

CARDIFF
UNIVERSITY

PRIFYSGOL
CAERDYDD

School of Pharmacy and
Pharmaceutical Sciences

Ysgol Fferylliaeth a
Gwyddorau Fferyllol

PASSPORT TO Pharmacy

What must I do to
become a pharmacist?

What does a pharmacist do?

Before you discover how to become a pharmacist, you might want to know what a pharmacist actually does! Put simply:

Pharmacists use their expert scientific knowledge of medicines and health to improve patients' lives.

They know:

- ✓ which medicines work best to treat different illnesses
- ✓ what the side effects can be
- ✓ how our bodies interact with different medicines
- ✓ how those medicines interact with each other within our bodies.

In practice, pharmacists can do a whole range of things to improve people's health and wellbeing.

Some pharmacists work directly with patients by providing advice, prescribing medicines and dispensing drugs, as well as administering medicines and vaccinations.

Others work in research laboratories to discover new drugs and treatments for all kinds of diseases. Some pharmacists redevelop existing drugs to better treat a disease or find new ways of delivering drugs into our bodies using technologies such as tiny needles, aerosols, capsules or even nanoparticles.

Pharmacists can also work for the pharmaceutical companies that manufacture and distribute a whole range of medicines or in government helping to advise on which medicines are safe for patients to use.

So, if you love science and you love helping people, a pharmacy career might be perfect for you!



Did you know?

- You have to study a **four-year Master of Pharmacy degree (MPharm)** at university to become a pharmacist. This is where you'll gain in-depth scientific knowledge of medicines and the human body and learn the skills you'll need to treat patients.
- There are lots of different **exciting** career options for qualified pharmacists.
- Many pharmacists hold **consultations** with patients to diagnose medical conditions and prescribe medicines to treat them – just like a doctor. Others work behind the scenes helping to find **new medicines** or **improve existing ones**.
- After you have completed your MPharm degree, you'll need to do a year's **paid work experience** – called a 'foundation training year' before you can sit a test to qualify as a pharmacist.



Year 9

Homework: A pharmacist needs to plan ahead, complete tasks within a set time frame, and take pride in their work. So, why don't you apply these skills to your homework tasks? It will help you to get the best results you can too.

Choose your GCSEs: Remember that most schools of pharmacy will want you to have good grades in either Double Science or Single Science Biology and Chemistry. English/Welsh is also important and, since numeracy is essential for pharmacy students, Maths is a subject worth focusing on.

Hobbies and interests: Pharmacy students are not all 'work, work, work'. The next few years will be challenging at times, so finding non-academic things that you enjoy is really important. The time you spend on fun activities will help you to relax and build resilience, which means you can bounce back when things go wrong. Pharmacy professionals also need to be excellent team players and communicators. Hobbies can help you to build these essential skills.



