



# Structured Practical Training

## Program Manual for Pharmacy Technicians



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## Program overview

Welcome to the Alberta College of Pharmacy's (ACP) Structured Practical Training (SPT) program!

In order to practise as a pharmacy technician in Alberta, candidates must meet entry-to-practice requirements, including the SPT program, and maintain competence throughout their career. These requirements are determined by ACP to ensure pharmacy professionals are competent to perform their authorized roles.

**Candidates** in the SPT program must apply their knowledge and skills at different practice sites for the purposes of learning and being assessed for their readiness for independent practice. To complete the program, candidates must

- complete online learning activities,
- complete practical experience activities in a manner consistent with the [Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians](#) and expectations for professionalism and ethical conduct, and
- demonstrate entry-to-practice competencies.

**Preceptors** play a critical role in the SPT program, and are responsible for teaching, coaching, facilitating learning, and assessing a candidate's overall readiness to practise. In return for their support and involvement, a preceptor has the opportunity to

- be a leader in the pharmacy profession,
- positively influence a candidate's career by guiding their practice and stimulating areas of interest,
- keep current with practice guidelines and literature to perform to the best of their own ability, and
- share knowledge and experience to give back to the profession.

## Program goals and philosophy

The overall goal of the SPT program is to ensure candidates are ready to practise in Alberta as pharmacy technicians in Canadian pharmacy practice.

The concept of practice readiness is more than the achievement of competencies. An individual who is ready to practise uses their technical and clinical skills confidently in the provision of person-centred care, embodies the characteristics of a pharmacy professional, and is trusted to practise within the healthcare system and their communities.

At completion of the SPT program, provisional pharmacy technicians will have demonstrated that they

- practise pharmacy competently;
- are person centred in their approach to the provision of professional services;
- act ethically and professionally by displaying a strong set of values and using good judgement;
- are confident in performing their professional role within the healthcare system;
- engage in active learning, including self-directed learning, acceptance of constructive feedback, and reflective practice; and
- are prepared to meet the expectations described in the legislative framework.

The design of SPT acknowledges the importance of time to learn and to receive feedback for achievement of practice readiness. The time spent developing a particular competency depends on a candidate's background, knowledge, and experience. Self-assessments assist candidates and preceptors in determining candidate learning needs throughout the program. Activities within the program only provide a basic framework to help a candidate understand and demonstrate the competencies required before being eligible for the pharmacy technician register. Preceptors will help candidates determine areas of development in order to meet or exceed acceptable performance levels. Assessment occurs along with learning during SPT, supporting candidates in demonstrating and improving their skills.

## Definitions

Throughout the SPT program

1. **Candidate** means a regulated member enrolled in the SPT program.
2. **Co-precepting** means when two preceptors share responsibilities as the preceptor for the candidate.
3. **Institution pharmacy** has the same meaning as in the [Pharmacy and Drug Act](#).
4. **Licensed community pharmacy** has the same meaning as in the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*.
5. **Licensee** has the same meaning as in the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*.
6. **Online learning activities** means online learning required by the registrar to be completed by the candidate as part of the SPT program. These activities are separate from the activities to be completed during a practical experience.
7. **Practice readiness** (or readiness to practise) means when an individual who is ready to practise uses their technical and clinical skills confidently in the provision of person-centred care, embodies the characteristics of a pharmacy professional, and is trusted to practise within the healthcare system and their communities.
8. **Preceptor** means a pharmacy technician or clinical pharmacist, approved by ACP, responsible for teaching, coaching, and facilitating learning, and assessing a candidate's overall readiness to practise. If co-precepting, both pharmacy professionals are required to be approved by ACP to be the preceptors for the candidate.
9. **Proprietor** has the same meaning as in the *Pharmacy and Drug Act*.

## Competencies

The SPT program is based on the [Professional Competencies for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians at Entry to Practice in Canada](#) developed by the [National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities](#) (NAPRA). NAPRA is made up of all provincial and territorial pharmacy regulatory authorities across Canada and its members collaborate to develop resources that are important to pharmacy practice in all jurisdictions. The competencies were developed to define the expectations of a competent pharmacy professional when entering practice anywhere in Canada. They are divided into six domains:

### 1A. Providing care: Clinical care

Pharmacy professionals provide safe and appropriate clinical care that meets the patient's unique needs, goals, and preferences.

### 1B. Providing care: Distribution

Pharmacy professionals distribute quality products and preparations that are safe and appropriate for the patient.

**2. Knowledge and expertise**

Pharmacy professionals engage in continuous learning and improvement to provide quality care based on the best available evidence and the application of professional judgement.

**3. Communication and collaboration**

Pharmacy professionals communicate and document effectively to enable partnership with the patient and collaboration with others to promote optimal patient care.

**4. Leadership and stewardship**

Pharmacy professionals provide leadership, support, and supervision to pharmacy colleagues. They preserve and support community and population health in Canada.

**5. Professionalism**

Pharmacy professionals comply with legal, regulatory, and ethical requirements. They commit to a culture of patient safety and promote a culturally and emotionally safe work environment for themselves and others.

## Candidate roles and responsibilities

While the SPT program provides activities and resources, the obligation to successfully complete the SPT program and become a competent pharmacy technician **rests with candidates**. They are responsible for understanding the program's goals and objectives, identifying and acknowledging their learning needs, and completing the requirements of the program.

It is critical to maximize the learning experience and accept and appreciate all the opportunities available during each practical experience. Candidates should show initiative and actively participate in all learning opportunities.

