

# What to expect from a prereg tutor

Your preregistration tutor can have a huge impact on your career. So, what support can you reasonably expect them to offer during this important year?

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**A**s many pharmacy graduates begin what is arguably the most important year of their working life, their preregistration year, many consider what to expect from their preregistration tutor. This article seeks to clarify these expectations and to provide guidance to both trainees and tutors alike.

## What is the purpose of the year?

In order to understand the role of a tutor it is necessary to begin by understanding the purpose of the preregistration training period. Despite many trainees' views to the contrary, the year is far more than a preparatory period for the registration examination. Instead the year should be viewed as a golden opportunity to:

- Acquire the requisite skills, knowledge and levels of competency required to begin independent practice as a pharmacist
- Consolidate existing skills and

knowledge gathered during a comprehensive undergraduate education, and to contextualise these within a working practice environment

- Observe and to model good practice demonstrated by more experienced colleagues including, but not confined to, the preregistration tutor

## What is the tutor's role?

Look in a standard dictionary at the word "tutor" and you will variously see it described as one who teaches, enlightens, advises, coaches, mentors, directs, guides, primes and educates. And yet even this broad definition does not fully capture the range of duties and roles a preregistration tutor performs, which can vary from being a financial adviser, an estate agent to just being a plain old shoulder to cry on.

The role of any preregistration tutor is in essence about encouraging and supporting the development of a new member of the profession. Clearly in

in arranging the cross sector placement

- ▶ Goal setting — establishing clear mutually agreed goals for each period of training
- ▶ Feedback — providing clear and honest feedback on your performance and areas you need to focus on or improve
- ▶ Role modelling — to act as a positive role model and to endeavour to exemplify high standards and professionalism in practice


### What is unrealistic to expect?

Preregistration tutors, in the main, are busy practising pharmacists. It is important that you approach the year with realistic expectations of your respective roles.

Do not:

- ▶ Expect miracles — it is unrealistic to expect your tutor to devote all their time to you or to know the answer to everything; accept responsibility for your own learning and take the initiative
- ▶ Expect the year to be solely focused on the registration examination — passing should be a natural consequence of diligently completing the year's comprehensive programme of experience, developing a positive approach to continuing professional development, and looking to improve your knowledge on a continuous basis

Do:

- ▶ Use all resources and opportunities available to you — technicians, support staff, other health care professionals and pharmaceutical industry representatives can all be a source of valuable learning
- ▶ Work in partnership with your tutor — the year is a great opportunity to observe pharmacy practice and to develop your skills and knowledge ready for the time when you will be a registered pharmacist yourself. Approach the year with a positive attitude, and dedication, and you will find it one of the most valuable periods of your professional career 

order to do this the tutors themselves have to be good pharmacists and be able to demonstrate good professional practice to their trainees. This does not mean that they have to know the answers to every question and be an encyclopaedic source of knowledge on all matters pertaining to pharmacy practice. Of course knowledge is important but just as important are attitude and interpersonal skills — tutors must be genuinely supportive and interested in developing people particularly given the breadth of roles that they are expected to undertake. It is often said that “attitude determines aptitude”; this is never more true than when applied to the role of a preregistration tutor.

### What can I realistically expect?

The preregistration year lays the foundation for a lifetime of rewarding professional practice — we hope. But the responsibility for its success and for learning is a shared one between tutor

and trainee. This is confirmed within a “learning contract” (see preregistration manual) completed along with an outline training plan at the beginning of each training year. This clearly specifies the tutor's expectations of their trainee and vice versa, which helps ensure complete clarity of mutual expectations and that the year is approached in a positive and forward looking manner.

But what are the key elements of a learning contract and what is it realistic to expect from your tutor?

- ▶ Support and guidance — how to approach the preregistration year, how to use the Royal Pharmaceutical Society's programme to best effect and help in understanding joint responsibilities within the programme
- ▶ Resources — providing specified reference books and helping you to identify additional resources which will support your training and development
- ▶ Cross sector placement — assistance