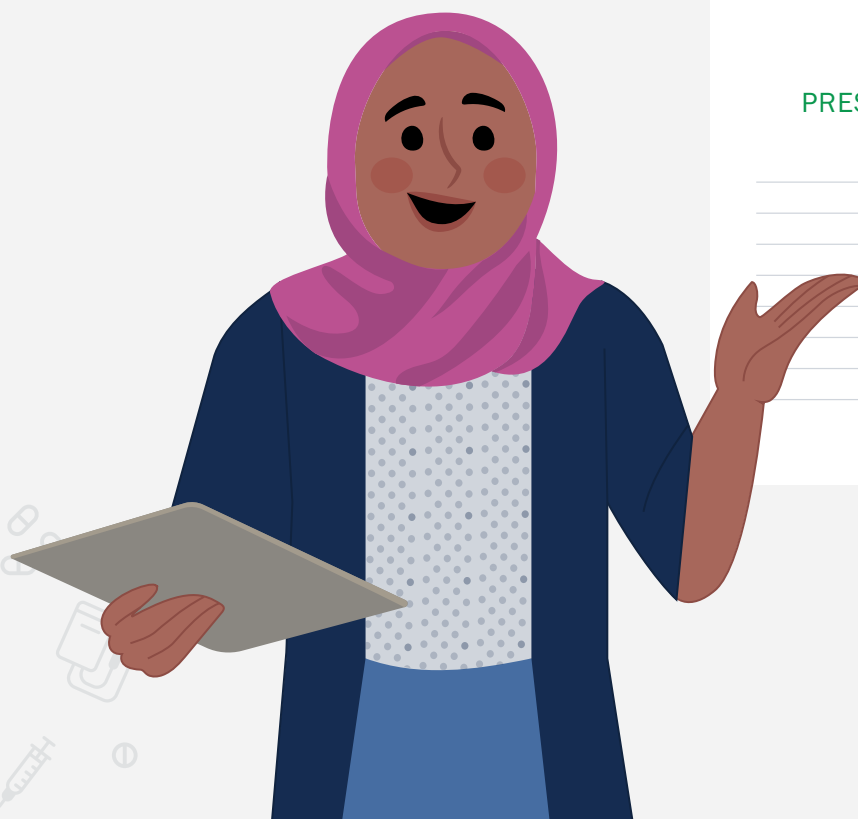
Year 10

Think: A good pharmacist continually reflects on what they do. This involves thinking about what went well, what could have gone better and what they have learnt. This is very important to help them avoid making or repeating mistakes that might be dangerous for their patients.

Keep your eyes and ears open: Start asking people what they know about a career in pharmacy – but remember that some people who want to be helpful may be misinformed, or their information may be out of date. The role of a pharmacist has changed a lot in recent years!

Practise reflecting with friends or

family: Pick one thing that you have done or seen each day and discuss it in detail. What happened? Why did it happen that way? What should have happened? Could it have happened any other way? What would you have done if you had been involved?



Year 11

Preparing for your pharmacy application

Choose your A-levels with care: While most universities will want you to obtain at least three A-levels to study pharmacy, they don't all specify the same subjects or which grades you need to secure: some require Biology and Chemistry, but some will accept either Biology or Chemistry if you have another science and a third subject.

For some pharmacy schools, a third A-level can often be anything you like but others may prefer particular subjects. Many pharmacy schools will not accept Critical Thinking or General Studies, and some may not accept certain subject combinations.

Maths or another science are often welcome, but Drama, History, English, Law, Welsh, French, Statistics, Economics, Art, Welsh Baccalaureate and other subjects can help you to become a well-rounded professional who is skilled at communicating which is very important for a pharmacist.

Remember to check the GCSE/Level 2 requirements too.

Confused? Check UCAS, the General Pharmaceutical Council's website and the websites of the pharmacy schools you might consider applying to before you make your final A-level choices.



could you volunteer?

If you are too young to get a work placement in a pharmacy, GP surgery or hospital, you could consider **volunteering** – perhaps you could mow the lawn or walk the dog (safely) for an older person who struggles to do this themselves. Do this consistently, not just occasionally, and use the time to reflect on what life must be like for them.

Think about new skills and experiences and how these might make you a good pharmacist who may be working with people from all walks of life one day. It might be a good idea to start keeping a journal to get in the habit of reflecting on your day.

Consider whether or not you enjoy helping them: pharmacists have **empathy** (the ability to ‘walk in someone’s shoes’), and they get a **sense of satisfaction** when they help people in need without anything in return. Does this sound like you?



Year 12

Work experience: It is important that you understand what it's like to be a pharmacist and what the role involves. You could apply for a weekend job at a local pharmacy or try to secure work experience to gain an insight into the profession.

Apply at the start of Year 12, by contacting your local pharmacy, GP surgery, care home or hospital to ask about work experience. They will often have lengthy waiting lists for work experience so apply early to avoid missing out.

Other things to consider: If you can't gain work experience in a pharmacy setting, don't worry! Many pharmacists will be very willing to provide you with information over the phone. You can also try shadowing a pharmacist to see what their typical day is like.

Think about your learning style and whether you are someone who likes to be hands-on and independent or more theoretical. Do you like working as part of a team?

