

Public Consultation Report on the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Themes for Pharmaceutical Assistants

3 October
2024

Introduction

The Regulated Professions Health and Social Care Amendment Act 2020 seeks to introduce a new requirement for PSI to ensure that pharmaceutical assistants undertake appropriate Continuing Professional Development (CPD). In response to this new requirement, we committed to the development of a CPD model for pharmaceutical assistants as part of our [Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#).

To assist us in identifying an appropriate model of CPD, we sought external expertise and the consultants, Mazars, were appointed following a public procurement process. Their report, [Report to Support the Development of a Continuing Professional Development \(CPD\) Model for Pharmaceutical Assistants](#) makes recommendations for a proposed CPD model. The recommended model has been informed by considerable desk-based research and stakeholder engagement, both national and international.

The report and the recommended CPD model were approved by the PSI Council at its meeting of 22 June 2023. The recommended CPD model is a bespoke CPD model that draws on elements from the CPD model for pharmacists and that utilises the infrastructure (ePortfolio) already in place. Since its approval by Council, we have been engaging with the Pharmaceutical Assistants Association (PAA) and pharmaceutical assistants on the implementation of the model. We will continue this engagement as the implementation of the model progresses.

About the public consultation

A public consultation on the draft CPD themes for pharmaceutical assistants took place from Thursday, 20 June 2024 to 6pm on Thursday, 18 July 2024. Participants could provide feedback via an online survey, by email, or by post.

Information about the public consultation and the draft CPD themes for pharmaceutical assistants was made available on our website. In addition, an email, and two subsequent reminder emails were sent to all registrants inviting feedback. The public consultation was also highlighted through social media.

Response to the consultation

The public consultation was open to all pharmaceutical assistants, pharmacists and members of the public. At the time of the public consultation there were 189 pharmaceutical assistants registered with PSI. Seventy-three responses were received via the online survey. Thirty-three (46%) respondents indicated that they are pharmaceutical assistants. One respondent indicated that they did not agree to the PSI data protection statement and hence, was restricted from completing the survey. Therefore, seventy-two responses were reviewed. Four responses were received via email.

Information about the responses and the response rate for each question included in the online survey is provided below. A summary of the feedback received from four email responses then follows.

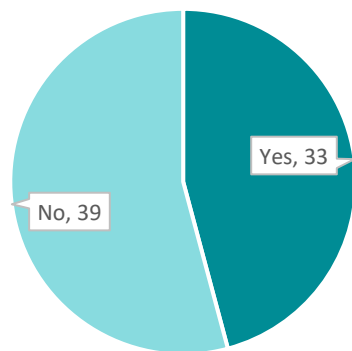
Response to the online survey

Question one: Data Protection Question

99% of respondents confirmed that they consent to providing their answers to the questions in the survey. 1% confirmed that they did not consent to providing their answers to the questions in the survey.

Question two: Are you a registered pharmaceutical assistant?

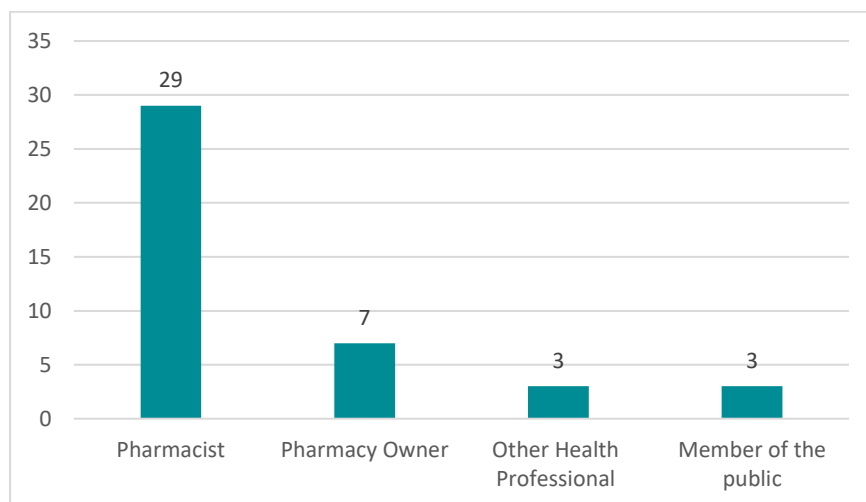
Answered	72
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46% of survey respondents indicated that they are pharmaceutical assistants and 54% of respondents indicated that they are not.

