
**Report on applications for NHS pre-registration trainee pharmacist places in
England & Wales for the 2012 intake (1st round of recruitment)**

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Introduction

The National Recruitment Scheme is the system through which pharmacy undergraduates and OSPAP students apply for pre-registration trainee pharmacist posts in NHS hospitals in England and Wales. The application stage of recruitment is handled by Pharmalife (Webstar Health) with all other stages of recruitment handled by the hospitals or regional panels. Recruitment for the 2012 intake of trainees took place in 2011. This report provides a summary of the application stage of recruitment for the first round of recruitment for the 2012 intake of trainees.

Number of places advertised

There were **5.2% fewer** pre-registration training positions (n = 660) advertised for the 2012 intake compared with 696 for the 2011 intake.

Number of applications

There were a total of 5280 applications from 1358 students for the 2012 intake. This is a **4.2% decrease** in applications compared with the 2011 intake (5514 applications and 1416 students). 856 students registered with the Pharmalife website before 30th June but did not make any applications. This year many of the community pharmacy multiples completed their recruitment before the NHS. Therefore some students had already received and accepted a community pharmacy offer before 31st August and didn't apply to both sectors.

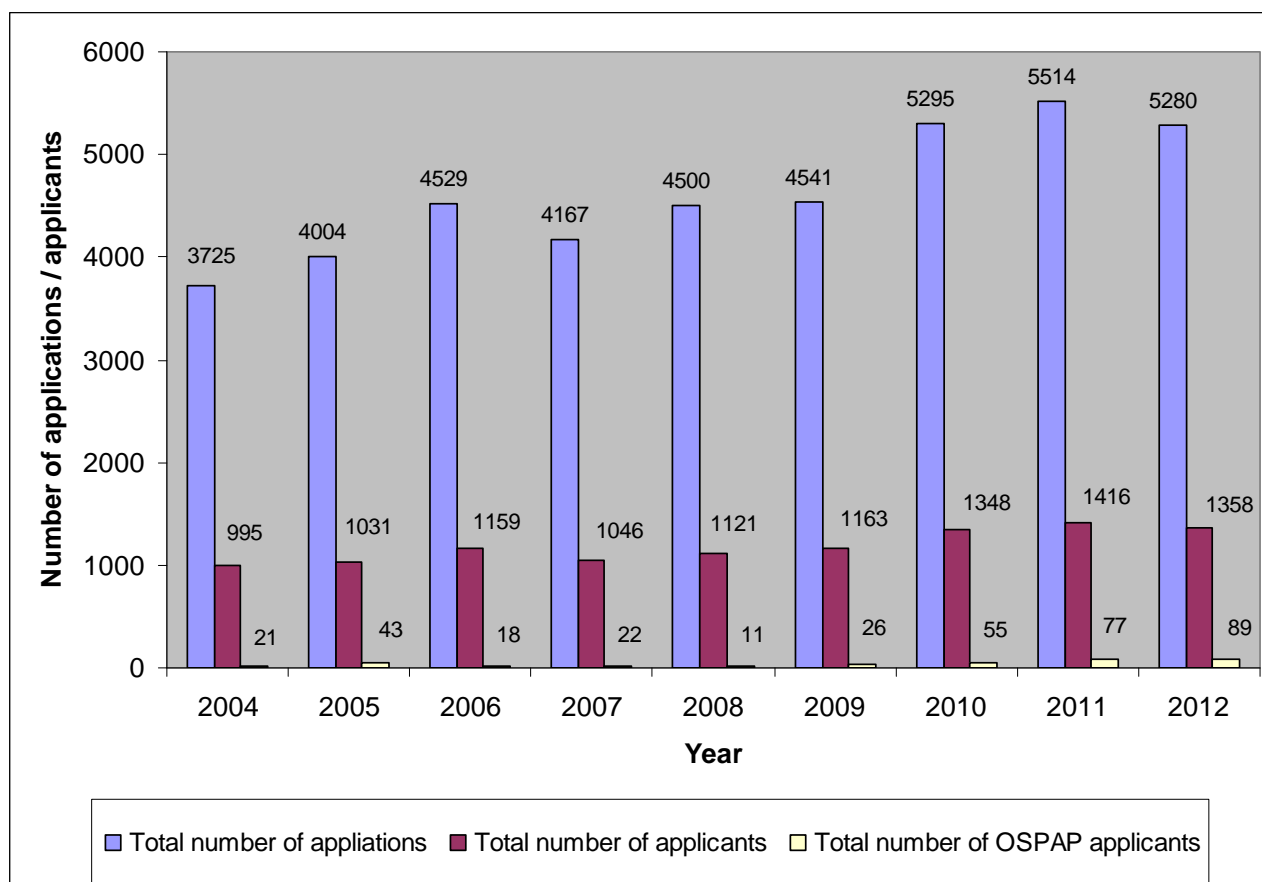
86 applicants were from the Overseas Pharmacist Assessment Programme (OSPAP course) compared with 77 for the 2011 intake and 56 for the 2010 intake. There were also applications from 3 EEA Pharmacists who were required by the GPhC to undertake pre-registration training.

