



Structured Practical Training Preceptor's Manual

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Program overview

Welcome

Welcome to the Alberta College of Pharmacy's (ACP) Structured Practical Training (SPT) program. Your support and involvement in our internship program are essential to the growth of our profession and greatly appreciated. We hope you will enjoy the many benefits of being a preceptor.

Rewards from being a preceptor¹:

- The joy of watching an intern develop.
- The opportunity to learn and be challenged about how therapeutic decisions are made.
- The intellectual stimulus an intern provides to “keep current” with clinical practice guidelines and the literature.
- The motivation to perform to the best of your own ability.
- Stimulating interns in areas of interest.
- The opportunity to influence an intern's career.
- The opportunity to share one's knowledge and experience.
- The opportunity to “give back” to the profession.
- The increased visibility and recognition by peers.

The Alberta College of Pharmacy's primary responsibility is to ensure safe, effective, and responsible pharmacy care for Albertans.

ACP's vision

Healthy Albertans through excellence in pharmacy practice

ACP's mission

The Alberta College of Pharmacy governs pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, and pharmacies in Alberta to serve, support, and protect the public's health and well-being.

¹ Damazo, B. (2003). Community Health Nursing Preceptor Manual. California State University, Chico, School of Nursing.

In order to practise as a pharmacist in Alberta, an intern must meet entry-to-practice requirements. These requirements are determined by the Alberta College of Pharmacy to ensure pharmacy practitioners are competent to perform their authorized roles.

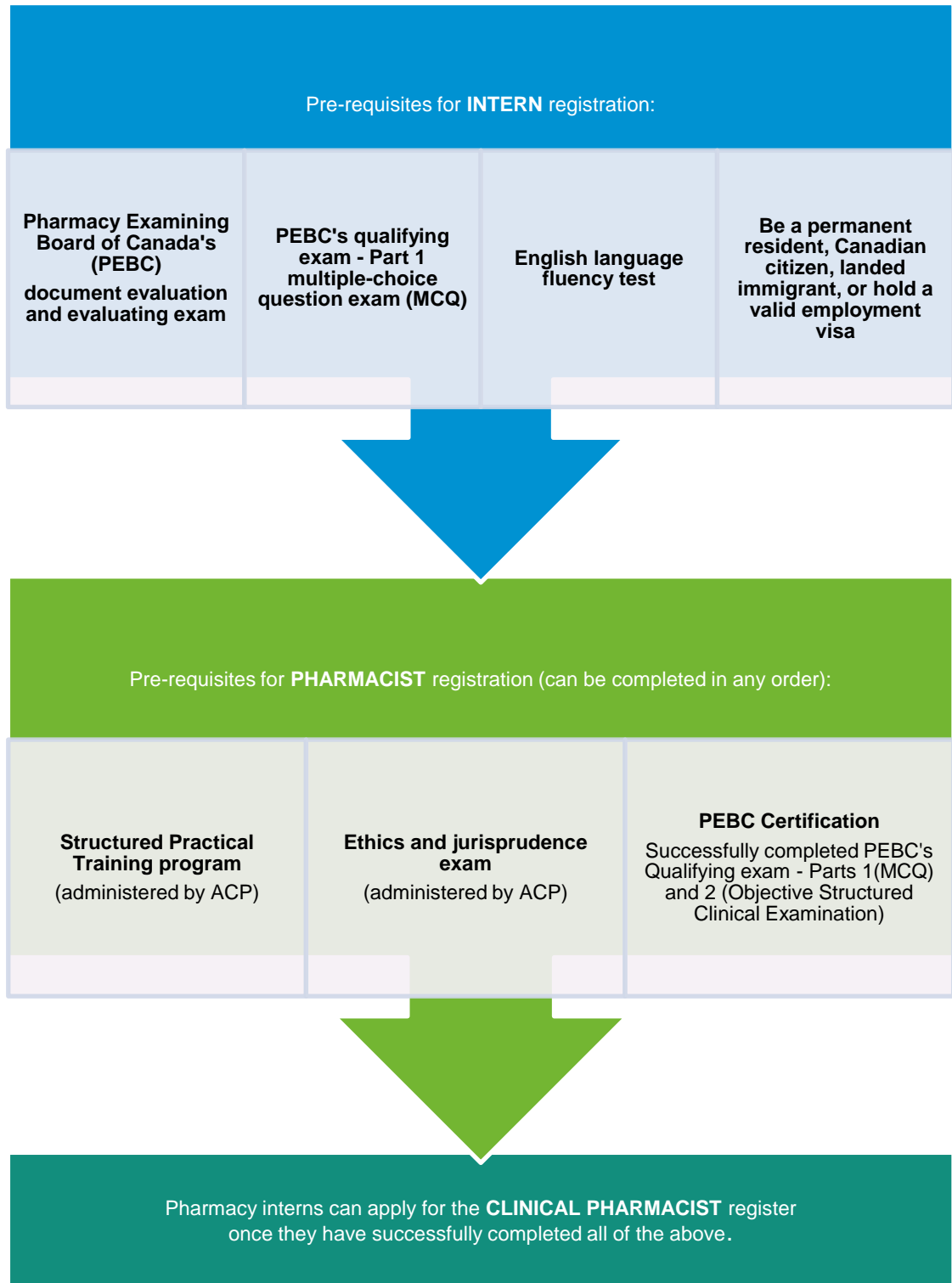
ACP is committed to pharmacy practice excellence in Alberta through a structured practical training program. This program is based on the [Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacists at Entry-to-Practice](#) determined by the [National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities \(NAPRA\)](#).

