



27 August 2020

Devika Mudaliar
Skills Engagement Executive, Skills IQ
Level 1, 332 Kent Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Technical Advisory Committee,

RE: SkillsIQ Draft 1 of Certificate III and Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support qualifications

The Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia is the national professional organisation for more than 5,000 pharmacists, pharmacists in training, pharmacy technicians and associates working across Australia's health system. SHPA is committed to facilitating the safe and effective use of medicines, which is the core business of pharmacists, especially in hospitals.

SHPA welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Skills IQ consultation on Hospital Pharmacy Training Package Products – Certificate III and IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support. This consultation has been informed by SHPA members through SHPA's Speciality Practice groups. We offer this feedback in addition to the valuable information our representatives have provided on the TAC and IRC committees.

SHPA surveyed leading members of both the *Technician and Assistants* and the *Leadership and Management* Speciality Practice streams which represent 1,079 members. The survey listed 40 pharmacy Technician activities derived from SHPA's white paper [Exploring the role of pharmacy technicians and assistants to improve patient centred care](#)¹, to identify a starting benchmark for most common activities undertaken by Technicians and Assistants in the hospital pharmacy setting. Respondents were asked to indicate the time spent by the collective hospital pharmacy Assistants and Technicians team, undertaking each activity in their workplaces by identifying each as occurring 'most of the time', 'some of the time', 'seldom', or 'never'. The survey results were used as the basis for a virtual workshop.

On Monday 17 August, SHPA hosted a virtual workshop to explore the relationship between SkillsIQ's Draft 1 of the Certificate III and IV qualifications and SHPA's *Hospital Pharmacy Technician Activity Survey* outcomes. The workshop had 18 attendees comprising of members of the Technician and Assistants Leadership Committee, the Leadership and Management Leadership Committee and SHPA staff. Leadership Committees are the top tier of SHPA's Specialty Practice program which covers 30 specialties. SHPA Leadership Committees are democratically elected from a network of experts practising in the specialty. Members of these two Leadership Committees were invited to participate as their expertise is highly relevant to the role of Technicians and Assistants in Australia's hospital pharmacy sector.

From this workshop SHPA has identified key points for consideration in the development of the curriculum for hospital pharmacy Technicians and Assistants that impact on the proposed Certificate III and IV qualifications. SHPA has aimed to collate these in the recommendations below.



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SHPA Recommendations:

- 1. Compounding must be incorporated as a core unit of both the Certificate III and Certificate IV qualifications, to ensure a basic understanding of ordering, issuing and labelling of compounded products and an appreciation of the manufacturing process.**

According to SHPA members, compounding of aseptic products (i.e. parenteral feeding solutions and cytotoxic drugs) is considered a *routine* activity, classified by more than 50% of respondents as a task undertaken by Technicians and Assistants most of the time in their workplace. Compounding of pharmaceutical products (i.e. topical creams/ointments and oral solutions) also highly ranked as a *common* activity for Technicians and Assistants working in hospitals across Australia.

SHPA members are aware of the challenges with completing these units when compounding is not a service offered at the learner's workplace. It was agreed however, by all attendees of the workshop, that an understanding of compounding from both manufacturing and procurement perspectives was relevant, even to those who do not undertake this activity. Most sites who do not compound their own pharmaceutical products, will purchase externally compounded ones. It is imperative that pharmacy Technicians and Assistants completing either of these qualifications, have a basic understanding of ordering, issuing and labelling of compounded products and an appreciation of the manufacturing process.

Whilst it is understood that these Certificate qualifications are required to deliver skill-based competencies, SHPA believes this significant theory can be embedded as part of an existing unit, such as HLTPHA012 'Assist with dispensing of prescriptions and medication orders'.

- 2. The following Certificate III units must also be core for learners enrolled in Certificate IV (without first completing Certificate III), to equip them with the skills necessary to be competent in undertaking the majority of routine tasks expected of hospital Technicians:**

- HLTCDD003 Use medical terminology in health care
- HLTPHA010 Maintain pharmaceutical imprest stock
- HLTPHA011 Pack pharmaceutical products
- HLTPHA012 Assist with dispensing of prescriptions and medication orders
- HLTPHA013 Order, maintain and distribute pharmaceutical stock

As outlined in table 1, SHPA members have identified dispensing, managing pharmaceutical stock, maintaining pharmaceutical imprest stock, and packing of pharmaceutical products, as activities *routinely* undertaken by hospital pharmacy Technicians and Assistants. It is hence essential that the units relevant to these skills, are also mandatory to all learners enrolled in Certificate IV and have not first completed Certificate III.

The use of medical terminology is another skill that underpins the majority of work expected of Technicians and Assistants in Australian's hospital pharmacy workforce. Therefore, it too should also be considered a mandatory unit for all learners enrolled in Certificate IV and have not first completed Certificate III.