Question three: Which best describes you?

Answered	42
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Respondents who answered 'no' to question two were provided with a number of categories to describe themselves. Of the forty-two respondents who indicated that they are not a pharmaceutical assistant, 69% indicated that they are a pharmacist, 17% indicated that they are a pharmacy owner, 7% indicated that they are a member of another health profession, and 7% indicated that they are a member of the public.

Question four: Are you answering on behalf of an organisation? If yes, please specify the name of the organisation.

Answered	72
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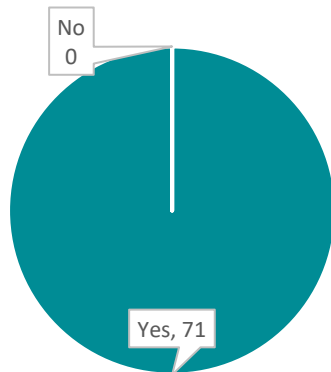
100% of survey respondents indicated that they were not answering the survey on behalf of an organisation.

Question five: Please specify the name of the organisation.

No respondents indicated that they were answering the survey on behalf of another organisation. Therefore, there were no responses to question five.

Question six: Is the theme professionalism relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	71
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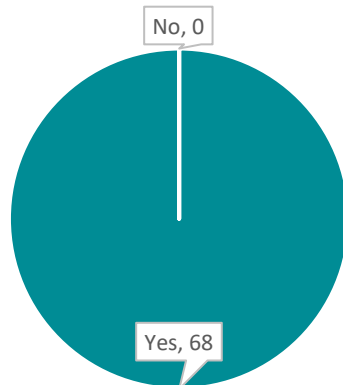
100% of respondents indicated that the theme professionalism is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question seven: If no: please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered no to question six were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question six. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question eight: Is the theme communication relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	68
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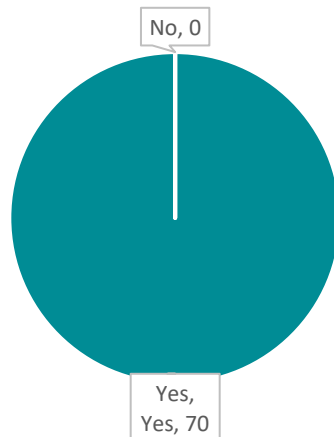
100% of respondents indicated that the theme communication is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question nine: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question eight were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question eight. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question ten: Is the theme collaboration relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	70
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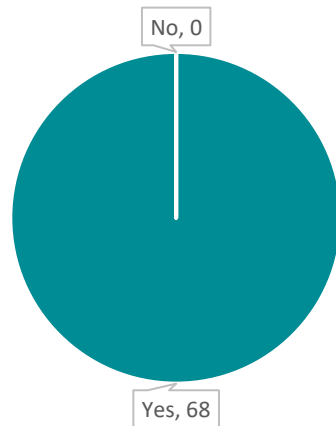
100% of respondents indicated that the theme collaboration is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question eleven: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question ten were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question ten. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question twelve: Is the theme public health relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	68
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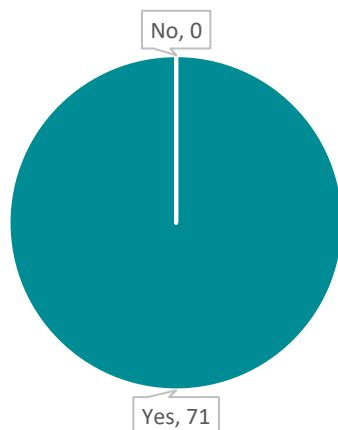
100% of respondents indicated that the theme public health is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question thirteen: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question twelve were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question twelve. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question fourteen: Is the theme pharmacy care relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	71
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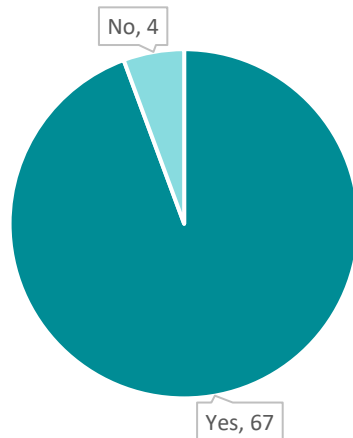
100% of respondents indicated that the theme pharmacy care is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question fifteen: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question fourteen were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question fourteen. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question sixteen: Is the theme organisation & management relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	71
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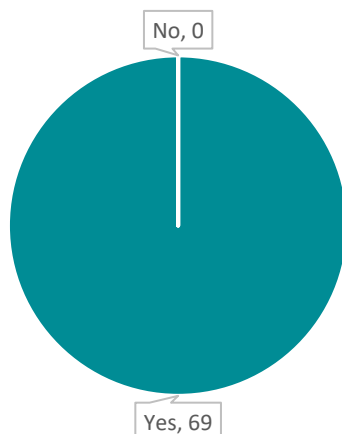
94% of respondents indicated that the theme organisation & management is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development and 6% of respondents indicated that it is not.

