

## Consultation Document

Addition of a new prescribed qualification for entry to the  
Intern Pharmacist and Pharmacist scopes of practice

30 July 2025

## Executive Summary

The purpose of this consultation paper is to seek feedback on the following proposal:

***The addition of the University of Waikato's Master of Pharmacy Practice as a prescribed qualification for the Intern Pharmacist Scope of Practice and Pharmacist Scope of Practice***

The University of Waikato has developed and is now offering a Master of Pharmacy Practice (MPharmPrac) to students who hold a relevant Bachelor degree and otherwise meet the programme's enrolment criteria. An aim of this new qualification is to ensure a sustainable workforce of pharmacists to meet the needs of New Zealand's growing population.

The Pharmacy Council of New Zealand, Te Pou Whakamana Kaimatū o Aotearoa (Council) is proposing, under section 12 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (the Act), to include the MPharmPrac degree as a prescribed qualification for the Intern Pharmacist and Pharmacist scopes of practice. This will allow MPharmPrac graduates to apply for registration first as Intern Pharmacists and then as Pharmacists, once they have successfully met the requirements for registration as a pharmacist. The qualification has already been assessed and accredited by Council against the Aotearoa New Zealand Accreditation Standards for Pharmacy Programmes<sup>1</sup> (Accreditation Standards).

## About us

The Pharmacy Council is responsible for the regulation of pharmacists in New Zealand pursuant to the Act. We protect the public by ensuring that pharmacists are competent and fit to practise.

There are currently three scopes of practice for pharmacists in New Zealand – Intern Pharmacist, Pharmacist, and Pharmacist Prescriber. One of our key regulatory functions, under section 12 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act), is to prescribe the qualifications required to enter each scope of practice. This means that only those who have a prescribed qualification can practise pharmacy in New Zealand as a registered intern pharmacist, registered pharmacist or registered pharmacist prescriber. Council is also responsible for accrediting and monitoring the qualifications and the educational providers that offer the qualifications.

The Act requires that Council must consult on any updates or changes to prescribed qualifications. Therefore, we are seeking feedback on the proposal to include MPharmPrac as a new prescribed qualification for the Intern Pharmacist and Pharmacist scopes of practice.

## Feedback and submissions

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<sup>1</sup> <https://pharmacycouncil.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Aotearoa-New-Zealand-Accreditations-Standards-for-Pharmacy-Programmes.pdf>

Council invites responses to this proposal for six weeks, with all responses to be submitted by **12 September 2025**.

Responses should be provided via [survey response](#)

If necessary, you can also email your response to [enquiries@pharmacycouncil.org.nz](mailto:enquiries@pharmacycouncil.org.nz).

We invite responses from members of the pharmacy profession, patients and other interested individuals, and organisations. Council will review and consider all responses received prior to making a final decision on the proposal outlined in this document.

This consultation and a summary of the responses received will be published on Council's website and will remain available to the public. Please advise in your submission if you wish to remain anonymous.

## Background

### *Prescribing qualifications*

Under section 12 of the Act, Council must prescribe the qualifications required for individuals to enter each of the three scopes of practice for the profession of pharmacy. Section 13 of the Act describes the principles that must guide Council when prescribing qualifications, including that the qualification:

- (a) must be necessary to protect members of the public; and
- (b) may not unnecessarily restrict the registration of persons as health practitioners; and
- (c) may not impose undue costs on health practitioners or on the public.

### *Existing Qualifications*

Currently there are three qualifications prescribed for registration in the Intern Pharmacist and Pharmacist scopes of practice. These are:

- Bachelor of Pharmacy<sup>2</sup>, University of Auckland
- Bachelor of Pharmacy<sup>3</sup>, University of Otago
- Australian pharmacy degrees from Schools of Pharmacy holding either full or conditional accreditation from the Australian Pharmacy Council (APC).

The qualifications offered by both New Zealand schools of pharmacy (in Otago and Auckland) are 4-year Bachelor (or Honours or with Honours) degrees. In both cases, there is no direct entry from high school. Students enter Year 2 of the degree having completed a first year studying general health sciences. The University of Auckland will also consider alternative admissions from students who have completed a minimum of two years fulltime study in a relevant degree from a recognised university.

A number of universities in Australia offer a range of pharmacy qualifications through their schools of pharmacy accredited by APC. Types of Australian pharmacy degree programmes from accredited schools of pharmacy, include:

- Bachelor of Pharmacy (4 years)
- Bachelor of Pharmacy (Hons) (4 years)
- Master of Pharmacy (graduate entry, 2 years fulltime or 5 years part-time)
- Master of Pharmacy Practice (5 years fulltime including intern year)
- Master of Pharmacy (extended) (6 – 7 years fulltime)
- Doctor of Pharmacy (graduate entry, 2 years fulltime).

### **Rationale for prescribing MPharmPrac**

The University of Waikato began offering the new MPharmPrac in February 2025. This pharmacy degree is the first of its kind to be offered in New Zealand; the pharmacy schools in Otago and Auckland currently only offer undergraduate degrees. This type of graduate-

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<sup>2</sup> Including Bachelor of Pharmacy (Honours)

<sup>3</sup> Including Bachelor of Pharmacy with Honours

entry pharmacy programme has been successfully delivered in Australia for the past 15 years.

