

## Foundation Trainee Pharmacist Recruitment Newsletter



Welcome to the November National Recruitment Scheme Newsletter! We are now in the sixth year of the National Recruitment Scheme (NRS) and have successfully completed another round of assessments. We are currently in the middle of the offers process for this round, but already looking at what the 2023 round of recruitment has in store. This newsletter will look back at a year which saw us slowly emerging from the worst of the pandemic but still suffering from its impact, the latest NRS numbers, and our future ambitions for the NRS.

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

### Inside this issue:

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- The Early Numbers
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- Booking a Test Centre
- Evaluating and Evolving the NRS: updating the professional Attributes Framework
- And Finally...



### 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](mailto:foundationpharmacyrecruitment@hee.nhs.uk). Applicant queries will not be answered via this route.

## Covid Disruptions Continue

The COVID-19 pandemic necessitated a change to pharmacy trainee recruitment in 2020 and 2021. Due to the nationwide restrictions placed on large gatherings and face to face meetings, 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 2022 approached the new Omicron variant was causing a rapid increase in Coronavirus cases across the UK, and all healthcare staff had been instructed to prioritise supporting the national vaccination campaign as a matter of urgency. We saw an increasing number of pharmacists being deployed in vaccine centres, with a significant number of community pharmacies also engaged to deliver vaccines at scale. The sheer pace of infection spread meant that once again our workforce was being stretched to capacity, and in the early parts of the year people in England were being asked to work from home if possible.



The NRS team was again required to consult our partners and predict in January what the landscape would look like come assessment time. What became clear was that our pharmacy workforce continued to be heavily impacted by both the effects of the virus itself in terms of staff illness, but also by being heavily engaged on the frontline. Pharmacy teams were (and continue to be) integral in vaccination efforts and in dealing with the resumptions of activities that had been paused during the peak of the pandemic. This meant that the workforce to allow us to conduct MMIs in the fairest and most unbiased way simply could not be guaranteed, and all our partners were adamant that we should not regress our processes. We therefore decided to maintain the Covid contingency plan and continue with SJTs and the Numeracy assessment.

This however allowed us once again to be able to offer our full assessment process to applicants across almost every continent on the planet. We are indebted to our partners for their support and all our applicants for their understanding.

## The Early Numbers

The year-on-year trend for growing numbers using the NRS continues; a record number of applicants applied to the NRS and completed the SJT and numeracy assessments. The total number of training places advertised through the Scheme remains high, with a significant expansion in places offering at least three months training in different practice areas. This means that at the time of publishing over a quarter of all places advertised via the NRS are multi-sector. A full breakdown of the latest numbers is provided below.

| Cohort Year   |                         | 2023-24 |
|---|-------------------------|---------|
| Total number of applicants to the NRS   |                         | 3056    |
| Total number of applicants attending assessment   |                         | 2446    |
| Total number of places within the NRS   |                         | 3684    |
| Community places within the NRS (52 weeks single sector)                                |                         | 2191    |
| Hospital places within the NRS (52 weeks single sector)                                 |                         | 561     |
| Multi-sector places within the NRS (at least three months in a different practice area) | Total number of places  | 932     |
|   | Hospital main employer  | 419     |
|   | Community main employer | 513     |

## Supporting Our Applicants

The NRS website and in particular the Student Zone section continue to be the go-to resource for all applicant information, with over 75,000 page views in the last two quarters of this year. The Student Zone once again housed our webinar in partnership with the Royal Pharmaceutical Society, who generously hosted Health Education England, Health Education and Improvement Wales, NHS Education for Scotland and the British Pharmaceutical Students' Association to help answer many of the queries we were receiving from employers and applicants. Other key resources include FAQs, articles, a sample SJT paper with fully worked answer keys and rationales and a numeracy assessment.

Additionally, for the first time the SJT and numeracy papers were also provided as an electronic version that looked and behaved like the actual assessments. This allowed applicants to better acquaint themselves with the functionality and appearance of the real tests before sitting them.

For anything that the Student Zone page couldn't answer, the NRS teams were busy answering hundreds of queries sent in directly to the support portal.



## Booking a Test Centre

We have always advised that it is a sensible approach for applicants to sit their assessments earlier in the testing window. Our analysis shows that testing later in the window offers no benefit in terms of scores obtained. However, there are significant disadvantages to applicants in terms of the support we are able to offer as the testing window closes, as we cannot extend testing window deadlines and there is often no test centre capacity should a rebooking need to occur at such a late stage. This is a risk that can easily be avoided, and future applicants are therefore advised to sit assessments as early in the window as possible.



# Evaluating and Evolving the NRS: updating the Professional Attributes Framework

You will recall that last year we announced we were undertaking a comprehensive review of the Professional Attributes Framework (PAF), to ensure it aligned with the reforms to pharmacy education and training and remained reflective of the expectations of our NHS employers.

The multi-stage project methodology included (1) a mapping exercise to review the current PAF to the new Initial Education and Training Standards and Learning Outcomes and the Foundation Pharmacist Framework, (2) stakeholder interviews and (3) stakeholder panel review of updated framework.

The project has now been completed and we will be using the updated PAF to inform selection into the Foundation Trainee Pharmacist role henceforth. As expected, the new version of the PAF is an evolution of the existing framework rather than a completely new framework. You can find the updated PAF and associated documents here <https://www.lasepharmacy.hee.nhs.uk/national-recruitment/job-description-person-specification-and-paf/>

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## Person Specification, Professional Attributes Framework and Job Description

- Person Specification
- Professional Attributes Framework
- Job Description
- Bradford Sandwich Programme Person Specification

During the recruitment process for a Trainee pharmacist (Pre-reg) post the person specification and professional attributes framework (PAF) are the two documents which detail the essential and desirable criteria and all selection methods will be mapped to these documents.

Some of the criteria within the person specification are underpinned by behavioural indicators within the PAF.

These documents are available to download along with the generic national trainee pharmacist job description.

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## And Finally...

The National Recruitment Scheme is a huge team effort, requiring many people and organisations to work in tandem for effective delivery. We would like to extend a massive thank you to our national operations team, regional pharmacy leads and associated HEE teams, employers, schools of pharmacy, professional and representative bodies, evaluation teams and pharmacy students across England, Wales, and Scotland. You have all been invaluable in this process, and we couldn't do it without you!

Until next time,  
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