Arrange to volunteer: You can consider volunteering if you haven't already done

so. Focus on volunteering that includes a care element, for example:

- care home support groups or clubs for children with physical and/or mental disabilities
- play schemes
- support groups and activity sessions for adults e.g. for patients with dementia
- children's sports coaching
- tutoring GCSE students
- mentoring young people.

Maintain your outside interests too. Enjoying music, sport, drama or art shows that you are a well-rounded individual (and this can really help to boost your mental wellbeing which is important).



Try to keep up with current news topics and developments in science and pharmacy. Read an online paper or look at reputable news websites. Explore scientific websites and those of the General Pharmaceutical Council and Royal Pharmaceutical Society.

There may be lots of students applying for a limited number of places at the pharmacy schools you are interested in, so being able to talk about how your volunteering, work experience or areas of interest will help you as a pharmacist could help to set you apart from other applicants.

Make a spreadsheet of pharmacy schools: Note what each university wants from its students, what makes you want to study there, and what worries you (if anything). Focus on the ones you would like to get into.

Do you have the right A-levels or should you look for pharmacy schools which offer a foundation year? How important is your personal statement and your predicted grades?

Remember that you must meet a pharmacy school's minimum requirements or your application will be rejected. Different pharmacy schools have different minimum criteria for GCSEs and other things. Most pharmacy schools also need you to be 18 or older on your first day.

Remember to note the UCAS code for each course.

Top tip: When you go to university open days or virtual events, add some notes to your spreadsheet about what each school prioritises, or key things you found interesting. This might come in handy when you come to apply.

Go on a fact-finding mission (and trust your gut).

Make the most of opportunities to visit pharmacy schools or to hear from staff and students there through online webinars. This will help you find out more about the way these schools teach pharmacy, and what current students think of the programme, the school and wider university.

Most of all, see how you feel when you visit a school of pharmacy — do you feel excited at the thought of studying there?



Be inquisitive: Before going to open days, think about the sort of questions you would like to ask pharmacy students, such as:

- Where do you go on placement?
- When do you start treating patients?
- What is the most enjoyable and most challenging aspect of the course?
- What's it like to live and study in the town or city where the school of pharmacy is based?

Remember:

Most of the information you need is available free of charge: go to open days and Pharmacy Taster Days, look at the General Pharmaceutical Council's website (pharmacyregulation.org), read university websites carefully, and talk to pharmacy students on The Student Room website.

The more people you speak to, the more perspectives you'll get which will help you weigh up your options about where you might like to study pharmacy.

Personal statement: You'll need to write a personal statement as part of your application to study pharmacy. This statement needs to cover the qualities or experiences that your preferred pharmacy schools look for in their students so make sure you look back over their entry requirements and think about what they told you at open day.

Don't just write what you've done. Instead, explain what you learned from those experiences including your work experience or volunteering opportunities and how this will help you become a thoughtful, respectful pharmacy professional.

Through your personal statement you can:

- display your passion for pharmacy and why you want to become a pharmacist
- demonstrate your motivation, commitment, skills and experience that will help you succeed in your studies and as a pharmacist.

Top tip: Keep a copy of your personal statement – it may come in useful later if you get invited for an interview.

Year 13

Decision time: The vast majority of students apply to study pharmacy through UCAS. The UCAS application deadline varies for different courses so make sure you look at the UCAS website and prepare your application in plenty of time. The application deadline for pharmacy is usually in January.

Would you like to take a year out?

Some pharmacy schools are happy for their applicants to take a gap year, as you will start your studies with a year's more maturity and life experience. If you want to take a gap year, remember to request it when you apply.

Did you know? Most pharmacy schools will want to interview you as part of the application process. See **page 14** for interview hints and tips!

Ask for advice! If you have worries or concerns about applying to university, ask your school for advice.

Got a question? You can call or email the admissions team at the school of pharmacy or university you are considering applying to – they will be happy to answer your questions.

