

Where will you spend your training year? It's time to start thinking about it

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Three years into your undergraduate course and you probably feel as though you still have a long way to go — the last thing on your mind is what lies ahead once you have completed your MPharm degree. However, if you are a third year undergraduate and you haven't already given it some thought, now is the time to start. Your university will hold a preregistration careers fair, usually between January and March, which will be attended by prospective employers from around the country. The fair will give you a chance to ask any questions that you have about the preregistration year and beyond. It will also give you the chance to pick up application forms.

Hospital

For those of you who are interested in applying for a hospital preregistration placement, it couldn't be easier. You can apply on-line (www.nhsprereg.org.uk) for positions in England and Wales. The web-based system is intended to be more convenient than paper applications for both students and employers. You will be able to apply from March 2003 and must have registered by 1 July 2003. Once registered you can browse the details of hospitals in England and Wales — 185 hospitals have already registered with the scheme for the 2004 intake. You can then create a CV, a personal profile and write a covering letter online. These must be submitted online on or before 31 August 2003. Interviews take place in September and October.

Scottish hospitals use a separate scheme. Application forms, which can be obtained from your school of pharmacy, must be submitted to the Scottish Centre for Postqualification Pharmaceutical Education by mid-June. Interviews take place in Glasgow in September.

This year (2002–03), out of a total of 1,355 trainees, 513 are spending their preregistration year at hospitals in England, Scotland and Wales.

training year

Community

If you want preregistration training in the community sector you must apply to individual companies. Applications generally need to be completed by the end of June and many companies hold interviews at schools of pharmacy at the beginning of the autumn term of the fourth year. A total of 820 trainees are undertaking their preregistration training in the community sector this year.

Boots The Chemists offers the largest number of preregistration positions, employing 365 trainees this year. Next comes Lloydspharmacy, with 78 places this year. Moss Pharmacy is currently training 70 pharmacy graduates and has recruited 60 for 2003. It hopes to be taking on a larger number in 2004.

Although a significant proportion of community pharmacies are independently owned, only a small proportion of pharmacy graduates undertake their training in independent pharmacies. This year, 155 are in independent pharmacies. The National Pharmaceutical Association does not have any involvement in helping students to obtain preregistration placements.

Industry

Prereregistration placements in the pharmaceutical industry are notoriously difficult to secure, largely because there are few places on offer. This year seven students obtained preregistration placements that were split between the pharmaceutical industry and hospital — three with Pfizer Ltd, two with Bristol-Myers Squibb, one with Quintiles and one with Generics (UK) Ltd.

Conclusion

Whatever you're planning to do, the time to apply for a preregistration position is creeping up fast. Each sector of the profession has something different to offer. Whatever you are interested in, it's time to put pen to paper. ✎