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How to choose the best prereg job for you

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It might seem like a long time before you are due to start work, but if you are in your third year, it is time to think about preregistration positions. Interviews are normally held in the summer after the third year. It can be helpful to try to do summer placements in both the hospital and community sectors, or at least speak to pharmacists from both sectors before you make your final decision.

Community

Your school of pharmacy will organise events where you can speak to people from different companies, pick up information and application forms. If there is a particular independent group that you would like to work for, ask if they take preregistration trainees and how to apply.

When you speak to the companies, it is in your interest to make a good impression. Ask them about the

company, the training and other benefits you will receive. Make notes of the answers because they could be useful when applying and attending interviews.

Hospital

The national scheme for England and Wales allows you only four choices of hospital and the application process is online. Your school of pharmacy will give you a handbook detailing all the hospitals that offer preregistration places. If you have some idea of where you would like to work, try to arrange a visit before applying to ensure you would be happy there.

Six-month split placements

Unless you are on a sandwich course, there are few places that offer six-month split placements. If you are interested in doing a stint in industry, or a community/hospital split, get in quickly. Ask your teacher practitioners for information before they offer it to you, and be determined.

How to apply

Make a note of the deadlines for the companies in the community sector to which you want to apply. Most are between the beginning of June and the end of July.

The deadline for choosing your hospitals is normally the end of August, but you should begin the application process well before this since the website needs details of referees.

When applying, it is useful to read information sources such as the *PJ* and *Tomorrow's Pharmacist*. The internet will also provide you with valuable information on topical issues. Keep anything relevant that is given to you by your school of pharmacy, the likelihood is that you can use it.

When asked about location, be honest. If you do not mind, say so. You may end up in a less desirable place, but at least you will have a job, and it may not be half as bad as people make out.

After hospital interviews, many regions pool any rejections after interview and offer applicants alternative hospitals.

Therefore, unless you are certain of the area in which you want to work, do not simply apply within one region. It is better for you to get four "second chances" rather than just one.

Before writing out your answers on to the final form, ask people to proof read it. Ensure you have ironed out any spelling mistakes and typos before submitting it. Once completed, photocopy or print the final copy.

Prepare for the interview

Prepare for each interview by reading through the application form and any other information you have collected. If you have to travel, make sure you give yourself plenty of time, and have a contact number just in case you become delayed.

For all questions, think about the question and construct your answer before speaking. If you have any interests, hobbies or experiences that may be of interest to your interviewers, try to weave them into your answers. They will probably give you a chance to tell them anything else, and to ask them questions.

Have some questions prepared to ask at the end of your interview. Try to ask something specific that they have not already given you information on. The last thing to remember is to keep calm.

When you are offered a place, you may not be given long to think about it (and receive other offers) before you decide. Consider carefully whether you want the job. No one can help you with this decision.

If you do not get a job in the first round, there is a second chance. The hospital scheme has a clearing system and schools of pharmacy will have details of community pharmacies still looking for preregistration trainees.

The main thing you must remember is that it is competitive out there, and you must be determined to get what you want. Be prepared and you will get what you deserve.

Good luck! ✂