To successfully complete the SPT program, a pharmacy intern must

1. demonstrate competence,
2. meet or exceed the acceptable performance levels for all entry-to-practice competencies, and
3. complete a minimum of 1000 internship hours.
 - a. Additional hours are often required to demonstrate all competencies. The preceptor(s) will determine when the requirements have been met.

Completion of the SPT program is only one step in the entire licensing process.

Roadmap to licensure for international pharmacy graduates (IPGs)



Philosophy of the structured practical training program

ACP's structured practical training program is designed to support an intern's journey to becoming a proficient, patient-centred, and outcomes-focused pharmacist in Canadian pharmacy practice through structured practical learning experiences.

The overall objective of the SPT program is to provide the intern with the opportunity, resources, and support to

1. understand the scope of practice of Alberta pharmacists and the [Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#);
2. apply his/her professional knowledge and skills to a practical setting and develop and demonstrate the entry-to-practice competencies; and
3. identify his/her areas of strength and areas for improvement and implement learning plans to improve their practice accordingly.

Activities within the program guide interns through practical experiences to accomplish internship goals and demonstrate entry-to-practice competencies. The activities in the competency modules only provide a basic framework to help an intern understand and demonstrate the competencies required at the point of licensure.

The time spent on a particular competency module depends on an intern's previous background, knowledge, and experience. As the preceptor, you can help your intern determine areas of development in order to meet or exceed the acceptable performance levels.

Preceptor's responsibilities

According to your [Code of Ethics \(COE\)](#), pharmacists must act as stewards of their profession by

- ensuring that they are competent,
- acting with honesty and integrity,
- demonstrating responsibility for self and other health professionals, and
- nurturing the profession.

To uphold these principles, you must

- be accurate and impartial when teaching others,
- not condone unethical or unprofessional conduct by colleagues,
- challenge the judgment of colleagues if you have reason to believe that their decisions could compromise the safety or care of others, and
- raise concerns if the professional performance or health of others may compromise patient care or public safety

As the preceptor, you have the ultimate responsibility of **assessing your intern's knowledge, skills, and abilities**, and **signing off on a level of training only when your intern has demonstrated competence** and met/exceeded the acceptable performance levels for all

entry-to-practice competencies. All restricted activities completed by the intern during the SPT program must be **under the supervision** of the preceptor and/or another clinical pharmacist.

The relationship between you and your intern should be a partnership in learning. In order for the internship experience to be successful, it is important that you are aware of your intern's learning needs and goals at the start of his/her training so that you can best help your intern succeed.

Professional competencies for Canadian pharmacists at entry-to-practice

The SPT program's activities and assessments are based on the nine nationally accepted entry-to-practice competencies developed through the NAPRA. Upon successfully completing the program, an intern should demonstrate the following behaviours as described for each competency category.