Applications: You'll make your application to study pharmacy online, through UCAS. Remember to apply early as there's quite a lot to think about and prepare.

Did you know? You don't have to complete your application in one go. You can start it and come back to it later.

Most schools of pharmacy will have an admissions team or admissions tutor who will be looking at every application for the following things:

- your qualifications and/or predicted grades
- the content of your personal statement (see **page 11**)
- the content of your reference
- your ability to articulate yourself in writing.



Get ready for your interview: Schools of pharmacy want you to enjoy their programme, succeed in your studies and flourish as a pharmacist. That's why they interview applicants who meet the basic criteria – they want to ensure that this really is the course for you and that you have the skills and potential to succeed. In addition, the pharmacy profession's independent regulator – the General Pharmaceutical Council – has introduced new standards for the initial education and training of pharmacists in Great Britain. As part of these new standards, schools of pharmacy are tasked with exploring applicants' professional behaviours, values and basic numeracy skills before they are offered a place to study Pharmacy.

This means you may be asked to give your opinion on different scenarios where pharmacists or pharmacy students are interacting with patients. You can discuss how you would respond in a similar situation. Don't worry, there aren't any perfect answers - it's just a good opportunity to explore your thoughts on the values and professionalism integral to a pharmacist's role.

You may also be asked to do some basic maths calculations as part of the interview process to ensure you have a basic level of numeracy. Again, this is nothing to worry about and you don't need to revise for these calculations.

Top tip: If you are asked to do some basic maths calculations, make sure you read the questions properly and check your answers.

Remember that your interviewer will want you to feel at ease and do well! Read on for more tips to help you prepare for your interview.

Deadline: Once you have applied to different universities, done your interviews and received any offers, you will need to make a decision about your offers.

No offers this year? You could consider trying to find a place to study pharmacy through confirmation and clearing when you get your A-level results (but places may be very limited) or reapplying next year when you know what results you have achieved. There might also be other degree programmes that you may enjoy studying so take some time to consider your options.

Again, UCAS will have a deadline for you to:

1. Make one offer your firm choice – this means you are accepting this offer as your first choice.
2. Make another offer, if you have one, your insurance choice – this means you are accepting this offer as a back-up if you don't get the grades needed for your first choice.
3. Reject any other offers you were made.

Interview Top Tips:

Think about **why you want to study pharmacy** and why you will be a good pharmacist in the future.

Read through your personal statement before your interview – it's likely that you'll be asked to talk about some of the things you've mentioned in your statement such as your skills and experience.

Keep an eye out on reputable news outlets for current medical and pharmacy related stories and research news. This can help you demonstrate a **keen interest in this area**.

Think about your 'values' and the way these might influence how you would react professionally to certain social and medical dilemmas. For example, how you might deal with patients professionally and empathetically.

Familiarise yourself with the GPhC's Pharmacy Standards of Practice before your interview. You won't be tested on these but **demonstrating an understanding** of what is expected of pharmacists and the way they practice is certainly beneficial.

As well as looking at the information on the GPhC's website, **browse the information on the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's website too**. This is a good, reliable source of information for those interested in learning more about the career options for pharmacists and different roles which pharmacists may undertake.

Try not to worry. Everyone gets nervous before an interview but this is a great chance to talk about yourself, your knowledge of pharmacy and to demonstrate that you have a good attitude towards learning and personal development.

Be yourself (and don't try and memorise set answers). Your interviewer is looking to get to know you a little and isn't expecting you to know everything or give perfect answers. Being yourself and showing good communication skills generally will set you in very good stead.

Key

B230: Each degree has a UCAS code. Two degrees may have different codes but be similar. Others may share an identical code but not have much else in common. Always double check the UCAS code for the course you want to apply to.

Foundation year: A few pharmacy schools offer students who did not take suitable A-level subjects the chance to apply to pharmacy via a foundation year. This is usually an extra year, before Year 1, where students are taught the science they did not study at A-level.

