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Media release

Robust accreditation standards strengthen pharmacy profession in Aotearoa New Zealand

Pharmacy Council (Council) releases the new [Accreditation Standards for Aotearoa New Zealand Pharmacy Programmes](#). This marks the completion of significant work and the transition of the accreditation process to an in-house operation.

The new accreditation standards are designed to set a high-quality bar for pharmacy education providers in Aotearoa New Zealand and align with the new competence standards for pharmacists and pharmacist prescribers.

“This is an assurance for all the aspiring students out there thinking about becoming pharmacists in the future. When joining a pharmacy school, you want to receive education that meets the highest standards and can equip you with the knowledge and tools necessary to provide safe and competent practice as pharmacist.

We’ve put in the hard work to ensure that the pharmacy programmes accredited by us meet those expectations. You should be confident in the pharmacy education programme when it has Council’s accreditation seal” says Chief Executive Michael Pead.

Since 2019, Council focused not only on developing the new competence standards for pharmacists and pharmacist prescribers, but also on refreshing the set of accreditation standards and tailoring them all specifically to Aotearoa New Zealand needs.

“Juggling these significant projects simultaneously was not easy. This synergy empowers safety outcomes for both - pharmacists and their patients. To achieve it, we knew that engaging, meeting, and consulting with the profession during the development phase was absolutely necessary”.

While working on the new standards, Council met with the education providers and consulted with pharmacists and association representatives to hear the profession’s voice and seek insights and constructive feedback.

“Similarly, as part of our comprehensive process, we established the Accreditation Expert Working Advisory Group that provided us with the independent advice along the way. This all enabled us to establish and deliver robust and credible accreditation standards for 2024 and beyond.”

Just like the new competence standards, these accreditation standards embody the principles of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and encompass health and equity obligations. Together, they reinforce good practice and uphold the high-quality of pharmacy education programmes.

Council wants pharmacy students to thrive and succeed as pharmacists, making a positive impact on the lives of their patients and the future of Aotearoa pharmacy profession. That’s why we take great pride in having accomplished this project knowing that it truly sets a high-quality bar for the accredited education providers.

With the mandatory implementation of the new competence standards set for 1 April 2024, all new pharmacy programmes will now be accredited against the updated accreditation standards. Existing pharmacy programme providers will need to meet these new accreditation standards during renewal of their current accreditation cycle.

Background

The Council was established under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) and has a statutory duty to protect the safety of Aotearoa New Zealand public and promote good pharmacist practice.

Accreditation is one of the proactive mechanisms Council has to protect the public through ensuring the quality of pharmacy programmes. We do so by accrediting and monitoring pharmacy programmes, undergraduates' degrees, intern training programmes, and pharmacist prescriber programmes.

Accreditation Standards set and ensure high-quality standards for education providers of pharmacy education and provides us with external and independent assurance that education programmes are helping deliver safe and competent:

- intern pharmacists,
- pharmacists, and
- pharmacist prescribers.

There are currently two schools of pharmacy in Aotearoa New Zealand offering accredited pharmacy programmes – School of Pharmacy at University of Auckland and School of Pharmacy at Otago University. The accredited intern programme is provided by Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand.

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