Competency category	Behaviour
Communication and education	Pharmacists communicate effectively with patients, the pharmacy team, other health professionals, and the public; and educate, where appropriate in order to promote and support optimal patient care and wellness.
Ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities	Pharmacists practice within legal requirements, demonstrate professionalism, and uphold professional standards of practice, codes of ethics, and policies.
Product distribution	Pharmacists ensure accurate drug and product distribution that is safe and appropriate for the patient.
Knowledge and research application	Pharmacists access, retrieve, critically analyze, and apply relevant information to practice with the goal of ensuring safe and effective patient care.
Patient care	Pharmacists, in partnership with the patient and in collaboration with other health professionals, use their knowledge and skills to meet the patient's drug-related and other health needs to achieve optimal outcomes.
Intra and inter-professional collaboration	Pharmacists work in collaboration with the pharmacy team and other health professionals to deliver comprehensive services, make best use of resources, and ensure continuity of care in order to optimize the patient's health outcomes.
Quality and safety	Pharmacists collaborate in developing, implementing, and evaluating policies, procedures, and activities that promote the quality and safety of pharmacy practice.
Health promotion	Pharmacists use their expertise to advance the health and wellness of patients, communities, and populations.
Practice setting	Pharmacists oversee the practice setting with the goal of ensuring safe and efficient patient care.

Program levels and goals

To successfully complete the SPT program, a pharmacy intern must demonstrate competence, meet or exceed the acceptable performance levels for all entry-to-practice competencies, and complete a minimum of 1000 internship hours. **The main objective of the SPT program is to help an intern demonstrate and master the entry-to-practice competencies.** The length of time in the SPT program is secondary, and additional hours are often required to demonstrate all competencies. As the preceptor, you may only sign off on the completion of a SPT level when the intern has demonstrated all the required competencies at the acceptable performance levels.

The SPT program consists of three levels and activities grouped according to the entry-to-practice competencies. During the SPT program, you and your intern will be completing assessments and activities in the competency modules. All program materials are managed through the online SPT portal.

Program levels

Level	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3
Competency modules and assessments	Preliminary self-assessments		
	Communication and education	Patient care	Activities for all competency categories
	Ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities		
	Product distribution	Intra and inter-professional collaboration	
		Midpoint assessment	
	Midpoint assessment	Quality and safety	
	Knowledge and research application	Health promotion, communication and education	
	Patient care	Practice setting	
Final assessment			
Hours	450 +	450 +	100 +
Additional hours are often required to demonstrate all competencies. The preceptor will determine when requirements have been met.			

Level 1

Level 1 is intended to provide an intern with a foundation to Canadian pharmacy practice and includes relatively simple activities. As the intern progresses through the program and builds on each competency, the suggested learning activities will become more advanced.

In Level 1, an intern will focus on the following competency categories:

- 1. Communication and education**
- 2. Ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities**
- 3. Product distribution**
- 4. Knowledge and research application**
- 5. Patient care**

Upon completing Level 1, an intern must demonstrate the ability to

- communicate with patients and other health care providers,
- develop a rapport with patients and assess their health care needs,
- accept and process prescriptions,
- research drug information questions, and
- adhere to the legislative framework for pharmacy practice.

Level 2

In Level 2, an intern will further enhance his/her skills and focus on providing safe and effective patient care. The intern is expected to demonstrate an increased ability to use his/her professional judgment to make clinical decisions and is expected to become involved in the supervision of other staff members in the dispensary.

In Level 2, an intern will focus on the following competency categories:

1. **Patient care**
2. **Intra and inter-professional collaboration**
3. **Quality and safety**
4. **Health promotion/Communication and education**
5. **Practice setting**

Upon completing Level 2, an intern must demonstrate the ability to

- assess patients and the appropriateness of their drug therapies,
- identify actual and potential drug therapy problems,
- make clinical decisions,
- develop and implement care plans,
- collaborate with other health care providers,
- document patient care,
- promote health and wellness, and
- ensure safe and efficient pharmacy practice.

Level 3

Level 3 is intended to confirm an intern's proficiency in all entry-to-practice competencies and assess his/her readiness to practice. In Level 3, an intern is expected to work independently, supervise other staff members, and demonstrate a thorough understanding of the relevant pharmacy legislations, Code of Ethics, and the Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians.

To successfully complete Level 3, an intern must demonstrate competence and meet or exceed the acceptable performance levels for all entry-to-practice competencies.

What type of supervision is required for interns completing SPT?

