

How to Get Through the Pre-Reg Year & Exam

At the start of the year, the pre-reg experience including the pre-reg exam can appear daunting. Allow yourself time to settle in, take time to get to know your colleagues and be clear early on of what is expected of you. Take everything on board and learn from it. During the year, it's really important that you are organised and it is highly recommended that you start your exam revision early on and not cram everything in at the last minute. At the end of the year, you will be surprised by how much you have learnt and taken in.

Don't neglect your portfolio of evidence

Keep on top of your portfolio of evidence. Do not worry if one pre-reg has been signed off on seven performance standards and you have only be signed off on two. Even if you have been working extremely hard, do not necessarily assume it is because your pre-reg tutor is making your life difficult. It could be due to several reasons, for example, the other pre-reg may have completed one part of their training that you have not done yet or your pre-reg tutor may want to see evidence from several different scenarios.

Pharmacy calculations (practice, practice & practice)

Start practising calculations early on in the year as this will help build your confidence and identify any areas of weaknesses before the pre-reg exam. Get into the habit from day one of developing a method to always self-check the answer. It is also important to ensure that you have a basic knowledge of arithmetic.

Prepare for the pre-reg exam

Answer as many sample questions as you can.

Ask various staff members to quiz you throughout the pre-reg year as this is a great way of learning whilst helping you to identify your strengths and weaknesses.

Form a close relationship with your BNF and BNFC during the year, try and get into the habit of using these essential prescribing reference sources to look things up at work regularly rather than asking your colleagues. If you do not know what you are dispensing, have a quick read in the BNF and BNFC. If you are limited on time at work, then read up on it later. The advantage of doing this is that you are more likely to learn more quickly and remember what you have learnt than if you sat there revising each page. Other essential reference sources that will also help with your learning include PILs (patient information leaflets) and the SPCs (summaries of product characteristics).

Get the answers to your questions not just from your pre-reg tutor

Do not just rely on your pre-reg tutor to answer all your questions. Ask other staff members as they could also help.

Get to know the range of resources kept in the pharmacy and what kind of things you can look up in each one. This will allow you to know where to look for an answer that someone may ask you or that you want to know for your own benefit or learning. Most importantly of all, when you qualify and if you do not know the answer to something, you are in a better position to know where to look. Ask other pharmacists what resources they use.

Understand what each staff member does

Try to embark on a range of experiences and shadow as many pharmacy staff members as you can as well as other healthcare professionals. Remember this is probably the only time you get to do this and having a greater understanding of what one does will allow you to understand their role better.

Be organised from the start of the year

Keep all correspondence from the GPhC in a safe place.

Introduce a filing system. File all the paperwork you receive from work or from your regional study groups as you get them. Do not let it all pile up, the last thing you should be doing is organising all your paperwork at the end of the year when you should be concentrating on your exam revision.

Keep a diary with you at work. Write important dates in this diary as well as the tasks to be achieved. It can also be easy to forget what questions other people asked you to find out about or any other questions that you need to look into further, so make a note of these also.

Your holidays are sacred to you due to exam revision, but at the same time, you probably want to enjoy yourself and switch off from your pre-reg training. Only you can decide how much time you need for exam revision and how best you work, therefore, think of how you should take your holidays before filling in leave requests. Make sure you do this early on so you are not refused leave because someone else has taken it.

Do not leave your audit to the last minute as this will only cause more stress for you.

Finally, remember to try and enjoy your pre-reg placement and take some time out for yourself regularly.