

Frequently asked questions

For pharmacy interns and preceptors

1 September 2021

The Pharmacy Board of Australia (the Board) developed these frequently asked questions (FAQ) to provide guidance to pharmacy interns and preceptors on their roles and responsibilities in relation to supervised practice. This includes the required steps for a pharmacy graduate to gain provisional registration and have the supervised practice approved by the Board in order to undertake a period of supervised practice to be eligible to apply for general registration as a pharmacist.

In considering these FAQ, pharmacy interns and preceptors should also refer to the Board's published:

- *Registration standard: Supervised practice arrangements* ([supervised practice standard](#)), and
- *Intern pharmacist and preceptor* [guide](#).

1. What are the registration standards for the pharmacy profession?

These standards (which includes the supervised practice standard), define the requirements that applicants, registrants or students need to meet in order to be registered. They can be accessed at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx.

2. If I am completing the final year of my pharmacy degree in Australia or New Zealand, what do I have to do in order to start my internship?

As outlined in the Board's supervised practice standard, you will need to:

1. Apply for provisional registration with the Board.
 - a. If you are a graduate of an approved program of study (or due to complete within the next six weeks) apply **online** from the 'Forms' webpage on the Board's website at <https://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms.aspx> (click on Start online application link), or
 - b. If you are a graduate of a substantially equivalent qualification in New Zealand, submit a **hardcopy** *Application for provisional registration and supervised practice* (APRO-60) which is available at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms.aspx.

If you apply for provisional registration **online**, you must also apply to have your supervised practice approved by submitting an *Application for approval of supervised practice* (AASP-60).

The **hardcopy** application APRO-60 already contains a section for approval of supervised practice, so you don't have to submit a separate AASP-60.

2. Enrol in an accredited intern training program (ITP) listed on the Australian Pharmacy Council website at www.pharmacycouncil.org.au.

For information on proof of identity documentation, and who can certify documents, see – www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Proof-of-Identity.aspx. Applications with

supporting documentation that is not certified according to Ahpra policy, may be returned to applicants.

For information on the relevant application and registration fees, see – www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Fees.aspx. Current fees are also detailed on the relevant application forms.

Your application(s) and/or supporting documentation should be lodged with the Ahpra office in the jurisdiction in which you intend to undertake your supervised practice. For postal and street addresses, see – www.ahpra.gov.au/About-Ahpra/Contact-Us.aspx. **Internship hours cannot be counted until both applications have been completed and approved by the Board.**

3. Should I apply for provisional registration and approval of my supervised practice at the same time?

Ideally, yes. For example, if you apply for provisional registration online and have secured a supervised practice position, the supervised practice approval application should also be lodged with Ahpra at that time.

There is no need to hold provisional registration if you haven't secured a supervised practice position. As provisional registration, once granted, only lasts for 12 months, if it is granted before you have secured a supervised practice position it is likely that you would need to renew your provisional registration in order to complete your 12 month internship.

If you decide to use hardcopy applications instead of an online application, there is an application form for both provisional registration and approval of supervised practice. Submit the hardcopy applications together so that you can have both approved at the same time, prior to commencement of your internship.

Remember, your internship hours cannot be counted until the Board approves both your provisional registration and supervised practice arrangements.

4. Can I work in a pharmacy before I have been granted provisional registration and have had my supervised practice approved by the Board?

When you hold provisional registration you have intern status, and the legal status to work in that capacity. Before then, your role in a pharmacy cannot be any different to what it was as a pharmacy student. Once your provisional registration and supervised practice arrangements have been approved by the Board, you may assume duties as an intern and your hours can count towards the required 1,824 supervised practice hours.

5. Can I enrol in an intern training program (ITP) before I have secured a supervised practice position?

Doing the ITP at the same time that supervised practice is undertaken enables interns to build on their academic knowledge with practical experience gained at the supervised practice site. The Board requires interns to successfully complete an accredited ITP during their supervised practice period.

