quantity and quality metrics of students. Programs must track:
- 1.8.a Percentage of students that successfully complete the program (completion rates).
 - 1.8.b Initial student employment/job placement in related field.
 - 1.8.c Student pass rates on national certification examinations (e.g., PTCB, NHA).
 - 1.8.d The organization shall maintain a list of all graduates from their program (beyond the minimum of the four-year period).

- 1.9** Credit for Prior Experience may be awarded to students if permitted by the program. Program policies and procedures need to be developed and implemented in order to allow transfer credit and/or course waivers for students who qualify. See Appendix “A” for guidelines on awarding Credit for Prior Experience.

Standard 2: Student Recruitment, Acceptance, Enrollment, and Representation

2.1. Program Policies

2.1.a Programs must document, maintain, and follow policies pertaining to topics outlined below (see 2.1.c list below).

2.1.b Policies and processes are provided to all personnel involved in student recruitment for enrollment into the accredited program (staff who enroll prospective students, such as telephone marketers, enrollment advisors, and admissions representatives), that includes guidance as follows (see 2.1.c list below).

2.1.c Policy List

- Organizational policies regarding harassment and reporting procedures/grievances.
- Accommodations are made for students and applicants with disabilities who request accommodation.
- Academic integrity policies consistent with the sponsoring organization’s policies.
- Procedures for response to student questions in a timely manner.
- Student selection and acceptance policies.
- Student financial commitment and reimbursement policies.
- Qualifications to enroll.
- Purpose of the training program (e.g., to work in a community pharmacy).
- Requirements for state registration or licensure as a pharmacy technician.
- Requirements for obtaining and maintaining national pharmacy technician certification.
- Programmatic and institutional accreditation status.
- Program curriculum outline and duration.
- Total out-of-pocket program cost for students (providing prospective applicants complete and accurate information total student financial obligation).
- Complete and accurate information about financing options.

- Program's dismissal policy, including academic and non-academic criteria, and associated dismissal process.
- Documented process to assess applicants' background pertaining to illicit drug use, criminal background checks, and immunization status that may prevent future employment as a pharmacy technician, to meet requirements and regulations of externship sites, employers, and State Boards of Pharmacy.
- Information regarding applicants' technology requirements for participation in the program.

2.2 Prior to acceptance of an applicant, the organization ensures that the applicant has the proper eligibility to enroll in the program. At a minimum, the student:

- 2.2.a Is enrolled in high school, possesses a high school equivalency certificate, or is a high school graduate.
- 2.2.b Meets the minimum age requirements that are based on a state's requirements for employment of pharmacy technicians.
- 2.2.c Demonstrates ability to successfully complete the program.

Standard 3: Program Director

3.1 A single program director, who serves as the organizationally authorized individual of the pharmacy technician training and education program, must be designated. The program director is accountable for the operation, maintenance, and compliance of the program according to the Regulations and Standards. Qualifications to be the program director, are the following:

3.1.a A licensed pharmacist with at least 3 years of experience;

or

An active nationally certified pharmacy technician, who:

- has graduated from an ASHP/ACPE-accredited pharmacy technician training program with 3 years of experience;

or

- has more than 5 years of experience as a pharmacy technician.

- 3.2** The program director takes the necessary precautions to ensure an effective and safe level of direct supervision of students, while providing timely assessment and criteria-based feedback.
- 3.3** The program director provides effective oversight and determines safety risk assessment for the educational and training program.

Standard 4: Faculty and Preceptors-of-record

- 4.1** Faculty and Preceptors-of-record must adhere to state regulations for licensure or registration to practice as a pharmacist or pharmacy technician, have at least 2 years of experience, and are either:
- Licensed pharmacists;
 - or**
 - Active nationally certified pharmacy technicians
- 4.2** The preceptor-of-record is:
- a person who works at the experiential site and coordinates or oversees students' activities;
 - has at least two years of experience in the type of pharmacy setting for which they are training students;
 - acts as a liaison between the site and the program director to ensure that each student receives the intended educational experience and is evaluated effectively;
 - ensures that only qualified pharmacy personnel are assigned to train students; and
 - ensures that required documentation (e.g., academic and professional record, student time sheets, evaluations) are submitted to the program in a timely fashion.
- 4.3** Evaluation of faculty and preceptor-of-record must be documented.
- 4.3.a Faculty members are evaluated by students, at least annually.
- 4.3.b Preceptor-of-record is evaluated by students after each student rotation.
- 4.4** The program director ensures the development of any individuals providing instruction to students. Development should be ongoing.

- Areas to consider when creating content for faculty development may include assessment of skills, review of students' evaluations, peer review, self-assessments, and/or performance reviews.
- Development activities focus on increasing knowledge and skills that can be applied to effectively educate students regardless of the practice setting (rather than development activities solely focused on improving personal clinical knowledge and skills).

Standard 5: Curriculum

5.1 Students demonstrate professional behaviors and ethical conduct to fulfill responsibilities entrusted to pharmacy technicians, while following their organization's policies and Code of Conduct. Student behavior and conduct shall include the following:

5.1.a Appearance and behavior is professional and appropriate for the pharmacy work environment.

5.1.b Communicate clearly and effectively, both verbally, non-verbally, and in writing.

5.1.c Demonstrate a respectful and professional attitude when interacting with diverse patient populations, colleagues, and other healthcare professionals.

5.1.d Apply self-management skills, including time and stress management.

5.1.e Demonstrate problem solving skills, customer service, and teamwork.