All restricted activities completed by the intern during the SPT program (Levels 1-3) must be under the **supervision** of the preceptor and/or another clinical pharmacist. The supervising pharmacist is responsible and accountable for all restricted activities performed by the intern while under his/her supervision.

Note: Direct supervision is still required for any intern administering drugs by injection.

Assessment and development

Intern assessment

To successfully complete the SPT program, an intern must demonstrate competence, and meet or exceed the acceptable performance levels for all [Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacists at Entry-to-Practice](#) (NAPRA).

As the preceptor, you are responsible for assessing your intern, providing feedback, and identifying specific areas of development. In addition to providing feedback, you also have a responsibility to support your intern with developing learning plans designed to meet his/her learning needs.

To help facilitate discussions with your intern regarding his/her performance, your intern is required to complete three self-assessments throughout each level of the SPT program: prior to starting a level, at mid-point, and at the end. You should review the intern's preliminary self-assessment to familiarize yourself with the intern's experience, knowledge, strengths, and weaknesses.

There is a different assessment for each level. For each SPT level, you and your intern will use and make updates to the same assessment form located in the SPT portal. You will be able to see each other's results.

As a preceptor, you are to complete an assessment of your intern

- at midpoint, and
- at the end of the level (final).

Assessment is based on key competencies related to the nine competency categories. To complete the assessment, you and your intern will rate (1-3) how they perform each of the key competencies according to specific performance level descriptors. The specific performance level descriptors for each key competency are defined in the assessment form.

General characteristics for each performance level:

1. **Needs improvement:** Improvement is needed and support is required to meet the acceptable standards. At the beginning of internship, this may be a typical performance level for an intern due to a lack of experience.
2. **Meets the acceptable performance level:** At this level, an intern would perform the relevant tasks independently; however, the intern may lack speed and flexibility when dealing with complex issues. **This is the typical performance level for an intern and the minimum performance level an intern must meet before completing the SPT level.**

3. **Exceeds the acceptable performance level:** At this level, an intern would perform the relevant tasks confidently, and manage complex issues efficiently and effectively. Interns should strive to achieve this performance level toward the end of internship.

As you complete the assessment and rate your intern's performance, you should

- **provide examples** to support your ratings,
- **comment on areas of strength and areas for improvement**, and
- **suggest actions plans** for areas that require improvement.

Once you and your intern have completed the assessment, you must meet with your intern to review, discuss, and compare the completed assessments.

Assessment design

To help facilitate the assessment process, you and your intern will be working off of the same assessment form throughout a level of SPT. For example, when you click on the final assessment, you will see the ratings you've selected for the midpoint assessment. This allows you to review your previously selected ratings and adjust the ratings for the competencies where your intern has improved his/her performance. Please note: any adjustments that you make will override the previously selected ratings.

Tip

If you wish to retain a specific version of the assessment (e.g., midpoint assessment) to keep track of your intern's progress, you should either print or download a copy of the assessment.

You and your intern may be uncomfortable with the assessment process and be reluctant to identify the specific areas that need further improvements. However, by identifying the areas your intern needs to work on, it will help your intern to

- focus his/her performance improvement efforts,
- plan and prioritize his/her learning, and
- work towards meeting the acceptable performance levels for the entry-to-practice competencies.

Tips

- Provide feedback on an ongoing basis so that there are no surprises during assessment. Regular feedback will also help you and your intern become more comfortable with the assessment process.
- Consult with other members of your team who have worked with your intern for additional feedback on areas such as professionalism and teamwork.
- If you are having difficulties with completing the assessment, contact ACP for assistance.

Developing learning plans

As you and your intern identify key competencies needing improvement, work together to determine corresponding learning plans to help your intern enhance his/her knowledge, skills, or abilities, to achieve acceptable performance levels. Your intern may document his/her learning plans within the assessment form located in the SPT portal.

After the final assessment

Once you and your intern have completed the final assessment, meet to review, discuss, and compare the assessment results. Based on the results, you and your intern should develop learning plans accordingly.

After reviewing the final assessment, you should inform your intern of whether you believe they

- are ready to advance to the next level of SPT, or
- are **NOT** ready to advance to the next level because they have yet to demonstrate all the required competencies at the acceptable performance levels.

Although your intern may have already completed the minimum number of hours for the SPT level, your intern is required to continue working on a SPT level until they have demonstrated the required competencies at the acceptable performance levels. You are responsible for determining when the intern is eligible to advance to the next level of SPT, and additional hours are often required.