An approved supervised practice position must be secured before enrolling in an ITP. The ITP provider can advise you about the conditions of entry to their programs.

6. Can I start my CPD before I start my internship and count it as part of my internship CPD requirement?

You should undertake CPD to meet your needs as required. Your ITP provider will check whether in the last 12 months, you have attained at least 40 CPD credits and have maintained records of your CPD that meet the requirements of the Board's CPD registration standard and guidelines.

(Also see FAQ 23 – Am I required to undertake continuing professional development as an intern?)

7. When can I commence my supervised practice hours?

You can commence your supervised practice hours once –

1. you have lodged complete applications for provisional registration and approval of supervised practice, and
2. you have been granted provisional registration by the Board, and
3. your supervised practice has been approved by the Board, and
4. your name and details of your supervised practice arrangements appear in the public register of practitioners.

Before undertaking any supervised practice, you must check the public register of practitioners at www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registers-of-Practitioners.aspx to confirm that you hold provisional registration, and that your supervised practice details have been recorded in the notations field on the register. Your supervised practice may commence from the date published on the public register. Your commencement date must correspond with your supervised practice start date documented on your *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60).

Your application for provisional registration cannot be processed, and your provisional registration granted, until Ahpra has received notification of successful completion of your pharmacy degree. There may be a lag time between notification of results and you being granted provisional registration due to many provisional registration applications requiring processing by Ahpra at this time. To ensure efficiency of this process, you should ensure that your application is complete with all of the required supporting documentation, and that your application has been filled out accurately to avoid application processing delays.

Your applications should be lodged with Ahpra about four to six weeks before your final exams, to further assist this process.

8. Do I have to advise Ahpra directly when I receive notification of my pharmacy degree results?

If you have completed your pharmacy degree in Australia, your university will notify Ahpra directly when your successful course completion has been confirmed. If you have completed your pharmacy degree in New Zealand or any other country, you are responsible for ensuring that Ahpra is made aware of your results and provide the required supporting documentation.

9. How long can I delay applying for provisional registration after finishing my pharmacy program?

There is no requirement to commence the internship within a certain amount of time after finishing your studies. However, the effects of significant delays in commencing your internship should be carefully considered.

10. If I am an overseas qualified pharmacist (other than from New Zealand), what do I need to do, before completing the above applications, in order to start my internship?

The first step is to successfully complete the required examination conducted under the auspices of the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) as outlined on the Board's website at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Overseas-Practitioners.aspx. Upon successful completion of the examination, APC will issue you a letter confirming that you are eligible to apply for provisional registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia.

You should submit an *Application for provisional registration and supervised practice* (APRO-60), which requires you to include the above mentioned APC letter. You are also required to organise for a current certificate of registration status (certificate of good standing) to be sent directly to Ahpra from every jurisdiction outside of Australia in which you are currently registered or have been registered during the previous 5 years. You must also attach a current Curriculum Vitae (CV) which details your full practice history (see the Ahpra Standard Format for Curriculum Vitae at www.ahpra.gov.au/Registration/Registration-Process/Common-Application-Forms.aspx).

11. Do I need to meet the Board's English language requirements when I apply for provisional registration or general registration?

The Board's revised *Registration standard: English language skills* which came into effect on 1 July 2015 requires you to meet the English language requirements when you apply for provisional registration. Refer to the Board's [English language skills registration standard FAQ](#) for more information.

12. What must I do if my preceptor at my current supervised practice location changes?

You must submit to Ahpra a new *Application for approval of supervised practice* (AASP-60). You must specify the remaining number of supervised practice hours that are to be completed under the supervision of your new preceptor. Your existing preceptor needs to complete the *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60) for the hours undertaken under their supervision. You should keep this record as evidence that these hours were undertaken, and it will need to be submitted to Ahpra when you apply for general registration at the conclusion of your internship. When you commence supervised practice hours under your new preceptor, you will also need to record the supervised practice hours completed on a new *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60).

Remember, you can only commence supervised practice hours under your new preceptor after it has been approved by the Board.

