

Foundation Trainee Pharmacist Recruitment Newsletter



Welcome to the February Foundation Trainee Pharmacist recruitment newsletter. We are now in the fifth year of the National Recruitment Scheme (NRS) and our applicants have been allocated one from their chosen list of training placements. We look in more detail at the numbers behind another huge recruitment round in the midst of a pandemic, and what this ongoing uncertainty means for the immediate future. We also highlight some of the work taking place to ensure the NRS continues to provide an evidence-based and fair recruitment process for all stakeholders.

Welcome to our February 2022 Newsletter which provides the latest news on the Foundation Trainee Pharmacist Recruitment Scheme.

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Queries: Who to contact

If you are an applicant and have an enquiry, you should go to the enquiries portal at: [HEE London and South East Support Portal](#). On the portal you will see a list of Frequently Asked Questions. If these do not answer your query, you can submit a question. This will be responded to within 48 working hours.

If you are an employer or University, please contact your local Pharmacy or Recruitment Lead if it is a local query e.g. about your Oriel entry. If it is a national query, please contact the Pharmacy National email inbox via foundationpharmacyrecruitment@hee.nhs.uk. Applicant queries will not be answered via this route.

The Final Numbers.....

A huge 3,476 places were advertised via the National Recruitment Scheme this year.

A total of 2383 applicants completed all stages of the recruitment process and thus were eligible to be considered for a place within Oriel. After minimum threshold criteria were set and applied to this cohort, the final numbers are as below (with 2020's numbers for reference):

Cohort Year	2021	2020
Number of successful applicants	2154	2215
Total number of places within the recruitment scheme	3476	3966
Hospital places	929	873
Community places	2547	3093
Offers accepted	1090	2005
Unallocated applicants (no training place matched to applicant)	17	20

The capability within the Scheme for Enhanced Preferencing allowed trainees to re-preference their choices as often as they wished up until the final iteration of the allocation process. Thus any trainees who did not receive offers initially could re-select their choices until an offer was made. This meant that **99% of successful applicants** were made an offer through the scheme and **89% accepted their offer**, with only 17 trainees not finding a suitable training place within the scheme.

Fill Rates and Regional Variation

There remain significantly more places within the Scheme than applicants (3476 versus 2383):

- ⇒ the **maximum fill rate achievable** had all appointable trainees within the scheme been allocated places was **62%**.
- ⇒ the **actual fill rate** achieved through this process was **55%**

Geographic location remains a significant factor in applicant preferencing, as shown in the regional fill rates in the table on page 3. Excellent training places exist in all locations, and we urge applicants to consider opportunities beyond popular locations to increase their chances of obtaining a training environment most suited to their wishes.

Fill Rates and Regional Variation - the numbers

Region	Places	Accepted	Declined	Expired	Fill rate (%)
Health Education England East Midlands	230	125	11	1	54.35
Health Education England East of England	323	158	14	5	48.92
Health Education England Kent, Surrey and Sussex	265	103	13	3	38.87
Health Education England London	763	535	25	2	70.12
Health Education England North East	186	93	9	2	50.00
Health Education England North West	361	234	19	7	64.82
Health Education England South West	343	121	29	6	35.28
Health Education England Thames Valley	137	71	6	2	51.82
Health Education England Wessex	123	43	4	3	34.96
Health Education England West Midlands	361	176	15	8	48.75
Health Education England Yorkshire and the Humber	273	139	5	2	50.92
Wales	111	111	6	1	100.00



Multi-sector Placements Continue to Attract Interest

As the pharmacy world continues to change at pace, so too do the preferences and expectations from students about their training. We have seen an increasing appetite from applicants to experience the variety of practice areas on offer during their Foundation year, and this has been borne out by the continued success of multi-sector placements such as the HEE-funded multi-sector programme, which allows trainees to spend a minimum of three months in general practice. This innovative programme achieved **an amazing 86% fill rate** this year.

Registration onto the National Foundation Trainee Pharmacist Recruitment Scheme via Oriel

In order to recruit via Oriel, employers must register each year via the online form below. You will need to provide programme specific information and agree to meet the terms of participation.

If you are an existing employer, your employer details will be available by selecting the correct Health Education England region followed by location (sector), Employer Type and speciality or size of organisation from the available selections in the online form below. Once you have submitted your form, you will receive an email from noreply@holograph.digital with a copy of your submission, please check your junk mail folder if you can't see this email.

We strongly recommend that you download a copy of last years information, which was advertised in Oriel, from the Pharmacy Employers and Programme Information 2021 spreadsheet which is available on the righthand side. The spreadsheet has filters added providing quick access to your programme information from last year. **If you have multiple programmes to submit (one form completion per programme) it is advisable to keep a track of which ones you have submitted and ensure you do not submit a programme which you do not plan to recruit to or duplicate entries.**

Please also read the employer guide, which provides detailed information about the National Recruitment Scheme and more information about registration and providing your programme information, in addition we have also prepared a short video for a step-by-step guide to how to complete the online form.