When you have indicated in the assessment form that your intern has met/exceeded the acceptable performance levels for all the applicable key competencies, then you may declare level completion through the SPT portal.

Performance and assessment difficulties

What if, despite all the planning and discussion, you feel your intern is not performing adequately? Or what if you and your intern strongly disagree on assessment ratings?

- If there are specific areas of practice your intern is struggling with, work together to identify learning needs and find opportunities to help your intern to improve on his/her practice. Additional training beyond the suggested activities within the program may be required. It is important that you provide ongoing feedback to help guide your intern's learning.
- If the situation cannot be resolved at the site level, preceptors and/or interns are invited to call the college. Initial contact should be with the registration department. A staff member will be selected to consult with you and/or the intern. The staff member will be determined by the situation.
- The college will strive to work with you and your intern to reach a mutually satisfactory understanding and agreement. Additionally, the college may appoint an individual reviewer to gather more information and make a recommendation to the college and/or arrange for your intern to be observed and assessed at another site.
- You or your intern may terminate the arrangement at any time. Prior consultation and discussion with the college is highly recommended as internship hours may not be transferred.

Reinforce with your intern that the focus on SPT should be placed on developing the required competencies for Canadian pharmacists at entry-to-practice at the acceptable performance levels, rather than hours.

To ensure a continued high standard of pharmacy practice, only sign off on a SPT level if your intern has met or exceeded the acceptable performance levels for the key competencies. Regardless of all planning, training, and discussion, if your intern is unable to demonstrate the required competencies, then they should not be moving forward to becoming a licensed pharmacist. If you need additional support, please contact ACP.

Assessment tips

Here are some additional tips for you to provide feedback effectively.²

Set the stage

- Establish a relationship with the intern that emphasizes working as allies, with common goals.
- Ensure that the goals and objectives are clearly understood by both of you.
- Find a quiet, private, comfortable place for communicating feedback.

Timing

- Provide feedback often and as soon as possible after a potential learning opportunity.
- Make feedback a regular, natural part of the clinical experience.
- Discuss and negotiate with the intern about when, where, and how often feedback will be given.

Content

- Begin by soliciting the intern's thoughts on his/her performance (e.g., "How do you think it went?").
- Base feedback on first-hand data.
- Relate feedback to goals and objectives.
- Give positive and constructive comments focused on behaviors that can be changed.
- "Sandwich" negative feedback between positive comments about performance.
- Use descriptive, non-judgmental language that focuses on decisions and behaviors rather than individual abilities or traits.
- Suggest correct performance rather than emphasizing what was done wrong.
- Focus on specific performances, not generalizations.
- Limit the quantity of feedback given at any one time.
- Check to see if the intern understands the feedback given (e.g., "Would you summarize...").

² FIPSE project group, Office of Educational Development, University of North Carolina School of Medicine. The Expert Preceptor Interactive Curriculum. [Electronic] URL: <http://www.med.unc.edu/epic/> (1998, October).

Program structure and activities

Competency modules

Program activities are grouped into modules according to nine competency categories and can be found online in the SPT portal. **A suggested duration of time (hours) to spend within each competency module is offered;** however, time can vary at the discretion of the intern and preceptor.



Levels 1 and 2 learning activities

Three different types of activities are required within each competency module.

1. Daily activities

- These activities form an intern's main job description.
- Interns are to complete these activities daily for the duration spent on the competency module.

2. Discuss with your preceptor activities

- For these activities, interns are to identify best practices, research the answers, and discuss the findings with their preceptor.
- Interns are to complete these activities simultaneously with the daily activities.

3. Role-play as the pharmacist activities

- For these activities, role-play as the "pharmacist" and resolve the scenarios.
- As the "pharmacist", the intern must ask the appropriate questions, assess the situation, make the appropriate recommendation(s), and/or communicate the response accordingly.
- Interns are to complete these activities simultaneously with the daily activities or towards the end of a module.



Daily activities

The daily activities outlined in each competency module **form the intern's "job description" and are to be completed daily (unless stated otherwise) for the duration spent on a competency module.**

Daily activities may reoccur in another competency category or level of internship to further develop the intern's skills. As interns practise these activities and progress through the program, they will strengthen their ability and confidence, and transition from observing/assisting the pharmacist to practising independently. **Interns are asked to familiarize themselves with the daily activities at the start of each competency module.**

Discuss with your preceptor

Discussion activities are designed to enhance an intern's knowledge and communication skills. To complete these activities, interns should reflect on their own knowledge and skills, identify best practices, and research the answers as needed.