(Also see FAQ 15 below – *The supervised practice standard states that I must undertake a minimum of 152 hours of supervised practice under the direction of an individual preceptor approved by the Board in order for those hours to count. What does this mean?*)

13. Is there a chance that my supervised practice arrangements application will not be approved by the Board?

An internship would be considered suitable if it provides a broad exposure to pharmacy practice and enables you to address the competency standards relevant to entry-level practice. If you are hoping to complete an internship at a location which does not provide broad practice exposure, you may be advised to make additional arrangements.

Remember that the Board's supervised practice standard requires you to undertake at least 50 per cent of the required supervised practice hours in a community pharmacy or hospital pharmacy department, unless otherwise approved by the Board.

You also need to ensure that your preceptor meets the requirements of the supervised practice standard, which includes that they hold general registration, have practised as a pharmacist for at least 12 months, and that they do not have conditions on their registration that would impact on the supervised practice of an intern.

14. What do I do if I am changing my supervised practice location?

You must submit to Ahpra a new *Application for approval of supervised practice* (AASP-60). You must specify the remaining number of supervised practice hours that are to be completed at the new location. If the change in supervised practice location also involves a change in preceptor, then your existing preceptor needs to complete the *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60) for the hours undertaken under their supervision. You should keep this record as evidence that these hours were undertaken, and it will need to be submitted to Ahpra when you apply for general registration at the conclusion of your internship. You will then need to record the

supervised practice hours completed on a new *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60) under your new preceptor.

Remember, you can only commence supervised practice hours at a new supervised practice location after it has been approved by the Board.

15. The supervised practice standard states that I must undertake a minimum of 152 hours of supervised practice under the direction of an individual preceptor approved by the Board in order for those hours to count. What does this mean?

Some interns may change their supervised practice arrangements after a period of time. At least 152 hours must have been completed under the direction and/or supervision of an individual preceptor approved by the Board, in order for these hours to count towards the required 1,824 hours. This is to ensure sufficient learning opportunities for all periods of supervised practice that contribute to the 1,824 hours required for general registration.

16. Can I undertake supervised practice at multiple sites?

Yes. The Board encourages intern pharmacists to obtain practice exposure that is as varied as possible, to assist in the development of the required competence for initial general registration. Rotations to alternative supervised practice sites to the main supervised practice site as part of the training program are encouraged. Examples of this may include:

- for an intern pharmacist who is undertaking the internship in a hospital pharmacy department, rotation to a community pharmacy to gain exposure to community pharmacy practice, or
- for an intern pharmacist who is undertaking the internship in a community pharmacy, rotation to another community pharmacy that is affiliated with the main supervised practice site, which may offer different pharmacy services to those provided at the main site.

As stated in the Board's supervised practice standard, if supervised practice is undertaken concurrently across multiple training sites, the training must be coordinated by the approved preceptor. Under these circumstances, although the approved preceptor may not be involved in the direct supervision of the intern pharmacist during these rotations, it is the preceptor who is ultimately responsible for the oversight of the training program incorporating the additional rotations. The preceptor should give consideration to how their ongoing obligations as preceptor, including the conducting of meetings with the intern as part of the on-site training program, are not compromised as a result of the rotations.

Rotations that are to be part of the training program under the direction of the approved preceptor should be included in the application for approval of supervised practice and recorded on the *Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours* (SPWR-60). (Also see FAQ 17 below – *Do I require additional approval if I undertake supervised practice at multiple sites?*)

17. Do I require additional approval if I undertake supervised practice at multiple sites?

Your application for approval of supervised practice should include all supervised practice sites that are to be part of your training program, under the direction of your approved preceptor. Rotations to additional sites under the direction of the approved preceptor which have not been approved by the Board, of up to 180 hours in total, may also count towards your 1,824 supervised practice hours. If you anticipate that you will spend more than 180 hours at additional site(s), you will need to submit another *Application for approval of supervised practice* (AASP-60) in order to have the additional site(s) approved.