- 3. Development of interpersonal skills should be an essential component of both the Certificate III and Certificate IV qualifications, to support learners in navigating complex team dynamics typical of hospital pharmacy settings.**

It was noted by SHPA members at the workshop, that a fundamental skill required of all Technicians and Assistants working in Australian hospitals, is the ability to navigate complex team dynamics.

Hospitals are complex workplaces and pharmacy support staff are not just expected to work collaboratively with pharmacy department staff, but a vast number of hospital staff (i.e. nurse unit managers, resource nurses, clinical nurses and ward assistants) working across a vast range of disciplines. It would be extremely useful for learners enrolled in either qualification, to develop interpersonal skills as a component of an existing unit, such as CHCDIV001 'Work with diverse people'.

4. The following therapeutic units, currently proposed to be included in the Certificate IV qualification, should be offered as electives and linked to non-dispensing competencies, to provide learners with knowledge that will support future Hospital Technician roles whilst demonstrating their understanding through the provision of education sessions or the compounding of pharmaceutical products:

- HLTPHA022 Apply knowledge of medicines used to treat gastrointestinal and nutritional disorders to dispense medication to patients
- HLTPHA023 Apply knowledge of medicines used to treat cardio-respiratory disorders to dispense medication to patients
- HLTPHA024 Apply knowledge of medicines used to treat central nervous system disorders to dispense analgesic medication to patients
- HLTPHA026 Apply knowledge of medicines used to treat endocrine and genitourinary disorders to dispense medication to patients
- HLTPHA028 Apply knowledge of medicines used to treat eye, ear, nose and dermatological disorders to dispense medication to patients

As pharmacists' roles have evolved to allow more time for clinical activities and direct patient care, pharmacy assistant and pharmacy technician roles have also expanded as they provide more support to pharmacists in core technical functions. The Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support should offer learners with an interest in undertaking these activities, an opportunity to obtain appropriate knowledge and skills necessary to take on some of these specialised roles.

SHPA members believe the inclusion of the above therapeutic units as an elective in Certificate IV, is a positive step in driving the future of the Technician workforce in Australia and aligning it with current international roles. The challenge is in linking these knowledge-based units to appropriate practical and relevant skills. Several of these units are currently linked to dispensing competencies, however it was agreed that an understanding of the therapeutic use of medicines is not required to be competent at dispensing, an expectation of learners completing HLTPHA012 'Assist with dispensing of prescriptions and medication orders' in Certificate III.

SHPA members suggested that, where appropriate, some of these units are linked to educational sessions in which learners are required to apply their knowledge to deliver education. Other units may lend themselves to be linked to compounding competencies as the medicines include commonly manufactured products.

5. As an application of relevant Certificate III and/or Certificate IV units, learners should be expected to demonstrate competency for completing the following activities that are currently being undertaken by Hospital Pharmacy Technicians and will support future Pharmacy Technician roles:

- Identifying patients who have not had their history or medication allergies or adverse drug reactions document

- Screen medication orders for compliance with legal and local requirements for pharmacist review of non-compliant orders
- Prepare a current medications list for a patient with the reasons for any changes to be reviewed by a pharmacist
- Annotate medicine order with information on the supply and storage of the medicine (e.g. imprest medicine, fridge)
- Pack medication administration aid (e.g. webster packing)

The above listed activities were classified as *common* or *less common* activities in table 1. Most of these activities are occurring to some extent, in current practice and if not, they are certainly activities Technicians will be expected to undertake in the near future. It is therefore important, as a means of future proofing the qualifications and ensuring they remain relevant, to assess learners enrolled in Certificate III and/or IV on competently completing these activities.

6. The descriptions used to identify roles and scope in the hospital pharmacy workforce should align with those detailed in the *SHPA Standard of Practice for Pharmacy Technicians to support Clinical Pharmacy Services*², to ensure standardisation, professionalisation and greater mobility within the pharmacy support workforce.

The terms *pharmacy assistant* and *pharmacy technician* are often used interchangeably and may have distinct differences in certain jurisdictional regulations and policy documents. It is essential however, that these terms are defined in the scope of these qualifications to assist with identifying the different skills necessary to competently undertake each role. The descriptions used to identify roles and scope within the hospital pharmacy support workforce, should align with those defined in the *SHPA Standard of Practice for Pharmacy Technicians to support Clinical Pharmacy Services*.²

Pharmacy Assistant: Supports pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in the delivery of hospital pharmacy services through the provision of administrative and basic technical activities and may have the following qualifications, or equivalent training and experience:

- Certificate III in Community Pharmacy
- Certificate IV in Community Pharmacy

Pharmacy Technician: Supports pharmacists in the delivery of hospital pharmacy services through the provision of higher-level administrative, technical and leadership activities, and may have the following qualifications, or equivalent training and experience:

- Certificate III in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support
- Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support

Advanced Pharmacy Technician: A pharmacy technician with a minimum qualification at Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support, who has successfully completed a structured competency assessment in order to undertake extended scope of practice activities (refer to Training and Education section of this Standard).

