

NEXT STEPS FOR THE PHARMACY COUNCIL

In late 2025, the Pharmacy Council released a discussion document to help us inform our thinking and prioritise our work. The document set out options for change, identified the implications and some of the pros and cons of each option, and described some possible next steps. We asked for feedback from people and organisations in the pharmacy sector.

In the discussion document, we outlined five areas of existing or potential work. We have now clarified our next steps in these areas.

Innovation statement

The Pharmacy Guild and Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand have already agreed to create operational guidelines to support the statement. These guidelines will help pharmacists put the innovation statement into practice. We will pass on the feedback regarding the innovation statement to be included in this guidance. Professional organisations hold the best-practice knowledge and expertise of the sector, so it is appropriate that they create the operational guidelines. Timing for this work is to be defined by the professional associations.

Registration pathways

As indicated in the discussion document, we opened public consultation on proposed changes to the Recognised Equivalent and non-Recognised Equivalent Qualification Routes.

Many people and organisations responded, and we presented the findings to the Council members in June, who approved the following actions. You can read the Pharmacy Council's full response on [the Consultations page](#).

For Recognised Equivalent Qualifications Route (REQR) pharmacists, we will:

- Change the name to Comparable Pathway
- Broaden eligibility based on registration in comparable jurisdictions rather than place of qualification
- Remove the CAOP requirement

Council will also:

- Remove the mandatory requirement for all pharmacists returning to practice after eight or more years complete the ITP and pass Assessment Centre. Instead, applications will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure the return to practice conditions/requirements are proportionate.
- Update the gazette to remove reference to the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997 and clarify the prescribed qualifications for UK pharmacist prescribers.

Much of this work will need to be gazetted into secondary legislation, and then we will need to implement the changes with updates to our IT system, forms, policies, guidance and communications. While some changes may take effect immediately after gazetting (such as the removal of the CAOP exam), others may not be in place until the end of 2026.

The sole change to the non-Recognised Equivalent Qualifications Route (non-REQR) will be:

- Changing the name to non-Comparable Pathway

There was mixed feedback on options to fast-track the non-REQR pathway by allowing the NZ Pharmacy Legislation to be completed in the ITP or removing the requirement to complete the ITP, so we will not make this change at this stage. It will be considered again when the pathway is next reviewed.

In the consultation, we also asked for feedback on the option of further increasing the pool of eligible pharmacist for the REQR route, including assessing other jurisdictions for comparability

There was reasonable support for increasing the number of jurisdictions we deem “comparable”, but this will require significant work so is unlikely to get underway until late 2026.

Another option for consideration was enabling faster and more affordable registration for some non-REQR pharmacists, by potentially removing the requirement to complete the intern training programme. There was limited support for this option, so the pathway will be reviewed again later in the year.

Prescribing

The Pharmacy Sector Leaders Forum (PSLF) has formed a working group to support the progression of pharmacist prescribing across the full continuum, including community, hospital and general practice settings in New Zealand. There is a need to understand and define how pharmacist prescribing will fit within the health system, the value it will offer to the New Zealand public, and the role pharmacist prescribers will fulfil.

Work is already in progress by the PSLF to establish a unified sector position on the future pharmacist prescriber pathway. Council will share information from the discussion document responses with the PSLF to help them progress this work. We can also support this work by ensuring any regulatory supports are appropriate and prescribing changes do not compromise public safety.

The heightened demand for access to prescribing services means it is timely for the Council to review the current prescriber scope of practice. Succinct descriptors of prescribing scopes can help to clearly signal to consumers the experience and advanced practice of the pharmacist prescribers. Any potential

changes will be developed and consulted in conjunction with pharmacist prescribers, members of the public and the wider health sector. Timing for this work is to be defined by the PSLF.

Endorsements

The responses were deeply divided about introducing scope endorsements. There was agreement that the problem must be clearly defined before any further work is done in this area.

As there was no clear direction from the sector on the need for endorsements, the Pharmacy Council has no plans to progress the work at this stage.

Regulating technicians and PACTs

Mandating technician regulation (such as registration requirements, education and competence standards) may impose significant costs, while alternative approaches could better enhance the recognition of technicians and PACTs.

Any proposed changes would benefit from a staged approach, possibly by focusing initially on hospital technicians to assess whether formal regulation is required or if improvements can be achieved through employment policies. Health New Zealand is well placed to determine how technicians can be most effectively deployed within the hospital system to maximise their contribution. Council will share information from the discussion document responses with Health New Zealand to help them progress this work.

Additionally, the current legislative framework requires pharmacy technician dispensing and compounding of medicines to be under the direct supervision of a pharmacist¹, so any regulation would require legislative change.

We suggest that the professional organisations, technicians, Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Health continue to work in this area, and if health profession regulation of technician is needed, Council is very willing to be involved.

¹ [Medicines Regulations 1984 | New Zealand Legislation](#)