

DEPARTURES AND VARIATIONS FROM THE UNIVERSITY'S REGULATORY
FRAMEWORK:

MPharm (Hons)

COVER SHEET

To note that Chair's action has been taken to approve a request from the Faculty of Life and Health Sciences to diverge from the norm on module size, to have a higher than pass standard for progression from integrated foundation year to Year 1, and to use a different exit award title from that of the parent course.

Memo

To: Prof Aine McKillop, ADE, Faculty of Life and Health Sciences

From: Prof Kathryn Burnett, Academic Lead for Education, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical sciences

Date: 17th June 2020

Ref: Cases for ASQEC

Cases to be made following revalidation event of Unit of Revalidation 3C4A

Unit of Revalidation 3C4A Pharmacy

Academic Office notes on revalidation event, March 2020:

A case should be made to ASQEC for:

- approval to maintain the non-standard module sizes (see also below comment under section A3).
- The non-standard progression criteria from the year 0 international programme and the associated consequences of failure.
- Where the exit award title differs from the parent award title

The School would like to present the following cases and seek approval from ASQEC for the approaches taken.

1. A case for maintaining the non-standard module sizes

The MPharm programme is accredited by the General Pharmaceutical Council in accordance with the Standards for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists. Standard 5 of the accrediting standards sets out requirements of course structure and design, in that the curriculum must have its component parts integrated in a coherent manner, with particular reference to the science and practice component parts, and must be progressive, the spiralling of the curriculum enabling students to deal with issues in an increasingly more complex way. **There is no professional standard as to how this is done in relation to module credit point size; the standard is just that the curriculum must be integrated and spiralling.**

Guidance is provided that the integration must be aligned to Step 9 of Harden's Integration Ladder, which is deemed to be 'Multi-disciplinary'. At Step 9 disciplines must be delivered through identified themes contributing to the students' overall understanding of each theme. Fogarty (1991, cited Harden, 2000) described this stage of integration as 'webbed', where *'a fertile theme is webbed to curriculum contents, and disciplines or subjects use the theme to sift out appropriate concepts, topics or ideas'*. Any perceived barriers between disciplines are removed by this approach, with the delivery of each theme at each level being the responsibility of a multi-disciplinary team.

Prior to the curriculum being changed to align with these new education standards, it was a traditional programme structure, with subject-specific disciplines being taught within distinct modules – Physical Pharmacy, Pharmacology, Microbiology, Pharmacy Practice, Pharmaceutics, Pharmaceutical Chemistry, etc. The learning and teaching materials to deliver the required knowledge was all there, it just was not taught in an integrated multi-disciplinary approach.

Several institutions, in addressing this integrated curriculum requirement, moved away from standard module sizes, with the 120-credit point module approach being adopted as an ‘easy’ way

to integrate the material that is being taught under a single module ‘umbrella’. It would appear to be a rational approach but was not considered by the course team due to the consequences of failure and student progression.

Other institutions adopted a systems-based approach to the curriculum re-design, in which the disciplines could come together under a theme, based on the different body systems – cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal, etc. This systems-based approach was adopted by the School.

The MPharm course is integrated around the core body systems covering the fourteen main physiological thematic areas outlined in the British National Formulary¹ (BNF). These fourteen thematic areas have been condensed into four specific themes that form the major content of years 2, 3 and 4 of the Ulster MPharm.

The four themes are:

1. Cardiovascular, endocrine, renal, nutrition and blood;
2. Respiratory, reproductive, gastrointestinal, skin, liver and urinary tract;
3. Cancer, infection and immunology;
4. Central nervous system and ENT.

It is through these thematic areas that spiralling, and vertical integration, of the curriculum through levels 5 – level 7, through Molecules to Man 1, 2 and 3, can be achieved. For example, in level 5 drugs and treatment associated with hypertension is discussed, revisited in level 6 when a patient with more serious heart failure would be considered, and revisited again in final year through Case Based Learning (CBL) looking at patients with heart failure and other co-morbidities. Another example of the spiralling of the curriculum would be in teaching dispensing skills, which is taught through levels 5 – 7, with the prescriptions and patients becoming increasingly complex in nature.

Horizontal integration of the curriculum is achieved through a ‘spine’ of Professional Practice Skills. Components of professional practice, learnt within relevant therapeutic areas, are considered in professional practice and assessed as professional competencies within long/thin professional practice modules. This completes the integration of scientific and practice/clinical learning. Figure 1 illustrates the spiralling and integrated nature of the course.

¹ The British Medical Association and The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain. *British National Formulary (Current Edition)*, BMA and RPSGB, London.