The application statistics are shown in the figure 1.0 on page 2.

Timing of applications

3.8% of applications (n = 201) had been made by the end of June. 69% (n = 3644) of applications were made in the last three days. The numbers of "last minute" applications was slightly higher than the last 2 years when the figure was 65.9% (2011 intake) and 64% (2010 intake). No late applications were accepted.

Figure 1.0: Applications and applicants



Applications per hospital

There was an average of 30.7 applications per hospital (range 1 – 154) compared with 31.7 applications per hospital last year.

On average there were 8 applications per advertised post (compared with 7.92 applications per advertised post last year). There were a total of 1358 students applying for 660 advertised posts (2.05 students per advertised post for the 2012 intake, which is similar to last year when there were applications from 2.03 students per advertised post).

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust* (D12) received the highest number of applications $n = 154$. One non-London hospital was in the top 10 (compared with one last year), and seven were in the top 20 (compared with six last year).

Despite there being fewer applications this year compared to last year, the average number of applications per hospital and the average number of applications per post advertised were very similar to last year. This is because the percentage reduction in applications (4.2%) is similar to the percentage reduction in places advertised (5.2%).

Applicants from Schools of Pharmacy

Applications were made from the following Schools of Pharmacy. Huddersfield University will produce their first MPharm graduates in 2012. The University of Hertfordshire will produce their first OSPAP graduates in 2012.

Intake	Number of MPharm applicants								
	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Aberdeen	36	31	43	45	43	45	39	53	36
Aston	82	66	92	90	62	68	65	61	39
Bath	83	70	87	70	52	67	64	77	50
Belfast	2	3	7	9	8	6	5	2	7
Bradford	8	25	41	33	48	42	58	31	34
Brighton	57	70	69	80	75	85	65	74	51
Cardiff	68	58	66	61	67	44	66	72	63
Central Lancashire								18	32
Hertfordshire						22	49	60	44
Huddersfield									29
Keele							23	27	34
Kingston					30	47	52	59	43
Leicester	45	48	59	54	65	47	44	40	49
Liverpool	68	56	66	48	42	77	45	54	55
London Kings	83	62	71	52	72	50	69	55	64
London School of Pharmacy	103	155	112	126	116	99	98	99	95
Manchester	64	73	98	99	107	89	94	82	100
Medway					47	42	88	84	56
Norwich (UEA)				28	53	43	56	55	48
Nottingham	89	94	98	85	82	79	111	108	116
Portsmouth	70	82	91	58	46	67	64	47	50
Reading						20	54	60	44
Strathclyde	11	14	22	18	8	10	17	24	36
Sunderland	65	81	94	90	87	77	49	57	67
Wolverhampton							17	11	26

	Number of OSPAP applicants								
Intake	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
International **	21	43	21	22	11				
Aberdeen OSPAP PgDip						0	2	6	7
Aberdeen MSc OSPAP								3	4
Aston OSPAP PgDip						9	35	30	36
Brighton OSPAP PgDip						11	11	20	19
Hertfordshire OSPAP PgDip									2
Kingston OSPAP PgDip								0	7
Sunderland OSPAP PgDip						6	8	17	12
	Number of EEA Pharmacist applicants***								
Intake	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
EEA Schools of Pharmacy									3
Total number of applicants (MPharm + OSPAP + EEA Pharmacists)	955	1031	1137	1068	1121	1163	1348	1416	1358