Foundation Training Year: Not to be confused with the foundation year above, this is the year of paid, work-placement training that all pharmacy graduates need to complete before they can sit an assessment to become a qualified pharmacist.

General Pharmaceutical Council

(GPhC): The regulatory body which sets the standards for your pharmacy degree and your career as a pharmacist.

Minimum Requirements: These are grades, skills or experiences that pharmacy schools want from their applicants. They will be different for each university so check these before you apply to increase your chance of receiving an offer.

Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs): This type of interview lets you talk one-to-one with many different interviewers, so that the pharmacy school can gain a fair and balanced overview of your strengths. Not all pharmacy schools conduct MMIs, some hold interviews with one or two members of academic staff.

Panel Interviews: A traditional interview style, where you may be interviewed by a panel of two or more people.

UCAS: The website you use to apply to study pharmacy at university. You will set up a UCAS account and use it to accept or reject offers, and pharmacy schools will use UCAS to contact you.

Remember...

- Choose your A-levels **with care**
- Arrange volunteering that ideally includes **a care element**
- Visit **schools of pharmacy** and find out as much as you can about the profession
- Keep **track of your choices** with a spreadsheet
- Take time to **enjoy hobbies**
- Practise **reflective thinking** with friends or family.

Study pharmacy at cardiff university MPharm (B230)

Once you apply, our Admissions Team will assess your application. In the following pages we will show you what the admissions process involves.

What happens after I apply to study pharmacy at Cardiff University?

October

- The UCAS application deadline for pharmacy is in January.
- Once you've applied, we check whether you have the minimum grade requirements, review your personal statement and read your reference.

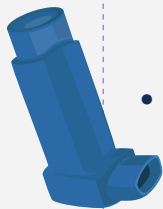
October - May: interviews

- If you meet the entry requirements and your application suggests you are a good fit for our course, we will get in touch with you to invite you for an interview which may be in person or online (meeting the minimum entry requirements does not guarantee that you will be offered an interview).
- We begin interviewing applicants as soon as we receive applications so the sooner you apply, the sooner you will hear whether or not you have reached the interview stage.
- You may be interviewed by more than one person and you may be asked questions based on scenarios that will help to explore your values, communication skills and knowledge. You may also be asked to demonstrate your numeracy skills.
- Please see **page 14** for interview tips.

April/May - check UCAS for an offer

- We make offers to successful interviewees via UCAS.
- If you are unsuccessful, you can request feedback from us on your performance at interview.

Did you know: you can also phone us for advice on A-level results day if you didn't get an offer from us but your grades are better than expected.



Visit us

- If you have an offer to study pharmacy with us, you will be invited to join us for an (optional) Offer Holder session, where you can learn more about the course and what it's like to study with us. You will also be able to access more information about our MPharm online at cardiff.ac.uk/pharmacy.
- If you have heard back from all of your choices, consider firming your offer via UCAS.



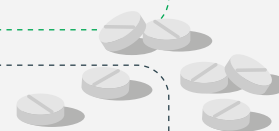
June - is your chosen course right for you?

- The final date for offer holders to make us their firm choice, make us their insurance choice, or reject our offer is in June.



August - A-level results day

- If you meet our offer requirements, congratulations! We will start sending you details of what happens next before we welcome you in person to begin your studies.
- Alternatively, if you have an offer from us but miss the grades we asked for, Cardiff University is sometimes able to offer you a place on another course but this isn't guaranteed.
- Please look at our website cardiff.ac.uk for more information about confirmation and clearing if you don't meet the offer requirements.



September

- If you secured your grades, welcome to the School of Pharmacy!
- Alternatively, if you are not starting university this year, enjoy your gap year, have fun widening your range of transferable skills to make you an even better pharmacist or stronger candidate for another course.