18. If I do my internship in a hospital pharmacy department, can I continue to work in a community pharmacy on weekends?

Yes you can. The Board encourages a broad training experience during the internship. It may be helpful to try to coordinate the two positions, which would enable you to count the weekend hours at the community pharmacy (see FAQ 16 – *Can I undertake supervised practice at multiple sites?*) If the community pharmacy hours are not approved, though, these cannot count towards your 1,824 supervised practice hours.

19. Can I do my internship in industry?

The Board's supervised practice standard states that at least 50 per cent of the required supervised practice hours are undertaken in a community pharmacy or hospital pharmacy department. Any other arrangements would need to be approved by the Board.

During your internship your competence to practise as a pharmacist will be assessed against a broad range of competencies. Working in the pharmaceutical industry will provide some good practice experience and exposure to a range of activities, however you will also need additional experience during your internship to make sure you are suitably prepared to practise in any practice setting once you gain general registration.

20. What costs are associated with the internship year?

The costs to undertake the internship year may vary from individual to individual. However below is a list of the standard costs that will apply to every intern:

- Provisional registration fees (application fee and registration fee). The Pharmacy Board of Australia fees are published on its [Fees](#) webpage.
- Fee for professional indemnity insurance arrangements should be discussed with a provider if you are not covered by your employer's arrangements (see FAQ 22 – *Am I required to hold professional indemnity insurance (PII) as an intern?*).
- Accredited intern training program fee. This may vary from course to course.
- Fee to obtain a senior or Level 2 first aid certificate.
- Written examination fee, which is published on the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) [Fees](#) webpage.
- Oral examination (practice) fee, which is published on the Board's [Fees](#) webpage.

Many continuing professional development (CPD) activities are free, even if you are not a member of a pharmacy professional organisation.

On completion of your internship, in order to gain general registration you will need to pay the Board's required fees (application fee and registration fee), as published on the Board's [Fees](#) webpage.

Once you hold general registration, you will need to renew this every year and pay the Board's annual general registration fee.

21. Can I take a break during my internship?

Yes you can. If it is a long break, think about the impact this may have on you achieving the required outcomes of your internship. You should also give consideration to the following:

- Taking a break may mean you are not able to accumulate the required hours for entry into a scheduled examination. For example, 75% of supervised practice hours are required to sit the oral examination. This may mean you will have to sit an examination at a later date than what you had initially anticipated.
- Successful completion of the registration examination requires you to pass both the written and the oral (practice) examinations within 18-months. Taking a long break in between sitting the two examinations may result in you needing to resit one of the examinations.
- Your intern training program (ITP) provider would need to advise you if you need to complete additional requirements.

- You need to ensure that the minimum CPD requirements were completed in the 12 months prior to applying for general registration.
- At the end of your internship when you apply for general registration, you will need to declare whether you meet the Board's recency of practice requirements as outlined in the *Registration standard: Recency of practice* (being 150 hours of practice during the previous 12 months, or 450 hours during the previous 3 years). If you do not meet this requirement, you may be required to undertake additional practice hours before you are eligible for general registration.
- While undertaking supervised practice you need to hold provisional registration. If your internship takes longer than 12 months (for example as a result of taking a break), you will need to renew your provisional registration, or submit a new provisional registration application if you have already renewed your provisional registration twice. This has associated fees.

22. Am I required to hold professional indemnity insurance (PII) as an intern?

As stated in the Board's *Registration standard: Professional indemnity insurance arrangements* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx), pharmacists with provisional registration are required to maintain the appropriate level of individual PII cover while practising. This may be achieved by taking out your own insurance cover, or through arrangements arising out of your employment, whereby you are covered by your employer's professional indemnity insurance or alternative coverage arrangements. If you do not hold your own professional indemnity insurance, you will need to have confirmed with your employer that you are covered by their insurance policy which only covers your supervised practice at your employment location.

23. Am I required to undertake continuing professional development as an intern?

Yes. You should refer to the Board's *Registration standard: Continuing professional development* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx), *Guidelines on continuing professional development* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines.aspx) and *FAQ on continuing professional development for pharmacists and pharmacy interns* (<http://www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/FAQ/CPD-FAQ.aspx>) for further information.