As with any pharmacy professional, candidates must, at all times, uphold the principles of the [Code of Ethics](#), including

- continuously improving their level of professional knowledge and skill,
- taking responsibility for maintaining a high standard of professional competence,
- evaluating their individual practice and assuming responsibility for improvement,
- responding constructively to the outcomes of competence assessments and reviews of their professional performance and undertaking further training when necessary,
- restricting their practice within the limitations of personal competence, and
- practising only when fit and competent to do so.

## Completing the SPT program

To successfully complete the SPT program, a candidate must

- complete the Overview course by reviewing the SPT Program Manual for Pharmacy Technicians, [SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians](#), and Pharmacy Technician Scope of Practice, and accepting the terms of the undertaking agreement;
- complete the mandatory Online Learning course;
- complete Practical Experience I by successfully completing all required activities, practising a minimum of 240 hours, and passing the final assessment; and
- complete Practical Experience II by successfully completing all required activities, practising a minimum of 240 hours, and passing the final assessment.

ACP will be reviewing the assessments and relevant documentation submitted by preceptor(s) and candidates prior to approving completion of a practical experience.

## Completing the Overview

The Overview course in Academy serves as an introduction to the program and **must be completed prior to a candidate being able to enroll into the practical experience portion of the SPT**. The Overview course includes the SPT Program Manual for Pharmacy Technicians, SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians, and Pharmacy Technician Scope of Practice, as well as an undertaking agreement that must be accepted by the candidate.

## Completing practical experiences

Candidates must complete two practical experiences by practising at an eligible practice site at least 20 hours per week, to a maximum of 40 hours per week. A practical experience is expected to be completed in consecutive weeks without breaks, which is essential to support continuity of learning and professional development. Consecutive weeks

- allow candidates to maintain consistent engagement with pharmacy workflows, patients, and the healthcare team;
- support accurate and fair assessment, as preceptors are able to observe performance, growth, and competency development without interruption; and
- ensure that candidates are appropriately prepared for entry to practice, having demonstrated competence in a realistic and sustained practice setting.

Candidates who are not able to complete their practical experience through consecutive weeks must reach out to ACP for prior approval.

Candidates must complete each practical experience at a different practice site and with a different preceptor or co-preceptors. Each practical experience must be a minimum of 240 hours. Additional hours may be required to demonstrate entry-to-practice competencies.

To begin a practical experience, a candidate must first find an eligible preceptor(s) and practical experience site and receive approval from ACP.

### *Finding a preceptor*

As part of the SPT program candidates, are required to find their own practical experience site and preceptor(s) by following these steps:

1. Seek an eligible practice site and pharmacy technician or pharmacist preceptor(s) in accordance with the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians.
  - Pharmacy technicians and pharmacists must complete preceptor training requirements in Academy to be eligible to act as a preceptor. Pharmacists are required to complete preceptor training specific to pharmacy technicians in order to precept a pharmacy technician.
  - Each practical experience must be completed with one preceptor or two preceptors who are co-precepting. For at least one of their practical experiences, the candidate must have a preceptor or co-preceptor who is on the pharmacy technician register. If there are co-preceptors, both pharmacy professionals must meet the eligibility requirements, complete the training, and be approved by ACP before the practical experience begins. A co-preceptor may not be added once a practical experience has begun.
  - The preceptor(s) must be available to supervise the candidate for the majority of their time (four days per week or 75 per cent of scheduled hours).

### ***Conflict of interest***

A candidate must not complete a practical experience at a site where they are related to or have a close personal relationship with the preceptor, licensee or proprietor of the pharmacy, or manager of the pharmacy team as this is considered a conflict of interest. A conflict of interest occurs when a personal, professional, or financial relationship could interfere with, or call into question, the objectivity of the preceptor's role in training and assessing a candidate.

Any conflict of interest must be disclosed to ACP prior to commencing a practical experience or as soon as the conflict of interest is discovered. A candidate must disclose any conflict of interest on the SPT enrolment form. Should a new conflict of interest arise once a practical experience has started, the preceptor or candidate must disclose the new conflict of interest by contacting ACP directly at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca).

SPT rules do not prohibit a candidate from completing a practical experience at a site where an employment relationship may exist, however, this must be disclosed to ACP prior to starting the practical experience on the SPT enrolment form. The following scenarios may be permissible but must be disclosed to ACP on the SPT enrolment form:

- The candidate is a current or former paid employee of the pharmacy.
- The candidate has an agreement with the licensee or proprietor of the pharmacy or manager of the pharmacy team for future employment as a pharmacy technician.
- Candidate is not related to or in a close personal relationship, but has an existing professional relationship with the preceptor, licensee, proprietor of the pharmacy or manager of the pharmacy team.

Failure to disclose an actual, potential, or perceived conflict of interest may result in termination of a practical experience. If a practical experience is terminated due to a failure to disclose a conflict of interest, the candidate will not receive credit for activities completed or hours undertaken.

### ***Enrolling in a practical experience***

2. Once an eligible practice site and preceptor is identified, collect
  - the pharmacy's name and licence number,
  - the preceptor's name and registration number, and
  - a [preceptor acceptance form](#) completed and signed by the preceptor.
    - If co-preceptors have been identified, a completed form from both preceptors is required.
3. Complete and submit the Structured Practical Training enrollment form in [myACP](#).
  - Provide the information collected during Step 2 on the enrollment form. Any potential, perceived, or actual conflicts of interest must be disclosed on this form.
  - Candidates and preceptor(s) will receive notification once ACP has approved the preceptor and practice site, which may take up to 15 business days. The practical experience can only be accessed in Academy after ACP has approved the preceptor and practice site.