SHPA members are excited by the developments in both Certificate III and Certificate IV in Hospital/Health Services Pharmacy Support qualifications, instigated by SHPA's workforce study and white paper.¹ We appreciate the development of this curriculum is ongoing and that considerable revision has taken place since the version we have reviewed. We provide this feedback in order to ensure the expertise of the profession is on record in support of this endeavour. Pharmacists and pharmacy Technicians and Assistants working as a team in the delivery of clinical pharmacy services will increase the capacity of Pharmacists to deliver clinical services to individual patients. With appropriate education, training and competency assessment, pharmacy



Technicians and Assistants can undertake a range of ward-based administrative, supply, technical and cognitive activities under the supervision of a pharmacist.

If you have any queries or would like to discuss our submission further, please do not hesitate to contact Johanna de Wever, General Manager, Advocacy and Leadership on jdewever@shpa.org.au.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'K. Michaels'.

Kristin Michaels

Chief Executive



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Table 1: Hospital Pharmacy Technician activity survey results

(SHPA survey undertaken August 2020)

<p>Routine activities</p> <p>≥50% of respondents classified this activity as occurring MOST of the time</p>
1. Assist with dispensing of prescriptions and medication orders
2. Order, maintain and distribute pharmaceutical stock
3. Maintain pharmaceutical imprest stock
4. Pack pharmaceutical products
5. Conduct small scale compounding and labelling of aseptic products
<p>Common activities</p> <p>≥50% of respondents classified this activity as occurring MOST or SOME of the time</p>
6. Management of staff, including recruitment, orientation, performance review and development
7. Conduct small scale compounding and labelling of pharmaceutical products
8. Answer basic enquiries related to medication availability and dosage forms
9. Maintenance of pharmacy equipment
10. Identify if all required medications are available in the patient care area and order medication for confirmed orders when required
11. Participate in medication safety and usage audits
12. Participate in accreditation activities
13. Management of special medicine supply schemes (stock and documentation) including vaccines, blood products, special access scheme, hospital in the home, antimicrobial stewardship program
14. Identify patients who have not had their history of medication allergies or adverse drug reactions documented
15. Assist in managing the storage and retrieval of patients' own medications
16. Gather and distribute consumer medicines information (CMI) leaflets to patients prior to counselling by a pharmacist
17. Provide medication supply information to health professionals, e.g. medical, nursing and pharmacy staff
<p>Less common activities</p> <p>>50% of respondents classified this activity as occurring SELDOM or NEVER</p>
18. Screen medication orders for compliance with legal and local requirements for pharmacist review of non-compliant orders

19. Clinical trials reconciliation and documentation
20. Administer and maintain PYXIS machines and robotic dispensing systems
21. Information technology software support
22. Identify patients requiring a supply of medicines on discharge and identify if the patient consents to accessing Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme medicines from a community pharmacy where appropriate
23. Prepare a current medications list for a patient with the reasons for any changes to be reviewed by a pharmacist
24. Receive medication information queries for pharmacist review
25. Annotate medicine order with information on the supply and storage of the medicine (e.g. imprest medicine, fridge)
26. Assist in identifying, reporting and reviewing near miss or medication errors
27. Transport medication and documentation between sites
28. Obtain information to assist with the medication reconciliation process
29. Identify patients requiring medication counselling or adherence aids for pharmacist review
30. Assess patients-own medications and products as suitable for inpatient or discharge use, if deemed clinically appropriate by the pharmacist
31. Utilise the National Medication Management Plan to identify patients who are at high risk of medication related problems and may require a medication review
32. Screen patient information for medication-related information (e.g. weight, height, smoking status) to assist pharmacist review
33. Pack medication administration aid (e.g. webster packing)
34. Identify patients' prescribed medicines requiring therapeutic drug monitoring for pharmacist review
35. Access and record patient medicine levels for pharmacist review
36. Ensure all inpatients have venous thromboembolism prophylaxis assessment
37. Administer and document destruction of controlled medicines
38. Assess and record patient-specific laboratory data for pharmacist review
39. Prepare information for uploading by a pharmacist to a patient's My Health Record
40. Education sessions for medical/nursing staff on PBS

References

¹ Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia. Exploring the role of hospital pharmacy technicians and assistants to enhance the delivery of patient centred care. [SHPA role redesign whitepaper](#). SHPA, Victoria; 2016

² Claire Bekema, et al. Standard of Practice for Pharmacy Technicians to support Clinical Pharmacy Services, Society of Hospital Pharmacists of Australia.; 2019