



ESSENTIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIESⁱ FOR THE ENTRY-TO-PRACTICE PHARMACY PROGRAMⁱⁱ

The Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia is responsible to society to provide a program of study so that students graduate with the knowledge, skills, professional behaviours, and attitudes necessary to enter the practice of pharmacy in Canada. Pharmacy is an evolving profession, which in the past was primarily concerned with the safe dispensing of medication. This task is increasingly being managed by pharmacy technicians, while pharmacists assume new roles that take better advantage of their clinical knowledge and skills. Pharmacists are becoming more involved in decision-making about patients' drug therapy and working with patients, caregivers, and other health care professionals to help patients better manage their medications and illnesses. Pharmacists are now prescribing some medications, administering injections, and conducting basic physical assessments of patients (e.g., measuring blood pressure, respiration rate, and other vital signs). In order to provide these services, pharmacists need extensive knowledge of drug therapy, clinical reasoning skills, and the communication skills and ethical values necessary to provide effective care to patients.

To provide students with the necessary education to become a pharmacist, the program uses a broad range of teaching techniques (e.g., lectures, pharmacy skills labs, tutorials, case discussions, and practicum opportunities in outpatient, inpatient and non-direct patient care practice settings) and assessment strategies (e.g., individual and group quizzes; written, oral and practical exams; Objective Structured Clinical Examinations (OSCEs, which are timed simulations of clinical scenarios); assignments; presentations in class and to the public; group projects; and portfolios). Ultimately, students must be able to manage health problems and provide comprehensive, compassionate care to patients. Thus, students in the Pharmacy program must possess the skills necessary to interview, assess, and counsel patients, and competently complete certain technical procedures in a reasonable time while ensuring safe and effective patient outcomes.

In addition to obtaining a Pharmacy degree, an individual must pass licensure examinations in order to practice pharmacy. Students should be aware that cognitive abilities, problem-solving skills, clinical reasoning, physical assessment, pharmacy management skills, communication skills, and professional behaviours are evaluated in written form and in oral, time-limited simulations of patient encounters on these licensing exams.

All students must have the required skills and abilities described in the Technical Standards below. All applicants to the program are expected to review this document to assess their ability to meet these standards. This policy does not preclude individuals with disabilities from entering the Pharmacy program. Students who anticipate requiring disability-related accommodation are responsible for notifying the UBC Centre for Accessibility.

Given the comprehensive, additive, and integrative nature of the curriculum, students are normally expected to complete the Pharmacy program within four years. Students may be granted an extension of time within which to complete the Pharmacy program. These requests are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Technical Standards for Students in the Pharmacy Program

A student in the Pharmacy program must demonstrate the following abilities:

Observation

A student must be able to participate in learning situations that require skills in observation. In particular, a student must be able to accurately observe a patient and acquire visual, auditory, and tactile information.

Communication

A student must be able to communicate in written and verbal English. A student must be able to communicate with and observe patients in order to effectively and efficiently elicit information. They must be able to describe appearance, emotional state, mood, activity, gait, and posture and perceive body language and other non-verbal communication. A student must be able to communicate effectively and sensitively with patients, caregivers, and any member of the health care team. A student must also be able to coherently summarize a patient's condition and therapeutic plan and be able to document their patient care activities in writing.

Motor

A student must demonstrate the ability to safely supervise the dispensing of medications, perform a physical assessment as needed, and use technology productively and effectively. These tasks must be done in a timely fashion. More specifically, but not exclusively, a student must be able to demonstrate and/or supervise the appropriate use of common medication delivery devices (e.g., inhalers, eye drops, patches), medical devices (e.g., blood pressure monitor, blood glucose monitor), and mobility aids.

Intellectual-Conceptual, Integrative and Quantitative Abilities

A student must demonstrate the cognitive skills and memory necessary to measure, calculate, and reason in order to analyze, integrate, and synthesize information. All of these problem-solving activities must be done in a timely fashion. Students must also be able to accurately perform pharmaceutical calculations.