24. Are preceptors required to complete preceptor training?

The Board's supervised practice standard (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx) states that preceptors must have suitable relevant training or experience. It refers to the Board's preceptor guide, now titled the *Intern pharmacist and preceptor guide* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Internships.aspx), which preceptors are expected to apply to ensure they are meeting the standard.

The *Intern pharmacist and preceptor guide* states that pharmacists seeking approval to conduct supervised practice should undertake a preceptor training program to prepare for their role. Preceptors are also advised to seek further information from intern training program providers and continuing professional development providers on preceptor training options.

25. What Board requirements need to be fulfilled during my internship year in order to be eligible for general registration?

As outlined in the Board's *Registration standard: Supervised practice arrangements*, and *Registration standard: Examinations for eligibility for general registration* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/en/Registration-Standards.aspx), you will need to:

1. complete 1,824 Board approved supervised practice hours
2. successfully complete an accredited intern training program, and
3. pass the written and oral examination.

26. What evidence do I need to provide to Ahpra to show that the internship requirements have been met?

As outlined on the *Application for general registration for pharmacists currently holding provisional or limited registration (APGR-60)* (www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Forms.aspx), an application must include:

1. a *Statutory Declaration form: Weekly record of supervised practice hours (SPWR-60)* found at the above link. You need to maintain this record for each week of supervised practice undertaken, commencing on your first week of supervised practice, and
2. evidence of satisfactory completion of an approved intern training program.

27. Is there a maximum number of written or oral examinations that I am able to sit?

The Board does not state a maximum limit on the number of attempts at the written or oral examination. However if unsuccessful attempts are ongoing, the Board may review your application for an examination at some point, to assess whether it is satisfied that you are suitably able to undertake the examination.

28. I am required to complete an extemporaneous dispensing assessment as part of my internship, and this will be submitted to my intern training program provider. Can another pharmacist sign one or more of the individual extemporaneous dispensing report forms, or does my preceptor have to sign each of the six report forms?

Your approved preceptor may delegate supervision of compounding (extemporaneous dispensing) to another pharmacist. The pharmacist who supervises the compounding of the product can sign the individual product report(s) for the product(s) they have supervised, however the approved preceptor must sign the *Statutory Declaration of Preceptor assessment of extemporaneous products prepared by pharmacy interns*. In order to sign this statutory declaration, the approved preceptor must be satisfied that the compounding has taken place, that this was in accordance with the relevant practice standards, and that the products are acceptable for supply to a patient. The relevant documents are available at www.pharmacyboard.gov.au/Registration/Internships.aspx. Once all documentation is completed by a preceptor, it should be submitted to your intern training program (ITP) provider. Any queries can be directed to your ITP provider.

29. Do I need to renew my provisional registration if I have finished my supervised practice but have not yet successfully completed the oral examination?

Provisional registration is required while you are undertaking supervised practice. If you are no longer working in a pharmacy, it is not required.

However, if you are still working in a pharmacy in the same capacity as you were during your supervised practice hours, you should maintain your provisional registration so you have the legal status to work in that capacity.

30. Is completing an internship without being paid permitted?

When arranging supervised practice hours, it is the responsibility of the employer, preceptor and intern to ensure that legal employment arrangements are entered into. If required, advice on such matters should be sought from relevant authorities. The Board does not support arrangements that are contrary to legal requirements.

31. If I am having problems at my supervised practice site. Who can I speak to?

It is important to address any issues at the supervised practice site promptly, to ensure that good training outcomes are not compromised. Your intern training program provider is a good early contact for advice on how any issues should be managed. You can also discuss your concerns with an AHPRA pharmacy professional officer by contacting your state or territory AHPRA office. Please note

that advice on industrial relations matters such as pay disputes, will not be provided by Ahpra (see FAQ 30 – *Is completing an internship without being paid permitted?*)