A candidate may not switch preceptor(s) and/or practice sites during a practical experience.

## ***Starting a practical experience***

To begin a practical experience, the candidate should arrange a start date and time with their preceptor(s). Prior to their first day, a candidate must log into Academy and complete the following

4. Complete the prior learning self-assessment.
  - Please ensure this assessment is completed in a timely manner, otherwise progress in the SPT program will be delayed. The practical experience does NOT start until the candidate has completed the prior learning self-assessment AND your preceptor has confirmed completion by signing off on the prior learning self-assessment in Academy. Any activities or hours commenced prior to completing the prior learning self-assessment will not count towards the completion of SPT.
  - To access the prior learning self-assessment, click on the Structured Practical Training module in Academy, and click on the applicable Practical Experience (I or II).
  - During orientation to the practice site, the preceptor(s) and candidate will review and discuss the prior learning self-assessment to help the preceptor(s) and candidate establish clear learning objectives and goals for the practical experience.
5. Review the activities required during their practical experience.

Within a practical experience, candidates are expected to complete different sets of activities, which are based on NAPRA's entry-to-practice competencies, in order to demonstrate their practice readiness.

Each set of activities in a practical experience contains an activity overview, mandatory activities or submissions, and required readings and additional resources. It is important for candidates to familiarize themselves with these activity overviews and requirements. Some activities, such as patient assessment and providing care, are meant to be longitudinal throughout the practical experience, while others, such as the best possible medication history activity can be completed in a single instance. The activity overviews provide a description of the activity, the learning objectives, the related entry-to-practice competencies, the assessments, and the completion requirements.

## ***Completing a practical experience***

During a practical experience, candidates must complete the following activities:

- Patient assessment and providing care activities.
  - Completed daily throughout the practical experience.
- Distribution activities.
  - Completed daily throughout the practical experience.
- Best possible medication history (BPMH) submission.
  - At least one submission for a patient with a minimum of three existing prescription medications for each practical experience.
  - Must be a different case from the patient education activity.

- Patient education activity.
  - At least one activity for each practical experience.
  - Must be a different case from the BPMH submission.
- Continuing Competence Program (CCP) learning activity.
  - Implement at least one learning plan for each practical experience.
- Verification and continuous quality improvement (CQI) activity.
  - Complete 250 checks per practical experience.
  - Analyze at least one practice incident or close call for each practical experience.
- Compounding activity.
  - Complete at least one compounding situation or theoretical non-sterile, non-hazardous compounding situation for each practical experience.

During a practical experience, candidates must also complete the midpoint and final self-assessments to demonstrate accountability for their learning.

Preceptors must confirm the candidate's successful completion of the CCP learning activity and the verification and continuous quality improvement activity. Additionally, preceptors must complete the following five assessments during a practical experience:

- BPMH submission assessment,
- patient education submission assessment,
- compounding assessment,
- midpoint assessment, and
- final assessment.

See the section of this manual on practical experience activities and assessment for further information.

According to the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians

25. A practical experience is complete when

25.1 the candidate has

25.1.1 completed all required activities identified for the practical experience,

25.1.2 completed the minimum practice hours required for the practical experience, and

25.1.3 demonstrated technical and clinical skills necessary for readiness to practise at the level and consistency specified in the assessment, and

- 25.2 the preceptor
  - 25.2.1 is satisfied the candidate has demonstrated readiness to practise in accordance with the SPT program assessment;
  - 25.2.2 has documented the assessment according to the program expectations; and
  - 25.2.3 has declared, based on their observation and assessment of the candidate, that the candidate is ready to practise, and
- 25.3 ACP has approved the documentation provided by the candidate and preceptor.

After a candidate has completed a minimum of 240 hours and all required activities within Academy, and the preceptor has completed the required assessments, the preceptor may complete the preceptor declaration form when they believe the candidate is ready to proceed in the SPT program. The preceptor declaration form must be signed by the preceptor(s) then provided to the candidate to upload into Academy.

ACP will review the documentation provided by the preceptor(s) and the candidate and may direct additional action should more information be required. A practical experience is considered complete when ACP has approved the documentation provided by the preceptor(s) and the candidate.

## Completing Online Learning

The Online Learning course of the SPT program consists of modules that are separate from the Overview course and practical experiences. The content of the modules is highly relevant to any pharmacy technician wishing to practise in Alberta. The modules provide the background and knowledge required for professional, person-centred practice. All candidates must complete the Online Learning course, and it **must be completed prior to starting any practical experiences**.

The Online Learning course consists of mandatory modules and optional modules. Mandatory modules are required for candidates to be able to complete the SPT program, while optional modules offer extra information that can be helpful to candidates. Preceptors may direct candidates to complete optional modules or redo a mandatory module if they require additional support in the applicable areas. The modules are prescribed learning activities created by ACP, so current regulated members have completed them as part of their Continuing Competence Program annual learning requirements.

## Preceptor roles and responsibilities

In addition to facilitating learning, preceptors have the ultimate responsibility of assessing candidates' knowledge, skills, and abilities. They must sign off on a practical experience **only when candidates have demonstrated practice readiness and have demonstrated acceptable performance levels for all entry-to-practice competencies**. All restricted activities completed by the candidate during the SPT program must be under the supervision of the preceptor(s) and/or another pharmacy technician or clinical pharmacist.

As with any pharmacy professional, preceptors must, at all times, uphold the principles of the Code of Ethics.