Pharmacy AT Cardiff UNIVERSITY

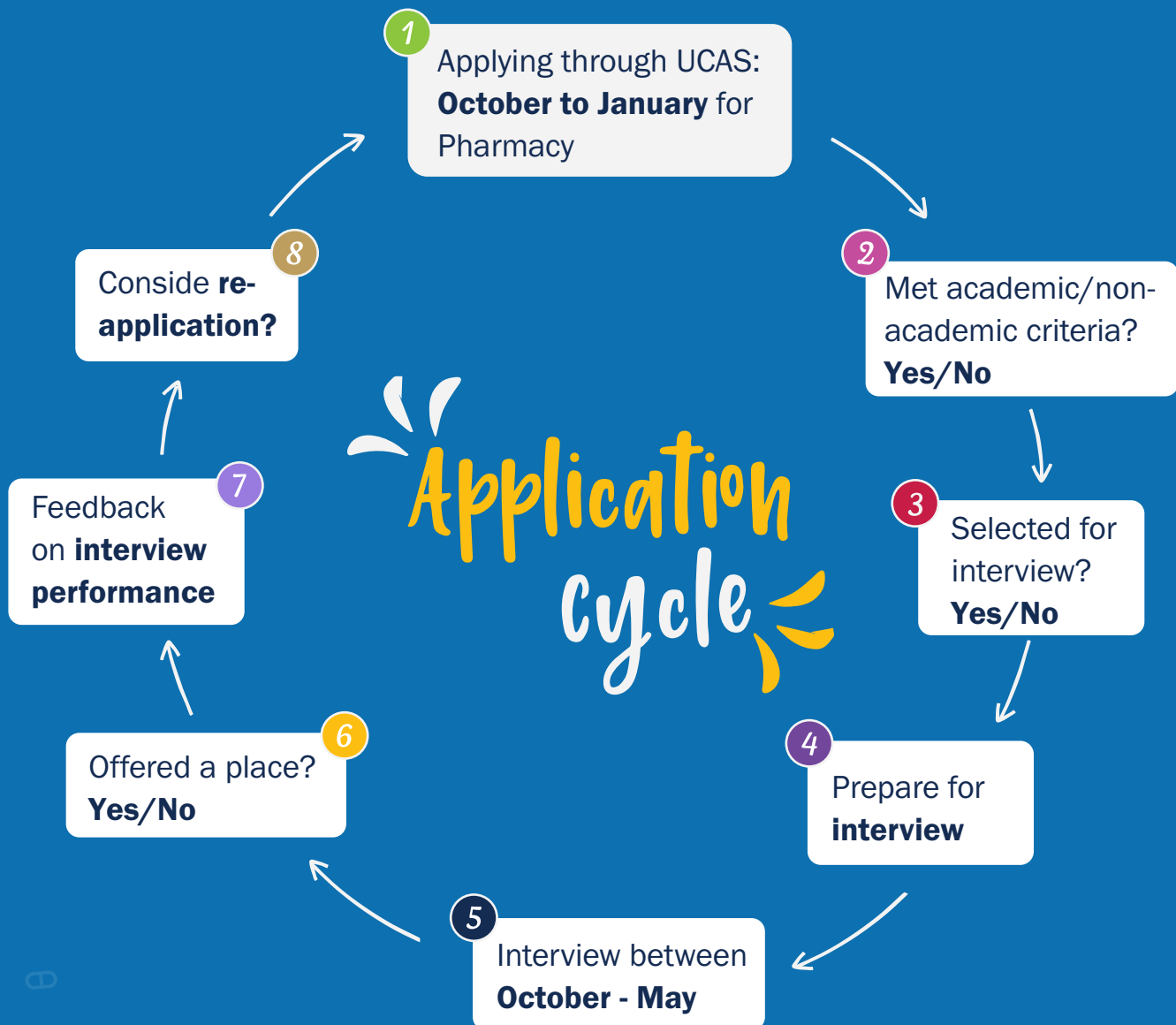
THE Application cycle



DID YOU KNOW?

- > If you apply to us but do not get an interview or an offer, we will be happy to hear from you again next year particularly if you achieved better than expected A-level results.

Want to know more? Go to cardiff.ac.uk/pharmacy



Notes



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Good Luck

cardiff.ac.uk/pharmacy