

Top Tips

Making the most of your Pre-registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician Training

Benjamin Smith, APTUK/AAH Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician of the Year 2017 - East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust

If you are a new Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician just starting this year, many congratulations on making a great choice of career and your success in getting this position. You're going to be starting an exciting journey to learn the practice based skills and knowledge to be a competent registered Pharmacy Technician. It will be hard work at times and deadlines for assignments may be tight, but the knowledge gained will set you up for a successful and rewarding career in pharmacy. I have just completed my two years training and therefore am about to register with the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) and after winning the prestigious award of APTUK/AAH Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician of the Year, I have been asked to share my hints and tips that helped me complete my course.



Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician Benjamin Smith at BTEC provider

First Top Tip

I wasn't successful on my first attempt to gain a position! Rejected! So perhaps my **first tip** is don't give up, keep going and with determination you will develop character to achieve your goals. I was told by one supervisor that 'I would not have a life' and while I did have rest time there is truth in that the two year training is very demanding with big topics required to fulfil the knowledge based qualification while still being required to work to achieve the practice based competencies required for the NVQ. A very demanding course, particularly if you want to achieve a top grade. Only a pass is required in the BTEC to register, but I found that this was the most difficult part and once into the subject, the merit and distinction were the really interesting parts linking the subject into the everyday practice of my chosen future career.

Second Top Tip

So my **second tip** is to aim high as the more hard work you put into the subject the more enjoyable you will find it. You will need to be well organised to keep within the deadlines set. Don't leave things to the last minute but aim to finish a few days beforehand so that you are entirely satisfied with your work before clicking that 'send' button. Time management is the key to success, plan when you are going to work on your BTEC coursework, and accept much of this will be in your own time, whether this be on weeknights or at weekends. It is also important to use any time your employer gives you for NVQ work wisely.

Third Top Tip

My third tip is to use resources wisely, Google search is great and any questions on your mind or in lack of understanding can be solved in an instant. Access to CPPE (Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education) is a must. CPPE offer learning resources about pharmacy topics to registered pharmacists and pharmacy technicians, but some programmes are free to students (details can be found from CPPE). Another resource is discussing the topic with colleagues and other healthcare professionals as this can build on knowledge, especially if they specialise in the topic.

Fourth Top Tip

There are also exciting opportunities Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technicians can become involved in. The professional leadership body for Pharmacy Technicians APTUK (Association of Pharmacy Technicians United Kingdom) offers FREE membership to students with access to the Pharmacy Technician Journal, online courses, and details about attending the APTUK Annual Professional Conference. APTUK have local branch meetings where educational evenings are held. Kent Branch has positions for Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician representatives for students to have their say about their future profession and be involved in branch discussions. It is our profession in the future so it is good to have an opinion. The APTUK Annual Professional Conference is highly rewarding and recommended, a great time to network with experienced pharmacy technicians, as well as being an opportunity to attend workshops tailored to suit student technicians. At this year's conference I attended workshops based on interview skills and registration tips, which was useful when taking my next steps to finding a permanent job. It is not all serious stuff though, the Annual Awards Dinner is a great chance to celebrate the achievements of pharmacy technicians in many areas, including improving patient care. So my **fourth tip** is to 'get involved' don't just be a bystander. Health Education England London and the South East required a student pharmacy technician to be a part of Pharmacy Quality Visits. Why not I thought! This meant looking at the delivery of training and development at the individual hospital Trusts, and required discussions with student pharmacy technicians, to help give them a voice so that an improvement plan could be developed to better the training for the future.



Virtual Classroom at BTEC provider Bradford College

My BTEC provider was Bradford College who teach students to use the Harvard Referencing system when researching their work. This means after each sentence or paragraph a reference to where the work was from is included in the academic writing, avoiding any allegations of plagiarism. It took me time to learn this system, but the trick to it is practice using it. When you start your training, research something that interests you, and Harvard reference the websites you use. That way when you start your academic writing, you should have mastered it!

And Finally...

So overall, if there is anything to take away from this to get the best of your Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician training, it's the following:

- * **Work hard**, this is the two years before you register with the pharmacy profession GPhC and you only have one chance to get the best grade in foundation knowledge.
- * **Organise your time**, giving yourself achievable targets each day, detailing what you will finish by the end of the day.
- * **Aim high, the sky is the limit.** Although you only need a pass grade to register as a pharmacy technician, the merit and distinction is there and worth a go. Don't aim only for the minimum and the more rewarding the course will be.
- * **Don't hold back, grab every opportunity that is offered to you**, because enthusiasm is contagious, achievements looks great on CV's and stand out from others when applying for jobs.
- * **Enjoy your course.** I have, and am looking forward to a satisfying career as a registered pharmacy technician. To be recognised for my hard work by winning the APTUK/AAH Pre-Registration Trainee Pharmacy Technician of the Year, was just the icing on the cake, and if it can happen to me, it can certainly happen to you too!