Preceptors must fulfill the following responsibilities:

- **Complete** training requirements in Academy.
- **Model** professionalism and ensure learning environments are inclusive and safe.
- **Prepare** the practice site (see Appendix A) and themselves for the practical experience by being knowledgeable about the goals and objectives of the SPT program.
- **Be aware** of the expected level of knowledge and skills required to demonstrate readiness to practise.
- **Remain** responsible for the delivery of all components of any professional services to patients.
- **Provide** an orientation to the candidate on the first day of the practical experience.
- **Meet** with the candidate at appropriate intervals to discuss progress.
- **Provide** regular, balanced, and quality feedback.
- **Receive and respond** to communication with ACP as required.
- **Disclose** any conflict of interest with the candidate(s) who is completing a practical experience (familial, personal, or financial), if present.
- **Respect** candidate privacy as it pertains to progress and assessment in SPT and other sensitive information.
- **Embrace** the role of preceptor as a learning experience and be open to new ideas and suggestions.
- **Assess** candidate performance fairly and objectively.
- **Communicate** regularly with the co-preceptor, where applicable, about candidate progress and have consistent messaging of expectations.

## Preceptor training

Preceptor training is mandatory to become a preceptor in SPT, to ensure that all preceptors are equipped with the knowledge and skills to be effective in the program. The training also attempts to create a more standardized experience for candidates, regardless of who their preceptors are.

At the completion of preceptor training, preceptors will be able to

- describe the SPT program objectives and procedures,
- prepare for a SPT practical experience,
- incorporate reflection into the preceptor-candidate relationship and their own professional practice,
- facilitate learning through the provision of feedback, and
- assess a candidate using the Tool for Assessment of Pharmacy Technicians (TAPT).

The Preceptor Training course in Academy consists of four mandatory learning components:

1. **Overview:** This component provides a foundational understanding of the SPT program. Preceptors are introduced to the purpose, structure, and expectations of the SPT program.
2. **Introduction to precepting and preceptor skill development:** This component focuses on preparing preceptors for their role as mentors and assessors as well as strengthening core teaching and coaching skills. It helps preceptors understand how to support candidates before and during the practical experience. Two mandatory modules focus on developing reflective practice and feedback and evaluation. Optional modules are available for preceptors who are looking for additional skill development.
3. **Activities:** This component focuses on familiarizing preceptors with the required activities of the SPT program that candidates must participate in to complete the SPT program.
4. **Assessment training:** This component prepares preceptors to properly and consistently assess candidates within the SPT program. The Tool for Assessment of Pharmacy Technicians (TAPT) is the primary assessment tool used in SPT, and this training ensures preceptors apply the assessment criteria consistently and fairly across candidates.

In addition to these components, there are links to relevant resources for preceptors developed by teaching institutions as well as tools to help preceptors prepare for an SPT practical experience.

Once a preceptor has completed the mandatory learning components, they must then accept the terms of the preceptor undertaking agreement. The undertaking agreement ensures that the preceptor understands the principles of the SPT program and agrees to the role of the preceptor. A preceptor may not accept a candidate until these components are completed in Academy and they meet all eligibility requirements per the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians.

## Preparing for and onboarding a candidate

### *Preparing for a candidate*

Being prepared for a practical experience is essential for a smooth start to the experience and sets the stage for a positive preceptor-candidate relationship. Prior to the candidate's arrival, the preceptor is responsible for ensuring that the candidate is registered with ACP, which can be verified using ACP's public directory.

The checklist in Appendix C of this manual offers a detailed to-do list that preceptors can use to ensure that everyone is prepared for an upcoming SPT practical experience. Preceptors should review this list in advance of the experience and are encouraged to add any additional tasks that are required at their sites to set up a successful practical experience.

### ***Orienting a candidate***

Providing a comprehensive orientation to the candidate is one of the ways preceptors can set them up for success in SPT. Candidates will be better able to demonstrate competencies when they are familiar with site specifics and processes and will feel more comfortable in the practice environment. Preceptors should take the time to provide a full orientation, and this must occur early in the practical experience (ideally on the first day). A checklist for preceptors to use to conduct candidate orientation is provided in Appendix D.

## **Supervision**

A candidate must be supervised in accordance with the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians and the Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians (SPPPT). The preceptor(s) should be supervising the candidate for the majority of the candidate's time (four days per week or 75 per cent of scheduled hours). When the preceptor is not available to supervise, the candidate must be supervised by a pharmacy technician on the pharmacy technician register or a pharmacist on the clinical pharmacist register.

According to the SPPPT and the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians, a regulated member providing supervision (the preceptor) must

- always be on site and accessible,
- be authorized to perform and supervise the professional services being supervised, and
- be satisfied that the candidate is authorized to perform the professional services.

The supervising regulated member (the preceptor) must

- remain responsible for the delivery of all components of any professional service that requires the professional skills and training of the supervising pharmacy technician or pharmacist,
- ensure the candidate acts within the limits established by the legislative framework, and
- be satisfied that the candidate will perform professional services safely and effectively.

### **Candidates must not be scheduled to work independently without a supervising regulated member or preceptor present.**

Per the SPPPT, the supervising regulated member **must provide the level of supervision they consider appropriate** to ensure the safe and effective performance of the professional services. Initially, the preceptor must begin with direct supervision of a candidate until the preceptor is satisfied that the candidate can perform the restricted activity safely and effectively. Direct supervision requires the preceptor to be directly present to observe, guide, monitor, and promptly intervene as the candidate performs a restricted activity. Restricted activities are defined in the Health Professions Restricted Activities Regulation.