Behavioural and Social Attributes

A student must consistently demonstrate the emotional health required for full utilization of her/his intellectual abilities. The application of good judgment and the prompt completion of all responsibilities attendant to the care of patients is necessary. The development of mature, sensitive, and effective relationships with patients, caregivers and other members of the health care team are also required, irrespective of sex, age, racial or ethnic background, health status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status. The student must be able to tolerate the physical, emotional, and mental demands of the program and function effectively under stress. Adaptability to changing environments and the ability to function in the face of uncertainties that are inherent in the care of patients are both necessary. Compassion, integrity, concern for others, self-awareness, interpersonal skills, intercultural sensitivity, interest, and motivation are all personal qualities that are expected.

Students with Disabilities

UBC recognizes its moral and legal duty to provide academic accommodation and is committed to facilitating the integration of students with disabilities into the University community. In accordance with UBC policiesⁱⁱⁱ, and the BC Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, each student with a disability is entitled to accommodation that will assist her/him to meet the program's educational standards without compromising those standards. Accommodations will be made to facilitate a student's progress. However, such accommodation cannot compromise patient safety and well-being. Accommodation may require members of the University community to exercise creativity and flexibility in responding to the needs of students with disabilities while maintaining academic and technical standards.

This document acknowledges that central to the success of a student with a disability in completing the Pharmacy program is her/his responsibility to demonstrate self-reliance and to identify needs requiring accommodation in a timely fashion.

Time Accommodations

a) Accommodations for Exams

UBC's Centre for Accessibility sometimes determines that accommodation for particular disabilities will include extra time to write exams. This determination is made on a case-by-case basis, and typically applies to exams assessing knowledge but not always to exams that simulate clinical practice where real-world time constraints exist and would affect patient care. Extra time does not apply to the in-class participation polls and group quizzes that are used in some Pharmacy courses.

Written Exams: Written exams, which may be administered either on paper or online, for students with extra time accommodation are normally supervised by staff at the Centre for Accessibility. Students are responsible for ensuring that the necessary arrangements are made at least 7 days before the exam date or 7 days before the start of the exam period.^{iv}

Practical and Oral Exams: The practical and oral exams for students with extra time accommodations are supervised by instructors in the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences, as these exams require the Faculty's resources, equipment, and expert assessors. Students with extra time accommodations for written exams do not always need extra time for these types of exams, and often opt to do them within the usual time allowed, as these exams are designed to simulate the actual time constraints of practice and of licensing exams. However, the extra time accommodation determined by the Centre for Accessibility can be provided for some components of these exams, depending on individual student needs. This requires considerable planning on the Faculty's part and may require evening or weekend scheduling of these exams, as determined by Faculty, so arrangements must be made at least 4 weeks in advance of the scheduled exam.

b) Accommodations for Practicums

If a student has a medical condition or disability that may impact their stamina for learning on practicum and/or impact his/her ability to provide safe and effective care to patients, the student is expected to register with Centre for Accessibility at the beginning of the academic year in which the practicum is scheduled. Specific accommodations will be determined by the Centre for Accessibility and will vary for each student depending on their individual needs.

Other Accommodations

Accommodation for students with disabilities may take other forms, such as adjustments in the exam schedule or clinical practicums in communities where appropriate access to medical care is available. These types of accommodation are determined on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Centre for Accessibility.

Approved by the Faculty: [09] March 14, 2013

Modified: [09] November 19, 2018

ⁱ This document is adapted with permission from the Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine (COFM) Policy Document, “Essential Skills and Abilities Required for the Study of Medicine,” approved November 2003. In addition to the Ontario schools and faculties of medicine, the University of Saskatchewan, University of Alberta, University of Calgary, and University of British Columbia (Faculty of Medicine) have adopted similar policies, based on the aforementioned COFM Policy Document. McMaster University, on its online Admission page, simply refers applicants to the COFM Policy.

ⁱⁱ “Entry-to-Practice Pharmacy Program” refers to both the BSc (Pharm) and the Entry-to-Practice PharmD programs.

ⁱⁱⁱ Namely, UBC’s Policy on Discrimination and Harassment, Policy#3 (<https://universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2018/09/policy3.pdf>); and Academic Accommodation for Students with Disabilities, Policy #73 (<https://www.universitycounsel.ubc.ca/files/2010/08/policy73.pdf>).

^{iv} See the information on exam accommodations on the Academic Supports website: <https://students.ubc.ca/enrolment/academic-supports/academic-accommodations-disabilities/exam-accommodations-guidelines-expectations>