Question seventeen: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question sixteen were asked to include information as to why. Three responses were received. The responses referred to the applicability of the theme to the role of pharmaceutical assistants.

Question eighteen: Is the theme learning & development relevant to a pharmaceutical assistants ongoing continuing professional development?

Answered	69
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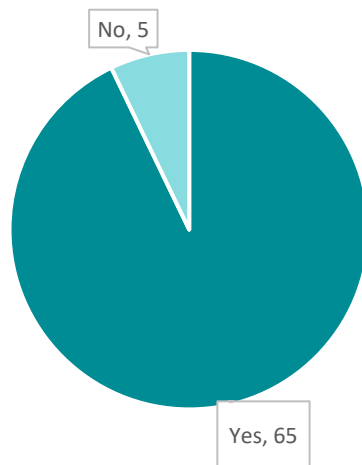
100% of respondents indicated that the theme learning & development is relevant to pharmaceutical assistants' ongoing continuing professional development.

Question nineteen: If no, please include information as to why.

Respondents who answered "no" to question eighteen were asked to include information as to why. No respondents answered "no" to question eighteen. Therefore, no further information was received.

Question twenty: Is there any theme(s) that you expected to see that are not included?

Answered	70
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93% of respondents indicated that there were no themes, that they expected to see and which were not included in the document and 7% of respondents indicated that there were.

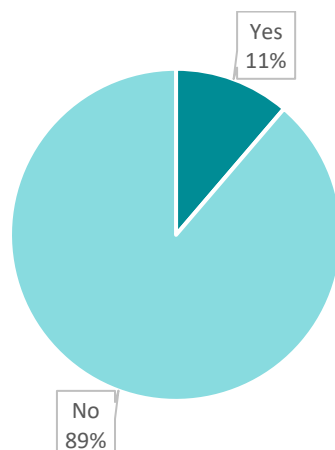
Question twenty-one: If yes, please include the theme(s) below.

Respondents who indicated in question twenty that there were themes that they expected to see that were not included in the document, were asked to include the themes they thought should be included. Five responses were received. The responses referred to:

- Pharmacy law
- Emergency preparedness regulations
- Technology proficiency
- Clinical skills and topics
- Preventative medicines
- Management of chronic illnesses in the community.

Question twenty-two: Have you any other comments?

Answered	71
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89% of respondents indicated that they had no further comments on the public consultation and 11% of respondents indicated that they had.