The intern must complete these activities independently and then discuss their findings with their preceptor/pharmacy team. **These activities are to be completed simultaneously with the daily activities.**

Role-play as the pharmacist

Role-play activities are intended to reinforce the intern's learning and prepare him/her for potential challenging scenarios in their practice. **Interns are required to play the role of the pharmacist** to resolve the issues presented in the scenarios. As the "pharmacist", interns must ask the appropriate questions, assess the situation, make the appropriate recommendation(s), and/or communicate the response accordingly.

As the scenario listed may not contain all the relevant details, the preceptor or another pharmacist, playing the role of the patient/prescriber, may need to supplement details and personalize the scenario. Role-play activities are intended **to be completed toward the end of a module and/or simultaneously with the daily activities.**

Level 3 learning activities

The objective of Level 3 is for a preceptor to confirm proficiency and the intern's readiness to practice. In Level 3, interns are expected to practise independently, supervise other staff members, and demonstrate competence to his/her preceptor,

The Level 3 activities are grouped according to five overarching competency categories:

- **Patient care**
- **Communication and education**
- **Product distribution**
- **Practice setting and**
- **Ethical, legal, and professional responsibilities**

Interns are to continue practising the Level 3 activities until they have demonstrated competence at the acceptable performance levels.

Completing learning activities

All competency modules and program activities are managed in the SPT portal. As your intern completes an activity, you and/or your intern may leave comments, notes, or observations in the SPT portal. Once an activity has been completed to your satisfaction, you or your intern may check off the activity. All restricted activities completed by the intern during the SPT program must be under the supervision of the preceptor and/or another clinical pharmacist.

Program tips

- To complete the activities, your intern may need to refer to the different federal and provincial legislations that govern pharmacy practice. The [Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#) and the [Code of Ethics](#) are good references.
- To prepare for practice, your intern would have completed the mandatory online [jurisprudence learning module](#) prior to starting internship.
- There may be multiple ways to sufficiently complete an activity. Your intern will need to complete the activity using his/her professional judgement and acting in the best interest of the patient; at the same time, ensuring that the overall legislative scheme for pharmacy practice is complied with to its letter and its spirit.

Adjusting the program activities

- The suggested timeframe noted in each competency module is only a guideline; you and your intern may decide to alter timeframes based on your intern's background and experience. Depending on his/her background and experience, the earlier activities within the program may be too simple. If this is the case, the activities and/or time spent on a module may be adjusted at the discretion of you and your intern; however, your intern is still required to complete the minimum number of hours required for the level.
- The majority of internships are completed in community pharmacies and the activities listed are tailored for community practice. If the intern is completing his/her internship outside of a community setting, please work with your intern to adjust the suggested learning activities and/or establish new activities that are more conducive to your practice site.

Any adjustments made to the program activities must be made at the discretion of both the preceptor and intern. Any new/revised activities must support the program's overall objective. In other words, activities must provide the opportunity to apply professional knowledge and skills to a practical setting, and develop and demonstrate entry-to-practice competencies.

Lastly, all activities must be completed in accordance with the [Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#), [Code of Ethics](#), and other relevant legislations that govern pharmacy practice.

Preceptor's role regarding program activities

Regarding the program activities, your role as the preceptor is to

- provide opportunities for your intern to complete the SPT program activities, supervising as appropriate;
- encourage critical thinking and problem solving by enabling your intern to formulate his/her own answers;
- support your intern with providing patient care and answering patient questions; assist with health promotional and interdisciplinary activities as needed;
- adjust activities as needed to be more conducive to the practice site and your intern's learning needs;
- play the role of the patient/prescriber in the role-play activities and supplement details as required;
- be available for discussion and guidance; provide ongoing feedback and meet with your intern to review and discuss assessment results;
- help your intern determine activities and learning plans to help him/her meet acceptable performance levels; and
- ensure other pharmacy team members are aware of the intern's role and responsibilities and the level of supervision required.

Further resources

For more information on the Structured Practical Training program, please refer to the instructions, Q&A, and/or additional resources available in the SPT portal.