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Background Paper
Intern assessment and feedback tools

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Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations	3
1. Introduction	4
1.1. Purpose of this paper	4
1.2. How to provide feedback	4
1.3. Anonymity	4
1.4. Additional information	4
2. Background	4
3. What we want to achieve	5
4. Proposed intern assessment tools	6
5. Feedback sought	6
6. References	6

List of Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
Ahpra	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
APC	Australian Pharmacy Council
CbD	Case-based Discussion
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
EPA	Entrustable Professional Activity
ITA	In-training Assessment
ITP	Intern Training Program
IYB	Intern Year Blueprint
NRAS	National Registration and Accreditation Scheme
PharmBA	Pharmacy Board of Australia
POF	Performance Outcomes Framework

Background Paper

Intern assessment and feedback tools

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of this paper

The purpose of this paper is to seek feedback on the usability and practicability of proposed new tools for pharmacist intern assessment and feedback.

Preceptors and supervising pharmacists are expected to *'assess and provide feedback on the knowledge, skills and performance of the intern so that experiences can be built upon and difficulties identified and remediated'* (PharmBA 2021).

We have worked closely with the [Pharmacy Board of Australia](#) (PharmBA) and subject matter experts to develop an initial suite of tools to help preceptors and supervisors in this challenging role. This work is a joint collaboration of the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC) and the PharmBA and has been funded by both organisations.

The draft tools have been endorsed for consultation by the project Governance Group, which comprises representatives from the PharmBA and the APC Board.

1.2. How to provide feedback

We encourage you to use the [online survey](#) to submit your feedback to us. However, if this is not possible you may send us your written feedback in a Word format. Please email to projects@pharmacycouncil.org.au.

1.3. Anonymity

We will NOT ask you to provide your name or contact details so you can be assured that your responses will be anonymised. However, we may use your examples or words to illustrate specific issues when we report back to the PharmBA or in other forums.

1.4. Additional information

For questions or clarifications please write to projects@pharmacycouncil.org.au or call us on 02 6188 4288.

2. Background

The purpose of the pharmacist internship (also referred to as the supervised practice period) is to allow pharmacy graduates to apply the knowledge and skills gained during academic studies while under the supervision of a more experienced pharmacist (PharmBA, 2021). During this period, the supervising pharmacist or preceptor is expected to *'assess and provide feedback on the knowledge, skills and performance of the intern so that experiences can be built upon and difficulties identified and remediated'* (PharmBA 2021, page 5).

The responsibility for intern assessment also extends to Intern Training Program (ITP) providers who gather evidence on intern performance through a number of avenues. However, at this point in time, the guidance

available to preceptors, supervising pharmacists, interns and ITP providers regarding assessment of intern performance is largely general and non-specific.

Recognising the need for improvements in this area, we commissioned an Intern Year Blueprint (IYB) project to inform the PharmBA on decisions regarding assessment of intern competence. The [Intern Year Blueprint Literature Review](#) (APC, 2017) showcased practice in comparable countries overseas and extensively discussed assessment and feedback methods in the published literature.

Commencing later in 2018, we undertook a major review and revision of the accreditation standards for pharmacy degree and intern training programs. This culminated in publication of a suite of documents including a new [Performance Outcomes Framework](#) (APC, 2020) in early 2020.

The development of a Performance Outcomes Framework (POF) signaled a major shift in the assessment of pharmacy students and interns. It meant that effective January 2020, intern assessment in the workplace would be based directly on the POF rather than on the [National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacist in Australia 2016](#) (Pharmaceutical Society of Australia, 2016). The registration examinations (Oral and Intern Written) will continue to be mapped against the National Competency Standards Framework.

The POF is derived from and mapped to the National Competency Standards Framework, which remain the consensus standard of practice for pharmacy in Australia. The POF describes performance outcomes that must be achieved by the point of graduation and those that must be achieved at the end of the internship.

Assessment of performance during the period of supervised practice needs to occur primarily in the workplace, that is in internship sites. To assist those with responsibility for intern assessment we published an [Intern Year Assessment Blueprint](#). The IYB suggests appropriate assessment methods that can be used. Working with the PharmBA we have now developed an initial suite of draft assessment tools based on the methods recommended in the blueprint.

3. What we want to achieve

The PharmBA has committed to engage with stakeholders to identify how best to support interns and preceptors in facilitating good outcomes across the intern year. We aim to improve intern and preceptor experiences during this period and ensure that interns are achieving the performance outcomes necessary for general registration.

Improving the internship experience by providing more structured assessment tools must be carefully balanced against preceptor workload. Supervision of an intern already requires a significant amount of work, and the introduction of new assessment tools may increase the time commitment for both preceptors and interns. We acknowledge that many preceptors will be quite familiar and comfortable with the use of the proposed types of assessment tools, while others will have minimal experience with them. We aim to make the tools easy to use and applicable across a range of internship sites.

Other than the PharmBA mandated assessment of compounding in the workplace during the ITP, intern assessment is currently conducted using a mix of tools across different workplaces. It is advantageous from a quality assurance perspective to have greater consistency by using more standardised assessment tools.

We hope that these tools will assist preceptors and supervising pharmacists document the work they already do. Interns will collate this documentation in a portfolio as part of the evidence of satisfactory completion of supervised practice. ITP providers are primarily responsible for providing assurance to the PharmBA that pharmacy interns have achieved the performance outcomes through collection of evidence in a portfolio. This means that ITP providers will serve as a “clearing house” (Intern Year Assessment Blueprint, 2021).

4. Proposed Intern assessment tools

Guided by a team of experts from Australia and New Zealand, we have developed an initial suite of tools and accompanying guidance. The proposed tools have been designed to address more than one performance outcome particularly when several outcomes can be demonstrated simultaneously in one context.

It is not within the scope of this initial phase to develop all of the tools necessary to “fill” the toolkit for the entire program of assessment of intern performance during supervised practice. At a later phase, adoption of a programmatic approach will enable different assessment tools to be used in a coordinated manner to allow appropriate decision-making about an intern’s readiness-to-practise.

The initial suite of tools comprises the following assessments:

1. in-training assessment (ITA) activities
2. case-based discussion (CbD)
3. entrustable professional activities (EPAs)

5. Feedback sought

We are seeking feedback on the usability and practicability of the tools through this consultation paper and through consultative workshops in Canberra and Melbourne. We then aim to evaluate the utility of the initial tools by pilot testing in pharmacies between August and October 2021.

We are seeking [expressions of interest](#) to participate in the consultative workshops and the pilot testing.

We encourage you to use the [online survey](#) to submit your feedback to us. However, if this is not possible you may send us your written feedback in a Word format. Please email to projects@pharmacycouncil.org.au.

6. References

Australian Pharmacy Council. September 2017. Intern year Blueprint Literature Review. Accessed 5 April 2021 at [Intern Year Blueprint | Australian Pharmacy Council](#).

Australian Pharmacy Council. May 2018. Intern Year Assessment Blueprint. Pharmacy Board of Australia and Australian Pharmacy Council. Accessed 31 March 2021 at [Intern Year Blueprint | Australian Pharmacy Council](#)

Australian Pharmacy Council. January 2020. Performance Outcomes Framework 2020. Accessed 31 March 2021 at [Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Programs | Australian Pharmacy Council](#)

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Pharmaceutical Society of Australia. 2016. National Competency Standards Framework for Pharmacists in Australia 2016. Accessed 31 March 2021 at [National Competency Standards - Pharmaceutical Society of Australia \(psa.org.au\)](#)