As the preceptor(s) establishes trust that the candidate can perform a restricted activity safely and effectively (i.e., with minimal to no guidance), **at the preceptor's discretion and based on the restricted activity and their assessment of the candidate**, they may decrease the level of supervision, allowing the candidate to practise with less oversight and guidance. However, the preceptor must always be present, onsite, and available to monitor and support the actions of the candidate as the preceptor remains responsible and accountable for the actions of the candidate.

When the candidate is being supervised by a pharmacy technician or pharmacist who is not the preceptor, the supervising pharmacy technician or pharmacist

- must be present, onsite, and accessible;
- must supervise the candidate in accordance with the SPPPT and the SPT Program Rules for Pharmacy Technicians; and
- may vary the level of supervision of the candidate based on their assessment of the candidate and consultation with the preceptor about the candidate's performance.

## Co-precepting

Co-precepting offers the ability for two pharmacy professionals to share the preceptor role. This enables pharmacy technicians or pharmacists who meet eligibility criteria and have an interest in precepting the opportunity to precept a candidate even if they may not work full time or do not wish to have sole responsibility for precepting a candidate.

Supervision of a candidate requires a preceptor to be scheduled with the candidate at least four days a week if the candidate is working 40 hours a week or 75 per cent of their time at the practice site if they are not working 40 hours a week. This supervision responsibility can be divided and shared between two preceptors acting as co-preceptors. It is important for the preceptors to oversee the candidate for the majority of their practical experience so that they can accurately complete their assessments of the candidate based on their own observations.

Co-preceptors must be identified before starting a practical experience. Both preceptors are required to complete the preceptor training, meet all eligibility criteria, and provide a signed preceptor acceptance form to the candidate prior to starting a practical experience. A co-preceptor may not be added in the middle of a practical experience.

Once the preceptors are approved, plans should be made in advance between the co-preceptors to share feedback and observations, and discuss candidate performance together. Co-preceptors should also make sure that the same expectations are provided to the candidate regardless of which preceptor may be supervising and supporting that candidate on any particular day.

Only one preceptor is required to enter candidate assessment results into Academy, but both preceptors will have the ability to do so. Assessment results should reflect observations and feedback from both preceptors.

At the end of a practical experience, both preceptors are required to sign the preceptor declaration form to be submitted by the candidate.

# ACP roles and responsibilities

## Oversight and support

ACP's oversight of SPT program activities serves to

- help ensure candidates and preceptors are meeting the program's expectations,
- support candidates and preceptors in meeting the program's goals and objectives,
- address concerns that may arise during the program, and
- approve the completion of a practical experience by reviewing the assessments and relevant documentation submitted by preceptor(s) and candidates.

Throughout the SPT program, ACP will

- provide support, guidance, and resources to candidates and preceptors to ensure they are fulfilling their responsibilities and meeting program goals and objectives;
- monitor candidate progress by regularly reviewing and tracking progress of candidates undergoing SPT;
- investigate situations where candidates have been in a practical experience for an extended period of time and may need additional support, assessment, or transition to another phase of their training;
- identify and address gaps in documentation and direct follow-up action to ensure that both candidates and preceptors are meeting program objectives and requirements;
- respond to instances where concerns regarding candidate performance, assessment, or learning are raised and support the candidate and/or preceptor(s) in these situations; and
- ensure documentation accurately and comprehensively reflects the candidate's progress, including competencies achieved, learning outcomes, and practical skills acquired.

ACP is committed to continuously assessing and refining the oversight process to ensure efficiency, effectiveness, and alignment with the changing landscape of pharmacy practice. ACP will review and implement program updates and changes as required and as pharmacy practice continues to evolve.

By executing these roles, ACP ensures that the SPT program aligns with regulatory standards, supports the development of competent professionals, and ultimately upholds public safety in pharmacy practice.

## Incomplete practical experiences

A practical experience is considered incomplete when

- a candidate does not meet the minimum number of hours in a practical experience;
- a candidate can not demonstrate practice readiness (e.g., unsuccessful final assessment);
- a candidate or preceptor does not complete all required activities and assessments;
- a candidate leaves a practical experience for any reason other than completion of a practical experience;
- a preceptor, co-preceptor, or candidate ends the preceptor-candidate relationship for any reason;

- a candidate withdraws from the SPT program;
- a candidate withdraws from a practical experience; or
- a candidate's provisional practice permit expires.

If a candidate does not complete a practical experience with the approved preceptor, the preceptor must notify ACP at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca) within 10 days of when the candidate's practical experience ended with that preceptor, including the reason for an incomplete practical experience. ACP may follow up with the candidate accordingly. The candidate will need to restart the practical experience with a new eligible preceptor.

## Concerns process

During a practical experience, the candidate or preceptor may encounter a disagreement, concern, or issue. Candidates and preceptors are encouraged to attempt to resolve the concern directly at the practice site.

### *Preceptor concerns about a candidate*

If a preceptor has concerns about a candidate, the preceptor is encouraged to attempt to resolve the concern directly with the candidate. If the concern cannot be resolved directly between the candidate and the preceptor, then the concern should be brought to the attention of ACP. The registrar may appoint a mediator to assist in the resolution of the concern.

Refer to the assessment section of the manual for more information on assessment and performance difficulties.

### *Candidate concerns about the preceptor or practice site*

There is an inherent power imbalance between the candidate and preceptor. Candidates and preceptors are encouraged to attempt to resolve the concern directly at the practice site. However, if a candidate has concerns about their preceptor or practice site, they may contact ACP at any time, including after their practical experience.