Please note that if you are an employer in Wales, you should not be completing the online form. Please contact Laura.Doyle3@wales.nhs.uk if you have any queries.

Employer Programme Information

[Employer Handbook](#)[Pharmacy Employers and Programme Information](#)

ONLINE FORM COMPLETION TUTORIAL VIDEO

The deadline for employers to register to recruit via Oriel and submit programme information for the 2023-24 cohort is 11:59pm on Tuesday 1st March 2022

Employer Registration Now Open for 2023 cohort

Employers wishing to recruit trainees via the NRS can now register to do so. Full details, including a comprehensive Employer Handbook and a helpful tutorial video can be found by visiting the dedicated employer section of the National Recruitment website here. The deadline for employers to register to recruit via Oriel and submit programme information for the 2023-24 cohort is 11:59pm on Tuesday 1st March 2022.

Evaluation: The Professional Attributes Framework

We continue to work with our partners and stakeholders to ensure that we learn from every iteration to make the process even better. The annual evaluation on the previous round of recruitment will be published in early 2022. You will also recall from the previous newsletter that we have been conducting a review of the Professional Attributes Framework to ensure it continues to meet the requirements and expectations of our changing profession. This is now in its final stages of stakeholder review, and we will publish the results in the coming weeks.

Equality Impact Assessment

As part of our regular review process, we undertook an equality impact assessment of the NRS to ensure it was meeting our aim of being a fair and robust recruitment process for applicants into Foundation training programmes. To maintain impartiality, we engaged the Royal Pharmaceutical Society as an independent observer and sought the input of a diverse stakeholder group recruited independently of HEE.

Feedback of the overall process was positive, with favourable comments around the inclusion of titles such as Mx and the mitigation of bias due to the types of assessments being conducted. Whilst this was pleasing to see, we can all do more to improve the experience for our applicants, and several further refinements were suggested which are in the process of being actioned as described below.

For employers, emphasising the diverse and inclusive nature of your workplace would help to attract a wider pool of applicants. For example, organisations whose programme information or websites actively supported recruitment of disabled applicants, or who displayed their support of LGBTQ+ applicants would be welcomed.

Protected Characteristic	Action
Disability	Make evidence requirement for reasonable adjustments in applicant handbook as clear as possible, and link directly to any external forms Obtaining evidence may have a cost attached; look for zero-cost alternatives where possible (e.g. obtain a Summary of Special Needs from Pharmacy Schools with trainee consent)
Disability/Sex	Provide reasonable adjustment information to applicants ahead of opening of application window Encourage employers to provide clearer information in programme information/ website links on disability/LGBTQ+ support offered
Multiple	Provide information on less than full-time working within handbook



Contingency Plan for 2022 Recruitment

Over the last two rounds, the COVID-19 pandemic has necessitated a change to pharmacy trainee recruitment. A decision was made with our stakeholders to cancel Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) and base all applicant rankings on scores obtained from Situational Judgement Tests (SJTs) and the Numeracy assessment.

As the 2022 recruitment round approaches, the Omicron variant continues to impact healthcare across the UK, and all available staff have been instructed to prioritise supporting the national vaccination campaign as a matter of urgency. An increasing number of pharmacists are being deployed in vaccine centres, with a significant number of community pharmacies also engaged to deliver vaccines at scale. This is in addition to extreme non-Covid related workloads and means that once again our workforce is being stretched to capacity. Therefore any return to interviews needs to be carefully weighed against current workforce pressures and the capability of our employers to be able to release significant members of their teams, at a time when the focus rightly is on frontline activity during an unprecedented and ongoing crisis.

As such we have once again worked closely with our partners and stakeholders including schools of pharmacy, employers and student bodies to confirm that the process for 2022 will remain as per previous rounds and consist of the SJT and the Numeracy assessment.

Looking to the Future

This is now the third year that MMIs will not have been possible, due to external factors beyond the control of any stakeholder in this process. This is not unique to pharmacy; recruitment into similar-sized specialties has also opted for similar contingency methodologies to those used within the NRS.

We acknowledge that frontline healthcare has been operating in crisis conditions for much of this time and therefore a return to 'normal' service may not occur for some considerable period, even if the pandemic is brought under a measure of control that no longer poses a significant threat to the NHS. Maintaining our current testing position affords us the opportunity for an in-depth scoping into how we may best incorporate a measure of communication skills assessment into the recruitment process that will not place further strain on frontline staff, but will allow applicants to evidence their proficiency in this area. Work on this has now begun and we will report our findings in due course.

And Finally...

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Once again a big thanks to the national recruitment team, our regional pharmacy leads and associated HEE teams, employers, question writers, schools of pharmacy, evaluation teams and pharmacy students, and others I'm sure I have missed. Please continue to feed your comments back to us and most importantly engage with our evaluations; they are a vital resource to help us improve the process year on year. As I always say; we couldn't do this without you all!