Council has been guided by the principles in section 13 of the Act in proposing that the University of Waikato's MPharmPrac is a prescribed qualification. The qualification has been designed to be comparable in terms of cost, content and educational outcomes to existing prescribed qualifications for the Intern Pharmacist and Pharmacist scopes of practice. It should deliver graduates that are safe, fit and competent to be registered on the Intern Pharmacist scope of practice.

### **Overview of the qualification**

The MPharmPrac is a two-year graduate entry programme, which means applicants for the programme must have an existing Bachelor's degree with a major in one of the molecular sciences (biochemistry, biomedical science, chemistry, molecular and cellular biology, or pharmacology) or equivalent. Applicants must also have achieved at least a B-grade average in the final year of their Bachelor's degree, and submit a personal statement, references and a criminal record check. Prior to confirmation of enrolment, the University of Waikato will interview all applicants to assess their communication and critical-thinking skills and prior science knowledge.

The MPharmPrac consists of 240 points (equivalent to 2 years full time study). The programme includes 2400 learning hours, incorporating 375 clinical placement hours in a range of pharmacy settings. Further information about the qualification and its outcomes can be found here: [Master of Pharmacy Practice: The University of Waikato](https://www.waikato.ac.nz/study/qualifications/master-of-pharmacy-practice/#degree)<sup>4</sup>

### **Purpose and outcomes for the qualification**

The intention of the qualification is to attract a new cohort of students to the New Zealand pharmacy profession, including domestic and international students. This will help to ensure that there is a sustainable and high-quality workforce of pharmacists to meet the needs of the New Zealand population. On successful completion of the qualification, students will have sufficient education and practical experience in pharmacy to apply for registration in the Intern Pharmacy scope of practice.

The University of Waikato's admission criteria includes priority pathways for Māori and Pacific students. The University of Waikato advises that compared to the national average (6%), Waikato has a high proportion of Māori undergraduate students who upon graduation would be eligible to enrol (16%) in the MPharmPrac.

The programme also offers a viable pathway for overseas registered pharmacists who do not meet the current eligibility criteria for registration in New Zealand (either through the REQR or non-REQR pathways). It is envisaged that overseas applicants will be able to enrol in the programme based on their existing Bachelor degree (including Bachelor of Pharmacy) and provided they met the other criteria for enrolment. Successful completion of the MPharmPrac degree will provide assurance that the overseas graduate is safe to practise in New Zealand.

The programme is scoped at level 9 of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) National Qualifications Framework. It holds Committee on University Academic Programmes (CUAP) approval and has undergone the Council's accreditation process (discussed below).

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.waikato.ac.nz/study/qualifications/master-of-pharmacy-practice/#degree>

The University of Waikato has implemented the qualification, and the first cohort of students commenced study towards the MPHarmPhac in January 2025. Several of the initial conditions have since been met and removed.

If the MPharmacPrac is confirmed as a prescribed qualification, the first graduates of the degree will be eligible to register as Intern Pharmacists from December 2026 and start their internship in 2027.

### **Accreditation status – accredited with conditions**

Council is responsible for accrediting and monitoring education providers, as well as specific degrees, courses or programmes, to ensure the delivery of safe and competent pharmacists. Accreditation recognises that a qualification meets a high standard of pharmacy education and allows for the qualification to be considered as a prescribed qualification.

Council has undertaken a robust accreditation process with respect to the MPharmPrac degree as required by the Accreditation Standards. Council's Programme Accreditation Team (PAT)<sup>5</sup> reviewed information submitted by the University of Waikato, as well as information gathered while conducting an onsite visit. The visit allows the PAT to view facilities and hold interviews with relevant staff involved in governance, development and delivery (internal and external) of the programme. This information was then assessed against the six domains prescribed in the Accreditation Standards.<sup>6</sup>

The PAT's report commented that key strengths of the MPharmPrac degree included:

- Strong commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles
- Focus on public safety and patient care
- Experiential learning and supervision
- Promotion of cultural safety and inclusivity.

The PAT also identified areas of vulnerability within the programme requiring further consideration by the University of Waikato. This is not unusual for newly developed qualifications seeking accreditation. The PAT, therefore, recommended accreditation with conditions to be met. Again, this is not uncommon and recognises that certain elements of the programme are still under development, need refinement or are yet to be implemented.

The conditions recommended related to providing Council with programme material once finalised, information on staffing and staffing contingencies, and clarification and assurances around processes. Timeframes for each condition were suggested.

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<sup>5</sup> A PAT comprises of up to four local (New Zealand) and overseas independent experts with combined experience in the following areas: pharmacy academia, pharmacy practice, Te Tiriti, health equity, cultural safety, accreditation and other expertise as required and relevant to the accreditation being undertaken.

<sup>6</sup> Te Tiriti o Waitangi, hauora Māori; Public safety and safe and inclusive practice; Academic governance and quality assurance; Programme of study; The learner experience; Assessment

The PAT's report was considered by experts appointed to the Council's Accreditation Advisory Group (AAG), which then formed a recommendation to go to Council. Finally, in October 2024, Council considered all the information available to it from the PAT and the AAG and made a decision to accredit the MPharmPrac degree with conditions for a period of three years (expiry 31 October 2027).

Council's accreditation of the MPharmPrac recognises that the qualification meets the high standards of pharmacy education needed to protect the health and safety of the public.

Ngā mihi

Michael A Pead  
**Chief Executive**