

Prescribing Safety Assessment (PSA)

Guidance for Applicants and Trainees for the 2019-20 Training Year

Introduction

The PSA has been developed jointly by the [British Pharmacological Society](#) and [MSC Assessment](#). It is intended to be a valid and reliable tool allowing medical graduates to demonstrate that they have achieved the core prescribing competencies outlined in [Outcomes for graduates](#) (originally published in *Tomorrow's Doctors*).

In late 2015, health officials representing the four countries determined that all UK students must take the PSA whilst at medical school and all overseas F1s will have to take the PSA during their first rotation.

Any F1 doctor who has not passed the PSA before starting work will have to undergo a programme of remediation prior to taking the PSA. A PSA pass is considered valid for two years therefore anyone who passed the PSA prior to 2015 will be required to pass again in 2016.

National Requirement for Completion of Foundation Year 1

Prescribing is a fundamental part of the Foundation Programme as doctors will write and review many prescriptions on a daily basis. The [British Pharmacological Society](#) and [MSC Assessment](#) have worked together to develop a Prescribing Safety Assessment (PSA) which allows all final year students and trainees to demonstrate their competences in relation to the safe and effective use of medicines.

The PSA is an essential component of demonstrating the necessary competences for successful completion of the Foundation Year 1 year. It is a national requirement for all F1 trainees to demonstrate a pass by the end of the year. All foundation doctors will be required to pass the PSA before being signed off as having successfully completed the F1 year and being awarded the F1CC. If the PSA was passed more than two years before starting foundation training, then it will need to be successfully retaken before completion of the F1 year (applies from August 2016 F1 entry).

Foundation doctors who have not passed the PSA before commencing the programme will be offered a support package and will be required to sit or re-sit the assessment.

Preparing to take the PSA

Your foundation school will register you for an account at <https://www.prescribingsafetyassessment.ac.uk>. You will receive an email requesting that activate your account. This will enable you to access further information about the PSA and a practice papers giving you an opportunity to familiarise yourself with the online assessment environment.

The PSA team shall provide online support to candidates including FAQs on registration, practice papers, and online videos explaining the registration process, the rationale and construction of the assessment, how the online environment functions and the marking process. Online support will be available from 1 month in advance of the first assessment events until the release of the results.

All registered candidates will have access to at least three practice PSA assessment 'papers' prior to the main assessment events for which they are registered. These practice papers will provide individualised scoring and feedback to the candidates after each one has been completed.

PSA Sitings

There will be three opportunities for trainees to undertake the PSA during the FY1 training year (one sitting in each four-month rotation). Foundation school sittings of the PSA have been scheduled for the following dates and times: -

- Tuesday 3rd September 2019 at 1pm
- Friday 13th March 2020 at 1pm
- Monday 11th May 2020 at 1pm

The Exam

The PSA is an online assessment of knowledge, skills and judgement related to prescribing medicines in the NHS and will give you an opportunity to gain familiarity with prescribing duties expected of F1 doctors and to receive feedback on your performance.

The PSA is based on the competencies identified in the General Medical Council's [Outcomes for graduates](#) (originally published in *Tomorrow's Doctors*), such as writing new prescriptions, reviewing existing prescriptions, calculating drug doses, identifying and avoiding both adverse drug reactions and medication errors and amending prescribing to suit individual patient circumstances. The eight distinct prescribing areas: prescribing, prescription review, planning management, providing information about medicines, calculation, adverse drug reactions, drug monitoring and data interpretation are delivered over two hours. The content of each question refers to ailments and drugs you are likely to encounter in year one of the Foundation Programme.

The PSA is designed to be taken in two hours. Extra time of up to 30 minutes can be accommodated for those eligible for reasonable adjustments. The paper will consist of 60 items in length.

Access to the content of the BNF will be available as part of the assessment interface. Paper copies of the BNF and BNFc can be allowed, however, candidates need to be aware that they may not contain the most up-to-date prescribing advice. Please note that PSA scoring is based on information on the BNF and BNFc websites that is most up-to-date at the time of the test. Candidates are not allowed to make any notes in the BNF during the test.

Results

Individual candidates will have access to their performance results by logging into the PSA Interface.

It is important to note that failure to pass the exam prior to the commencement of the Foundation Programme will not impact employment. Individuals will commence their allocated programme as scheduled and will be required to undertake the appropriate remediation package.

Candidates are not permitted to appeal against their PSA score. The test is marked automatically. Appeals against locally managed elements of the PSA delivery will be addressed by foundation schools in accordance with local procedures.

Evaluation

Feedback from candidates will be sought through an online evaluation form, which is automatically presented after candidates complete the assessment.