If the candidate has concerns about the ability to meet program requirements, such as

- insufficient opportunities to complete required learning activities,
- need for more dialogue and feedback from the preceptor,
- performance difficulties,
- ethical concerns,
- conflict with the preceptor, or
- health concerns,

the candidate should reach out to ACP, in confidence, at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca). The registrar may appoint a mediator to assist in the resolution of the concern.

Concern reporting is not limited to a candidate. The preceptor or another third party may also reach out to ACP at any time to report an issue. Issues related to preceptors, candidates, practice sites, or the SPT program can be reported to ACP at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca).

Once a concern is received, ACP will confirm receipt and gather any relevant information, including the nature of the concern, timeline, involved parties, and prior resolution attempts. Each concern is reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and outcomes from these reviews will also be determined on a case-by-case basis.

## Practical experience activities

Practical experiences are made up of different sets of activities that need to be undertaken by the candidate in order to demonstrate readiness to practise and meet entry-to-practice requirements. The activities can be found in Academy.

A candidate is expected to review each set of activities in a practical experience during their first week at a practical experience site. Each set contains an overview of the activity which will outline

- the summary of the activity,
- the learning objectives,
- entry-to-practice competencies,
- how the candidate will be assessed, and
- the completion requirements of that activity.

Each set also contains relevant tasks the candidate must complete as well as required readings and additional resources related to that specific activity. The set of activities under patient assessment and providing care and under distribution are meant to be longitudinal throughout the practical experience. Other activity sets can be completed in a single instance.

Note: The candidate must complete the prior learning self-assessment and the preceptor must sign off on the prior learning self-assessment before they can review the other activities in Academy.

## Practical experiences required activities

A candidate must access Academy in order to complete all required activities for their practical experience. Each practical experience consists of the following components.

### *Overview of activities in SPT*

Activity	Candidate role	Preceptor role	Timing of completion
Prior learning self-assessment	Complete prior to starting a practical experience. Discuss with the preceptor.	Review on first day of the practical experience. Discuss with the candidate	Prior to and on the first day of the practical experience.
Patient assessment and providing care activities	Complete mandatory activities and required readings.	Support candidate by providing sufficient opportunity to participate in the mandatory activities.	Throughout entire practical experience.
Distribution activities	Complete mandatory activities and required readings.	Support candidate by providing sufficient opportunity to participate in the mandatory activities.	Throughout entire practical experience.

Activity	Candidate role	Preceptor role	Timing of completion
Best possible medication history (BPMH) case submission	Review the required readings and submit one complete BPMH for a patient with a minimum of three existing prescription medications per practical experience as outlined in Academy.	Assess the candidate's case.	At any point during the practical experience.
Patient education case submission	Review the required readings and submit one patient case per practical experience. Cannot reuse same patient case from the BPMH submission.	Assess the candidate's case.	At any point during the practical experience.
Continuing Competence Program (CCP) learning activity	Review the required readings. Complete a learning plan, complete the learning, apply the learning to practice, summarize the learning.	Support the candidate in the creation and implementation of their learning plan, review the application and evaluation of learning with the candidate, and sign off on completion of the activity in Academy.	At any point during the practical experience.
Verification and continuous quality improvement	Review the required readings and complete 250 prescription and product checks with 100 per cent accuracy.	Support the candidate in identifying a practice incident or close call and review appropriate steps with the candidate. Sign off on completion of the activity in Academy.	At any point during the practical experience.
Compounding	Review the required readings and complete all required components.	Assess the candidate's submission.	At any point during the practical experience.

# Assessment and evaluation

## Assessment

Assessment that occurs during SPT is complimentary to other forms of assessment required for entry into the profession (e.g., completion of university or college programs, Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada Multiple Choice Question (MCQ) exam, Objective Structured Performance Examination (OSPE), ACP Ethics and Jurisprudence Exam) in determining readiness to practise. The assessment approach also recognizes that, in workplace-based assessment, the highest value from assessment comes from the use of formative assessment, or assessment for learning, which includes the provision of regular feedback to improve performance. Therefore, assessment in SPT is both formative (for learning) and summative (for judging performance).

The preceptor (or co-preceptor where applicable) is responsible for assessing the candidate according to pre-determined criteria. Most of this should occur when the preceptor has directly observed the candidate demonstrate required activities in the pharmacy. Candidates are also responsible for ensuring they are able to demonstrate the behaviours and competencies outlined in the assessment rubrics.

Preceptors will use the [Tool for Assessment of Pharmacy Technicians](#) (TAPT) to complete the midpoint and final assessments of the candidate. This is the main assessment which determines the outcome of the SPT practical experience and is detailed in the [TAPT Guide](#). ACP acknowledges the Ontario College of Pharmacists for permission to adapt this tool and the use of supplementary materials to support the use of the tool.

Three additional assessments are required for preceptors to complete during SPT to assess specific activities. All assessments are completed directly in Academy. Assessments are outlined in the table below.

### Overview of assessments in SPT

Assessment	Candidate role	Preceptor role	Timing of completion
Prior learning self-assessment	Complete the self-assessment.	Review the candidate's submission.	Prior to starting each practical experience.
TAPT midpoint assessment	Complete the self-assessment.	Complete assessment of the candidate.	Midpoint of practical experience (e.g., end of third week).
TAPT final assessment	Complete the self-assessment.	Complete assessment of the candidate.	End of practical experience.
Best possible medication history (BPMH) submission assessment	Upload BPMH and documentation into Academy for assessment.	Complete the assessment of the presentation.	Upon completion of BPMH and documentation.
Patient education case submission assessment	Upload patient case and documentation into Academy for assessment.	Complete the assessment of the submission.	Upon submission of patient case and documentation.
Compounding assessment	Complete required components in Academy.	Complete the assessment of the submission.	Upon submission of required components.

