General Pharmaceutical Council Standards for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists – Pharmacy Schools Council Position Statement

The new standards for the Initial Education and Training of Pharmacists were approved by the Council of the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) on 10th December 2020. The Pharmacy Schools Council (PhSC) would like to particularly commend the inclusive and consultative approach taken by the GPhC in drawing up these standards; this has allowed stakeholders, including the PhSC, to have a genuine input into the process and hence to feel a sense of ownership and enthusiasm for the ambitious future plans for the profession.

The PhSC recognizes that the compilation of the standards has been an extremely onerous task, requiring the discussion and capture of many complex issues. We particularly welcome the reform of the pre-registration (now Foundation) year and look forward to working with the Deaneries (or equivalent) and employers to ensure that the new standards are met. We also recognize and welcome the move towards Independent Prescribing at the end of the Foundation year. The inclusion of science standards is a very positive aspect, reflecting the recognition of pharmaceutical science (underpinning, clinical, practice based and research facing) as the unique skill set that differentiates us within the health care team. We also welcome the new standards on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and reiterate our commitment to providing all our students and staff with a fair, inclusive and opportunity-laden environment.

There do remain challenges that must be recognized and addressed, including the need for a realistic transition programme until steady state is achieved, the scale of change within the Foundation year that will need the engagement of all stakeholders, the need to imbue all years of the degree with Independent Prescribing attributes and, of course, the need for these ambitious changes across the first five years of education to be properly funded. Nevertheless, we feel that the new standards do represent a significant step forward in moving our future pharmacists further towards embracing risk management, leadership skills and evidence-based decision making, with the confidence and professional respect that such attributes will surely bring. It has been a pleasure to have been a contributor to the discussions and we look forward to working with the GPhC, the Statutory Educational Bodies and the employers to ensure that these standards are implemented in a sustainable and timely manner.