Question twenty-three: If yes, please provide below.

Respondents who indicated in question twenty-two that they had further comments on the public consultation, were asked to provide them. Eight responses were received. No themes emerged in the comments provided. The responses related to:

- Welcoming the introduction of CPD for pharmaceutical assistants' and its benefits to the public.
- The need for pharmaceutical assistants to be held to the same standard as pharmacists through engagement with CPD.
- The need for CPD to address pharmaceutical assistants' scope of practice.
- Recognition of the role pharmaceutical assistants in community pharmacy practice

Summary of feedback received from email responses

Four responses to the public consultation were received via email, including from the PAA (see appendix 1). A summary of the feedback received included:

- Welcoming the introduction of a regulated CPD model for pharmaceutical assistant's and highlighting the need for a lead-in time and explanatory events.
- Welcoming the engagement with the PAA throughout the development and implementation of the CPD model.
- Noting the potential for the CPD themes for pharmaceutical assistants' to be aligned with the domains used by pharmacists when conducting their CPD, for practical advantages, amongst other reasons.

Discussion

Overall, the feedback received during the public consultation was very positive and is welcomed by PSI. As mentioned above, the vast majority of respondents (nearly 100% in most cases) indicated that the draft CPD themes were reflective of a pharmaceutical assistants' continuing professional development. Although a small number of additional themes were suggested, we are satisfied that the suggested themes can be included under the themes proposed. For example, technology proficiency is included in the theme 'learning and development', and clinical skills can be included under the theme 'pharmacy care'.

As the feedback was predominately positive, and no consistent themes emerged, the proposed continuing professional development themes will be presented for consideration by the Regulatory and Professional Practice Committee and Council of the PSI.

The positive feedback is reflective of the level of research and engagement that Mazars had with stakeholders that informed the recommended CPD model, and the subsequent engagement that we have had with the PAA as we begin to implement the CPD model. We would like to thank all stakeholders who engaged in this process which has contributed greatly to the positive feedback reported above. We will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders throughout the implementation of the CPD model.

Appendix 1

Public Consultation Response from the Pharmaceutical Assistants Association (PAA).

Dear Andrea,

On behalf of the Pharmaceutical Assistants Association (PAA), I would like to make the following comments on the Draft Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for Pharmaceutical Assistants.

Many thanks to you and your team, for the level of engagement afforded to our organisation, in the process of formulating a CPD Programme for Pharmaceutical Assistants. We look forward to continued engagement with the PSI, in its future implementation.

For many years, we have sought legal recognition as Regulated Health Professionals and to have our CPD accredited and formally assigned to our qualification. Most of our colleagues work in a patient facing dispensary setting, with a minimum of 40 years' work experience.

So, we, in the PAA, took it upon ourselves to rectify the matter. Finally, in late 2018, with the support of the Seanad and the Dail, the PAA campaign, for inclusion under the "Regulated Professions (Health and Social Care) (Amendment) Act 2020", was successful.

For those unfamiliar with the history of our qualification, the following excerpts may be helpful:

"The qualification of Pharmaceutical Assistants was formulated, validated and examined by the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland and entitled those who passed the exam to "to transact the business of a licentiate of the Pharmaceutical Society in his temporary absence but shall not be entitled to conduct or manage a business or to keep open shop on their own account". (Pharmacy Act, (Ireland) Amendment Act 1890)

"A (Qualified) Pharmaceutical Assistant is permitted therefore, to carry out the activity of a registered pharmacist in the temporary absence of that pharmacist insofar as the sale and supply of medicinal products in a retail pharmacy business are concerned (vide Sn 27(d), 28 (c) and 29(d) of the Act) but not those functions that would be specifically associated with the roles of Superintendent and/or Supervising Pharmacist." (P.S.I.)

Finally, I would also like to thank Mazars for their comprehensive and empathetic engagement with our association.

Yours Sincerely,

*Vyra Hardy,
PAA Chair.*