5.2 Participate in wellness promotion and disease prevention.

5.3 Understands basic knowledge relevant to the pharmacy technician's role, including the following:

5.3.a Anatomy and physiology

5.3.b Pharmacology

5.3.c Medical terminology

5.4 Perform mathematical calculations essential to the duties of pharmacy technicians in a variety of settings.

5.5 Demonstrate adherence to infection prevention procedures.

Processing and Handling of Medications and Medication Orders

5.6 Accurately receive, process, and prepare products and prescriptions/medication orders that are safe for patient use.

- 5.7** Collect, organize, and record demographic and clinical information to assist pharmacists in the monitoring of medication therapy.
- 5.8** Identify patients who desire/require counseling to optimize the use of medications, equipment, and devices.
- 5.9** Explains concepts and processes for both compounded sterile and non-sterile medication products per applicable, current United States Pharmacopeia (USP) Chapter(s).
- 5.10** Prepares non-sterile medication products.
- 5.11** Store and prepare a variety of medication products (including requiring special handling and documentation), that will align with planned experiential rotation(s) and are in compliance with applicable current USP Chapters.

Some examples may include:

- Non-Patient Specific medications, variety of oral syringes prepared, unit dose medications, long-term care, and non-sterile compounding during simulation, emergency kits, emergency carts, and bulk compounding.
 - Prepare or simulate chemotherapy or hazardous drug preparations, per applicable current USP Chapters.
 - Controlled substances.
 - Investigational drugs:
 - Understand the appropriate medication-use process to investigational drugs, medications being used in off-label indications, and emerging drug therapies as required. Understand the handling of investigational drugs, including immunotherapy agents, biologic agents, and pharmacologic therapies.
- 5.12** Maintain pharmacy facilities and equipment.
- 5.13** Use information from Safety Data Sheets (SDS).
- 5.14** Describe the Drug Supply Chain Security Act (DSCSA) for product tracking, tracing, and handling requirements.

- 5.15 Use current technology to ensure the accuracy of medication dispensing.
- 5.16 Demonstrate Point of Sale process and adjudication, including collection of payment for pharmacy services.
- 5.17 Explain accepted procedures in purchasing pharmaceuticals, devices, and supplies.
- 5.18 Manage inventory of medications, equipment, and devices.
- 5.19 Describe the management of product recall, product shortages, and medication error reporting.
- 5.20 Describe accepted procedures utilized in identifying disposing of medications and supplies.
- 5.21 Process, handle, and demonstrate administration techniques of immunizations and other injectable medications.

Patient Care, Quality and Safety Knowledge and Skills

- 5.22 Demonstrate patient-safety and medication-safety practices (e.g., management of high alert, high risk, tall man lettering, look-alike/sound-alike medications).
- 5.23 Explain basic safety and emergency preparedness applicable to pharmacy services (e.g., floods, hurricanes, robberies, bio-terrorism, terrorism).
- 5.24 Perform medication histories as part of the medication reconciliation process.
- 5.25 Demonstrate point-of-care testing (e.g., glucose monitoring, cholesterol screening, blood pressure, temperature).
- 5.26 Verify measurements, preparation, and/or packaging of medications produced by others.

Regulatory and Compliance Knowledge and Skills

- 5.27 Demonstrate application of state and federal laws pertaining to processing, handling and dispensing of medications including controlled substances.

- 5.28** Discuss state and federal laws and regulations pertaining to pharmacy technicians, including obtaining and maintaining registration, licensure, and/or certification to work as a pharmacy technician.
- 5.29** Describe the pharmacy technician’s role, pharmacist’s role, and other occupations in the healthcare environment.
- 5.30** Explain the importance of regulatory and related agencies, such as: Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), Institute for Safe Medication Practices (ISMP), The Joint Commission (TJC), US Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Pharmacopeia (USP), Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI), National Coordinating Council for Medication Error Reporting and Prevention (NCC MERP), Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
- 5.31** Describe Protected Health Information (PHI) and maintain compliance with all Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) regulations.

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APPENDIX A

Awarding Credit for Prior Experience

The Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC) supports mechanisms, in accordance with institutional policy, where more candidates may qualify for and complete accredited pharmacy technician education and training programs. PTAC supports providing credit for demonstrated competency, as an important enhancement, making accredited pharmacy technician education and training accessible to students.

The process outlined below provides guidance on how to determine student credit for prior experience and/or demonstrated competencies.

1. Portfolio Creation

- a. PTAC recommends that programs seeking to provide credit for prior experience should create a portfolio of documentation that demonstrates justification for credit granted. Example documents *may* include:
 - i. Records of employer required training (e.g., USP didactic instruction, required regulatory training, and/or results of practical skills demonstration) inclusive of performance on the assessment.
 - ii. Supervisor attestation to experience **and** demonstrated competence of required curriculum elements.
 - iii. Documentation from high school, college, or other training completed (inclusive of specific content covered in coursework and student performance).
- b. Portfolios must be supplemented by knowledge assessment testing to validate credit substantiated via portfolio documentation (i.e., existing program examinations that fully cover each knowledge domain).
- c. For practical skill credit, the program must provide completed records of skill validation sheets.
- d. For experiential credit issued, a supervisor or preceptor attestation and evaluation of performance is required.

2. Limitations to Credit for Prior Experience

- a. Credit awarded must only be granted for competencies supported by documentation and/or testing.
- b. Methods used to document and test for competency in selected key elements must be deemed equivalent by the Program Director to methods used in the accredited pharmacy technician training program.

3. Relevant and Contemporary Experience

Prior experience should be contemporary to the candidate's enrollment in the training program. Records used to substantiate credit should be current to the training program curriculum (e.g., a program could not use regulatory standards that have been revised).



4. Review of Credit Awarded

Credit issued will be reviewed as part of the accreditation survey process.

- a. The program must have a process for the documentation of a student's prior experience and granting of credit (i.e., consider using existing checklists for areas of technician competencies).
- b. Credit issued without appropriate documented evidence may result in a survey citation.