## ***Requirements for successful completion***

### **Tool for Assessment of Pharmacy Technicians (TAPT)**

The preceptor's ratings and score on the TAPT assessment will determine whether a candidate may proceed in their SPT program. This overall score is determined by calculating the number rating received for each element assessed on the tool, which can range from 1 to 5, out of total possible points. As stated in the TAPT Guide, a rating of 5 is reserved for candidates who demonstrate practising beyond the level expected at entry to practice (i.e., a level typically demonstrated by an experienced pharmacy technician). This level is rarely seen during SPT.

A score of at least 60 per cent is required to move from Practical Experience I to Practical Experience II. In situations where the candidate scores lower or the preceptor identifies major performance concerns in any of the areas assessed, ACP must be notified and will provide support and direction. In addition, the candidate can not have received ratings of 1 or 2 in any of the elements assessed.

A score of at least 70 per cent is required to successfully complete Practical Experience II. In addition, the candidate can not have received ratings of 1 or 2 in any of the elements assessed.

### **BPMH submission assessment, patient education case submission assessment and compounding assessment**

The preceptor will assess the candidate's BPMH submission, patient education case submission and compounding submission by rating elements on the rubric for each activity as "below expectations," "meets expectations," or "exceeds expectations." All ratings must meet or exceed expectations for successful completion of the activity. If the candidate does not achieve successful completion of the activity, additional attempts may be submitted until these skills are sufficiently developed.

## ***Performance and assessment difficulties***

### **Discrepancies in assessment**

If disagreements in the assessment of the candidate arise, preceptors and candidates should attempt to resolve these discrepancies through discussion. Candidates are encouraged to engage the preceptor or co-preceptors in dialogue regarding their assessment outcomes prior to reaching out to ACP.

If the discussion does not result in a satisfactory resolution of the discrepancy, candidates and/or preceptors may reach out to ACP at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca) for support within 10 days of completion of the assessment in question.

ACP will gather relevant information regarding the assessment in question and the discrepancy. It is important that any ratings noting that the candidate requires significant guidance or noting that the candidate is not meeting expectations are justified by supporting comments. The registrar may appoint a mediator to assist in the resolution of the disagreement or direct an alternative preceptor to reassess the candidate.

### Candidate performance not meeting program standards

If it has been determined by the preceptor or co-preceptors that a candidate is not meeting program standards, the preceptor or co-preceptor may request the candidate extend their practical experience to allow for additional time for the candidate to demonstrate readiness to practise. This does not need to be communicated to ACP. Because 240 hours per practical experience is the minimum number of hours required, it is expected that some candidates will require more time in practice to meet the minimum requirements.

There is no pre-determined length of time that a practical experience can be extended and should be considered on a case-by-case basis with the goal of enabling a candidate to demonstrate readiness to practise.

Preceptor(s) may reach out to ACP at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca) at any time during a practical experience for support with candidates whose performance is not meeting program standards.

### *After the final assessment*

Preceptor(s) are expected to

- ensure the candidate's BPMH submission, patient education case submission, and compounding submission meet or exceed expectations;
- sign off on the candidate's verification and CQI, and CCP activities;
- ensure all assessments are completed with written feedback;
- meet with their candidate to discuss the final assessment;
- (if the candidate has met the program requirements) download and complete the preceptor declaration form; and
- provide the signed preceptor declaration form to the candidate to upload in Academy.

The candidate is responsible for

- ensuring all required activities are completed,
- ensuring all self-assessments are completed,
- ensuring midpoint and final assessments are completed by their preceptor(s), and
- uploading the completed preceptor declaration form into Academy.

**Reminder:** Completing a minimum of 240 hours does not mean the candidate has completed a practical experience. A candidate is required to demonstrate readiness to practise by meeting all entry-to-practice requirements. Candidates may require additional hours to sufficiently demonstrate readiness to practise.

### ***ACP documentation review***

Once the candidate has uploaded the preceptor declaration form, ACP will review the documentation provided by candidates and preceptors to determine whether a practical experience is complete. This is an important step to ensure candidates and preceptors are meeting the program's expectations and that candidates are ready to practise in accordance with the entry-to-practice requirements.

Preceptor(s) and/or candidates may be required to provide additional information prior to ACP's approval of documentation. To avoid delay, ensure all activities have been completed and documentation is comprehensive.

Once the documentation is reviewed and approved, a notification will be sent to the candidate and preceptor advising them of this approval.

### **Expected timeline for completion**

ACP will review the documentation in a timely manner not exceeding 15 business days.

### **Program evaluation**

Program evaluation is an essential component of SPT to ensure program success and ongoing improvement of the program.

Feedback from candidates and preceptors will be collected at the end of each practical experience via confidential surveys for the purpose of evaluating the SPT program. Providing this feedback is voluntary but highly encouraged.

Candidates and preceptors are welcome to provide direct feedback at any time during the program to [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca).