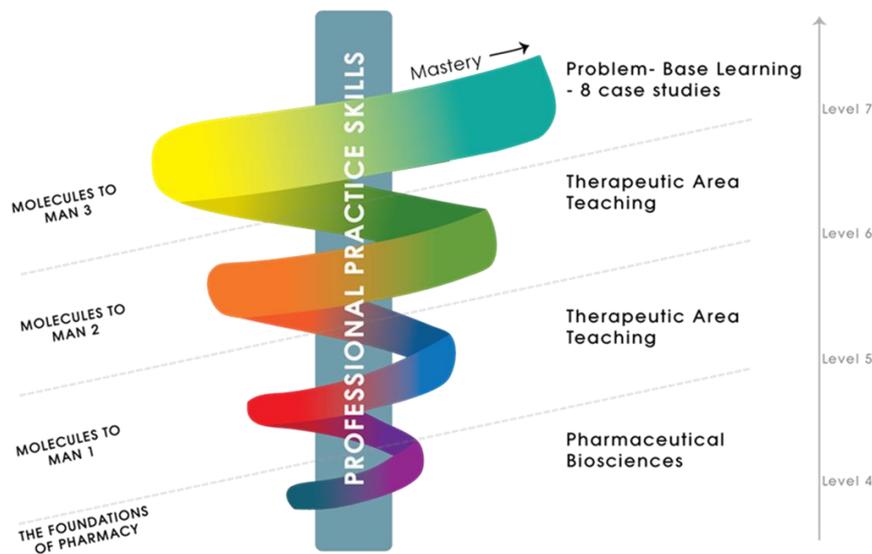


Figure 1: MPharm Spiral curriculum

When redesigning the curriculum, previous teaching was redistributed amongst whichever theme was appropriate in the first instance, and then the focus of some content e.g. a drug used in a pharmaceutical analysis practical class, was changed to realign to a theme if required. It was important that the credit points assigned to a new module reflected the content within a module, therefore this redistribution resulted in the credit sizes of modules being determined by the volume of relevant material to be delivered, and therefore does vary from the standard 20-credits suggested within the Curriculum Design Principles. The final credit value was determined to be relevant to content and therefore student effort. Changes were made following first year delivery in relation to student effort with PHA530 and PHA532, which had both been 25 credits, being changed to 20 and 30 credits respectively as a direct consequence of student feedback which was that PHA532 had more content.

In conclusion, the module sizes have been determined through a multi-faceted approach, taking into consideration the following factors:

1. The body system approach, which is necessary for delivery of an integrated curriculum, a requirement of the professional body;
2. The content to be delivered relevant to the body system – some body systems require greater content due to the prevalence of the disease within population health – cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, cancer and infections, are the greatest causes of morbidity and mortality in healthcare;
3. Ensuring credit point size reflects student effort;
4. The requirement for the spine of Professional Practice Skills which runs as long/thin modules through years 2, 3 and 4, horizontally integrating the knowledge and skills with professionalism, law and ethics;
5. Feedback from students.

We seek approval from ASQEC in support of this approach.



2. A case for non-standard progression criteria from the year 0 international programme and associated consequences of failure

The year 0 international programme is available as an International Foundation Pathway (IFP) and an International Foundation Year (IFY). An international student can either complete the IFP and then use this qualification as an entrance award for a programme of study at Ulster or an alternative institution, or, complete an integrated IFY on an existing programme of study in order to continue on that programme of study. The benefit in the latter IFY is that the student gains a visa for the full period of study (5 years in the case of the MPharm and MSci) at Ulster University, rather than looking elsewhere upon completion of the IFP.

The School requested the inclusion of the IFY into both the MPharm and MSci Pharmaceutical Biosciences programmes, and the School team had significant input into the development of, and significant input into the delivery of, the required science modules to ensure the suitability of the year for entry onto our programmes.

In order to progress from the IFY onto year 1 of our programmes, it is important that the underpinning scientific knowledge, equivalent to that of the chemistry GCE A-level curriculum, was obtained, at an attainment level equivalent to that required for direct year 1 entry. For this reason, the progression criteria needed to explicitly mention the requirement of a high level of attainment overall, and not just a pass, and a high level of attainment in the science modules specifically, to ensure that students entering the programmes met the equivalent grades required of those students entering directly into year 1 and had the underpinning subject-specific knowledge required.

To determine the required levels of attainment to proceed onto our programmes from the IFY, the [Equivalence Tables](#) for qualifications on the Ulster website was used. The Diploma in International Foundation Studies is a level 3 qualification and would therefore equate to the Access Diploma (NI). However, because the IFY is delivered by Ulster, we have used the slightly lower equivalence requirements of the Certificate of Higher Education. It is not appropriate to use the Ulster Foundation Degree equivalencies because this is a level 5 qualification.

For the MPharm, therefore, which requires equivalent of GCE A-level AAB for entry into year 1, an equivalent of 70% overall in the IFY is required. In addition, as the AAB must include chemistry and one other science, this also necessitates that 70% must be achieved in the two science modules completed within the IFY.

For the MSci Pharmaceutical Biosciences, which requires equivalent of GCE A-level BBB for entry into year 1, an equivalent of 60% overall in the IFY is required. In addition, as the BBB must include chemistry and one other science, this also necessitates that 60% must be achieved in the two science modules completed within the IFY.

Students who enter into year 0 of the programmes will be aware of the entry grades required for progression at the time of registration and the consequences of not achieving the required grades. Those students who cannot progress but who have successfully passed the IFY, albeit at a lower level, will be awarded the Diploma in International Foundation Studies (STE pathway) which may be acceptable for entry onto other programmes.

We seek approval from ASQEC in support of this approach.

3. A case for the exit award title differing from the parent award.

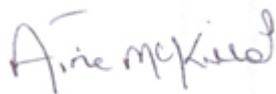
The BSc (Hons) Pharmaceutical Studies has been the exit award for the MPharm programme since first validation in 2009. It is the exit award widely used across Schools of Pharmacy in the UK.

There are statutory reasons why the exit award cannot have the word 'pharmacy' in it. The term 'pharmacy' is a protected title under the Medicines Act 1968 and is restricted to a registered pharmacy or the pharmaceutical department of a hospital or health centre, and only people on the Register of Pharmacists can call themselves a pharmacist and practice as such.

Additionally, globally, there are many qualifications which enable someone to register in their country of qualification, and among these qualifications is a BSc Pharmacy degree. It could cause confusion if we therefore awarded a BSc Pharmacy as an exit award.

It is important that graduates with the exit award fully understand that they cannot practice as a pharmacist as they have not completed the accredited programme. By not using the term 'pharmacy' in the award this removes any doubt and confusion on this matter and continues to protect the title 'pharmacy' under the law.

We seek approval from ASQEC in support of this approach.



Professor Aine McKillop
Associate Dean (Education)
Faculty of Life and Health Sciences