** The 2009 intake was the first time that we had a breakdown of the Schools of Pharmacy for the OSPAP course.

*** EEA Pharmacists with notification from the GPhC to undertake pre-registration training (adaptation training)

Academic references

Academic references were not requested for a total of 81 MPharm students who submitted their academic referee details after the 30th June deadline. In addition, 4 references were requested but not received by the deadline, making a total of 85 students with missing references. There are a higher proportion of students without reference this year than for previous years. This is because a decision was made not to request references this year for students who missed the deadline compared to previous years when references were requested regardless of whether the student met the deadline or not. The change was made this year otherwise it was unfair to students who did meet deadlines for those who didn't meet deadlines not to be penalised in some way.

If no reference has been collected for the student the application specified the reason e.g. No reference because academic referee details submitted late. Or – academic referee details submitted on time but referee did not submit reference. Academic references are not available until after short-listing this year (in previous years the reference was available with the application form) and Pharmalife has also provided academic referee details and a reference template should a hospital wish to follow up an academic reference at a later date.

Referees and, students who met the deadline were contacted during 16th August to chase outstanding references. In addition a list of outstanding references was sent to the pre-registration co-ordinator at each school of pharmacy to ask them to follow up the references or find a replacement referee if necessary.

Discussion and conclusions

Overall Pharmalife has performed well with hospitals receiving their applications on the agreed date and whilst there were a few minor technical problems on the day the applications were made available to hospitals, no major problems were reported.

The validity of all applications and academic references were confirmed. However at the short-listing stage one of the regional co-ordinators noticed that a Bradford Sandwich student had made applications. This student's applications were withdrawn and the matter was reported to Bradford School of Pharmacy.

Due to changes in the structure of the application form an error occurred and the question asking whether the applicant has a criminal record was missing from the online application form for OSPAP and EEA pharmacist applications. Therefore this information had not been collected for these applicants. This error was detected the day before applications were due to be sent to hospitals. All 92 affected applicants were contacted by email and informed of the situation and sent a self-declaration from which they were instructed to complete and bring to their interview(s) if invited to attend. The hospitals and regional co-ordinators were also informed of this.

On 14 September it was noticed that the pdf version of the application forms (but not the HTML version) for all of the OSPAP and EEA Pharmacists was showing that they had ticked 'Yes' in answer to the criminal records question. This was incorrect information as these applicants had not answered this question on their application forms. Pharmalife identified the hospitals that these individual's had made applications to and then contacted all affected hospitals and regional co-ordinators by email. The emails were followed up with a phone call. An investigation was undertaken which identified how this error occurred and measures were put in place to ensure that a similar error did not occur again.

One hospital detected that 2 students had copied each others answers on the profile questions. This matter was reported to the School of Pharmacy who will conduct fitness to practice investigations. The other hospitals which these students applied to were informed and the students were not short-listed by any of their 4 hospital choices.

Communication and referral of queries by Pharmalife to the National Recruitment Scheme Lead has been timely and all queries are answered within 2 working days despite a substantial increase in the number of queries received. Pharmalife has been efficient and responsive. A new recruitment scheme website is being developed for the 2013 intake which should make systems even more efficient.

Whether the **4.2% overall decrease** in applications, compared with the 2011 intake, will affect the ability of hospitals to fill their pre-registration placements with suitable candidates will not be known until October. It was noticed that there was a significant decrease in applicants compared with last year from seven Schools of Pharmacy: Aberdeen (32% reduction), Aston (36% reduction), Bath (35% reduction), Brighton (31 % reduction), Hertfordshire (27% reduction), Medway (33% reduction) and Reading (27% reduction). The reasons why there was such a large decrease in applications from these particular Schools of Pharmacy is unknown. It is recommended that the NHS PEDC Pre-registration Specialist Group discusses how to raise the profile of hospital pharmacy pre-registration training across England and Wales and whether new technologies e.g. Webinar presentations, Blogs from current pre-registration trainees and videos would be of use in increasing the number of applications to the NHS.