# Appendix A

## Completion checklist for candidates

- Complete the Overview course in Academy. **Required prior** to enrolling in a practical experience.
- Complete the mandatory Online Learning course. **Required prior** to enrolling in a practical experience.
- Seek an eligible practice site and preceptor(s), collect a preceptor acceptance form from your preceptor(s), and submit the Structured Practical Training enrolment form in [myACP](#). **Required** to enrol in a practical experience.
- Complete a prior learning self-assessment to start a practical experience. **Required** to start a practical experience.
- Complete SPT Practical Experience I and II requirements.
  - Review the overview and activity requirements for each set of activities.
  - Complete all required readings.
  - Complete and check-off all mandatory activities under patient assessment and providing care activities and distribution activities.
  - Complete CCP and verification and continuous quality improvement requirements to the satisfaction of the preceptor for each practical experience.
  - Successfully complete the patient education case submission (one case required per practical experience).
  - Successfully complete the BPMH submission (one submission required per practical experience).
  - Successfully complete the compounding submission (one submission required per practical experience).
  - Complete the midpoint assessment during each practical experience.
  - Achieve a successful score on the final assessment for each practical experience.
  - Complete a minimum of 240 hours of practical training for each practical experience.
  - Upload the preceptor declaration form signed by the preceptor(s) at the end of each practical experience.
- Complete additional SPT practical experience(s) if required.

## Appendix B

### Completion checklist for preceptors

- Complete the mandatory Preceptor Training course, including the undertaking agreement, in Academy. **Required prior** to providing a preceptor acceptance form to a candidate.
- Complete the preceptor acceptance form and provide to the candidate. **Required** for the candidate to enrol in a practical experience.
- Review and sign-off on the candidate's prior learning self-assessment. **Required** at the start of a practical experience.
- Review the overview and activity requirements for each set of activities.
- Review the candidate's completion of the CCP and verification and continuous quality improvement requirements and mark as complete when applicable.
- Assess the candidate's patient education case submission (one case required per practical experience).
- Assess the candidate's BPMH submission (one submission required per practical experience).
- Assess the candidate's compounding submission (one submission required per practical experience).
- Complete the midpoint assessment.
- Complete the final assessment.
- Complete the preceptor declaration form and provide to the candidate.

## Appendix C

### Preceptor preparation checklist

Once you have accepted a candidate for SPT, use this checklist as a guide to prepare for the SPT candidate to begin their practical experience.

#### Prepare yourself

- Review the SPT Program Manual for Pharmacy Technicians.
- Review the TAPT and TAPT Guide.
- Refresh your precepting skills if it has been a long time since you have precepted and/or completed SPT Preceptor Training. Courses and resources are available for all preceptors in Academy.
- Ensure your email is up to date in myACP to receive SPT-related correspondence.

#### Prepare the practice site

- Ensure proper access to the practice site has been arranged.
  - Computer access including personal Netcare access.
  - Physical access to the pharmacy.
- Arrange for a candidate nametag that identifies their name and role (provisional pharmacy technician).
- Ensure other colleagues and staff are aware of the candidate's arrival.
  - Explain the purpose of SPT in preparing the candidate for practice and ensuring readiness to practise.
  - Check if any staff members have a prior relationship with the candidate and contact ACP at [techspt@abpharmacy.ca](mailto:techspt@abpharmacy.ca) for guidance if needed.
  - Define the roles of the candidate and preceptor in the pharmacy.
  - Outline expectations for pharmacy staff supporting the candidate and preceptor during SPT.
- If you have a co-preceptor, work together to develop a plan to communicate and complete assessments during the experience.

### Prepare schedules

Create a schedule for the candidate that

- includes time for the midpoint and final assessments,
  - ensures that at least 75 per cent of their time is spent under supervision of the preceptor or co-preceptors, and
  - provides at least 20 hours per week to a maximum of 40 hours per week of time at the pharmacy in practice.

Ensure your schedule allows sufficient time with the candidate to appropriately observe, teach, and assess the candidate.

Prepare the candidate orientation and ensure there is time to provide the planned orientation activities.

### Prepare the candidate

Confirm that the candidate is registered with ACP (public directory).

Exchange contact information with the candidate.

Provide the candidate with details regarding their first day (start time, meeting place, dress code if applicable, meal options).

## Appendix D

### SPT candidate orientation checklist

Use this checklist as a resource to help plan and facilitate orientation of the SPT candidate to the practice site. You are encouraged to add any additional topics to be addressed during orientation, as applicable to your site and practice. **Do not submit a copy of this checklist to ACP.**

#### Site orientation

- Introduce the candidate to the pharmacy staff and their roles.
- Provide a guided tour of the practice site.
- Review hours of operation and services offered at the pharmacy.
- Review site workflow and processes, including
  - filing/record retention processes,
  - inventory management (including narcotic inventory management),
  - dispensing process,
  - documentation process, and
  - other relevant workflow processes.
- Introduce technology in the pharmacy.
  - Provide candidate log-ins to the computer software/order entry system, show the candidate how to use the software for the most frequently used functions.
  - Provide candidate instructions on answering calls, placing calls on hold, fax communication, etc.
  - Provide instructions for internet access.
  - Other relevant technology used onsite.
- Provide the location and instructions to access references and resources.
- Review site policies and procedures, including
  - dress code and workplace identification,
  - communication process for unexpected situations (e.g., illness, emergency, bad weather),
  - patient confidentiality and privacy,

- medication incident reporting,
- safety and emergency procedures, and
- other relevant policies and procedures.

#### SPT orientation

- Review SPT objectives, activities, practical experience schedule, and assessment processes.
- Discuss candidate and preceptor roles and responsibilities.
- Set clear expectations for the practical experience.
- Review the candidate's prior learning self-assessment and discuss with the candidate.