

Pharmacist

Pharmacists work either in a community or retail pharmacy or in a hospital or clinical pharmacy.

The Work

Community or Retail Pharmacist

You could be:

- supplying over the counter and prescribed medicines to the general public
- making sure that medicines are stored securely and correctly labelled
- checking that dosages and instructions on prescriptions are accurate and clear
- referring back to a doctor if there is a problem, for example a conflict with other medication the person is taking
- preparing prescriptions and advising people how to use medicines properly
- managing and training other pharmacy support staff
- advising customers on a range of health matters and referring them to their doctor or dentist if needed
- carrying out cholesterol and blood pressure checks and diabetes screening
- keeping records and business accounts up to date and handling cash.

Hospital or Clinical Pharmacist

You could be:

- making sure that drugs and medicines are stored securely and correctly labelled
- checking the quality of medical products
- preparing drugs and medical products and arranging for them to be delivered to various hospital departments
- maintaining and ordering supplies
- advising and informing staff and patients on the best drugs to use
- making rounds of the wards with other medical staff to see patients and discuss medication
- training and supervising pharmacy support staff
- keeping records and completing forms.

Pay

Pay rates can vary depending on whether the pharmacist works with the National Health Service (NHS), with a private practice, or is self-employed.

Pharmacists working within the NHS are on Agenda for Change scales. The current pay scales are from April 2025. Pre-registration pharmacists are normally on Band 5, £34,494 to £42,977 a year. After registration pharmacists are on Band 6, £43,169 to £52,603 a year. Clinical and specialist pharmacists are on Band 7, £52,769 to £61,377 a year. Senior pharmacists and team leaders are on Band 8a, £65,032 to £70,202 a year and Band 8b, £76,778 to

£82,133 a year.

Salaries for community pharmacists range from £30,000 to £60,000 a year depending on experience and size of pharmacy.

Conditions

- Community or retail pharmacists work in shops including chain stores and supermarkets – they may visit people at home.
- Hospital or clinical pharmacists work in laboratories or dispensaries and may visit patients in the wards or in residential homes – they may sometimes work in health centres.
- All types of pharmacists usually work regular hours although retail pharmacists may have to work at weekends or in the evening, and hospital pharmacists sometimes have to work shifts and be on call.
- Flexible or part time hours are possible.
- Pharmacists usually have to wear a white lab coat or other protective clothing.

Getting In

- You need a degree (SCQF Level 10) in pharmacy. In Scotland, the University of Strathclyde and Robert Gordon University offer a Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) degree course.
- Entry to Robert Gordon is 4 good Highers including Chemistry and one from Maths, Biology (or Human Biology), Physics or Psychology, plus National 5 English and Maths.
- Entry to Strathclyde is for 2nd year and you need Advanced Highers plus 4 good Highers.
- To work as a pharmacist you need to register with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC). You can do this on completion of the necessary qualifications and one year pre-registration training (see 'Training' below).

What Does It Take

You need to be:

- methodical and pay close attention to detail
- accurate and precise – mistakes could be fatal
- a good organiser
- willing to take responsibility
- able to get on well with people, both colleagues and customers
- able to explain detailed and sensitive information to the public
- patient and understanding when dealing with the public.

You should have:

- IT skills
- a professional manner
- a good memory
- business skills if working as a retail or community pharmacist.

Training

- After completing your MPharm degree, you would complete a paid Foundation training year and pass a registration assessment to gain GPhC registration to become a qualified pharmacist.
- Most hospital pharmacists go on to take a postgraduate certificate or diploma in clinical pharmacy.
- You need to keep up to date with research and development of new drugs.

Getting On

- You will be required to keep your skills and knowledge up to date by undertaking continuous professional development (CPD) courses throughout your career.
- You could be self-employed, either as a locum or running a high street pharmacy.
- You can train as a supplementary prescriber, to work in a Primary Health Care Trust.
- There are opportunities to teach or do research.
- There are also opportunities in general management and advisory or consultancy work.
- You can take specialist postgraduate courses.

Contacts

General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC)

Tel: 0203 713 8000

Email: info@pharmacyregulation.org

Website: www.pharmacyregulation.org

Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheGPhC

NHS Scotland Careers

Website: www.careers.nhs.scot

Website (2): jobs.scot.nhs.uk

Royal Pharmaceutical Society Scotland

Tel: 0845 257 2570

Email: scotinfo@rpharms.com

Website: www.rpharms.com

X: @rpharms

Facebook: www.facebook.com/royalpharmsoc

Statistics

Employment Status : Not available this career.

Past Unemployment - Scotland

No Claimant statistics available for Scotland.

Predicted Employment Statistics : Not available this career.