

How does undergraduate experiential learning shape the transition from pharmacy student to trainee pharmacist: a qualitative study

Submission date 18/05/2026	Recruitment status No longer recruiting	☐ Prospectively registered ☐ Protocol
Registration date 04/06/2026	Overall study status Completed	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 04/06/2026	Condition category Other	☐ Individual participant data ☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims

In Scotland, pharmacy students complete an undergraduate Master of Pharmacy degree that includes experiential learning placements in real healthcare settings. After graduating, they enter the Foundation Training Year, a supervised practice year before they can register as pharmacists. This study explores trainee pharmacist's views of undergraduate experiential learning placements, including how well these placements prepared them for this transition and what could be improved for future learners.

Who can participate?

Participants will be trainee pharmacists in their Foundation Training Year who have graduated from one of the two Schools of Pharmacy in Scotland and are currently working in Scotland. This includes trainees in hospital-only, split-sector, and modular programmes. Split-sector programmes involve training across community and hospital settings. Modular programmes involve training across a health board setting, such as hospital, community, or specialist services.

What does the study involve?

The study involves in person semi-structured interviews lasting about 30 minutes. Interviews will be audio-recorded and transcribed. Some background information will also be collected to give a summary of participant's characteristics e.g. male/female. The interviews will explore trainee pharmacist's experiences of undergraduate experiential learning placements and how these influenced their transition into the Foundation Training Year. They will gather views on preparedness for practice, development of skills, knowledge and confidence, feedback, factors affecting placement quality, and suggestions for improving the experiential learning programme.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?

Taking part will help improve understanding of how practice-based learning prepares pharmacy students for professional practice and may inform recommendations to improve the undergraduate experiential learning programme for future learners. The project will follow NHS Scotland guidance for service evaluation studies, which assess and improve services, and will protect participants' data and confidentiality. No significant risks are expected from taking part.

Where is the study run from?

The study is being carried out in Scotland and will recruit participants nationally through education and training networks. The lead organisation is NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Scotland's largest regional public healthcare organisation.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?

The study is expected to begin in December 2025 and run until August 2026.

Who is funding the study?

The project is funded through an NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Pharmacy Services grant that supports new projects.

Who is the main contact?

Clodagh Clarke, Clodagh.Clarke2@nhs.scot

Contact information

Type(s)

Principal investigator, Scientific, Public

Contact name

Ms Clodagh Clarke

Contact details

Clarkston Court, 56 Busby Road, Clarkston
Glasgow
United Kingdom
G76 7AT
+44 (0)7415032505
clodagh.clarke2@nhs.scot

Additional identifiers

Study information

Scientific Title

How does undergraduate experiential learning shape the transition from pharmacy student to trainee pharmacist: a qualitative study

Study objectives

1. Understand the perceptions and experiences of FTY trainees on the effectiveness of the Experiential Learning (EL) programme.
2. Based on findings, make recommendations on the development of EL programme delivery.

Undergraduate pharmacy experiential learning (EL) provides students with opportunities to learn within real healthcare environments throughout their MPharm degree, including community pharmacy, hospital, and primary care settings. By connecting academic learning with practical experience, it aims to support the development of confident, reflective, and patient-centred future pharmacists, while helping students build an understanding of multidisciplinary

working, professional practice, and the evolving role of pharmacy ahead of the Foundation Training Year (FTY).

This work explores the experiences of Foundation Trainee Pharmacists in Scotland. Foundation Trainee Pharmacists are pharmacy graduates undertaking a structured, supervised training year following completion of their university degree and prior to registration as pharmacists. The study will gather trainees' reflections on the role of undergraduate experiential learning in supporting their transition into practice. By exploring how these early practice-based experiences influenced their Foundation Training Year, this work aims to identify perceived benefits, challenges, and opportunities to further enhance pharmacy undergraduate education and preparedness for practice.

Training pathways for foundation trainee pharmacists within health boards may vary. Some trainees complete their foundation training year within hospital sites, while others undertake rotations across hospital and primary care services (split programmes). Additionally, some trainees rotate between community pharmacy and Health Board settings (modular programmes), including acute, specialist, or primary care services.

To ensure representation of different educational backgrounds, participants will be recruited from graduates of both Schools of Pharmacy in Scotland.

Invitations to participate will be distributed nationally across all Scottish Health Boards via the Education and Training network to capture a diverse range of training experiences.

Ethics approval required

Ethics approval not required

Ethics approval(s)

Primary study design

Observational

Secondary study design

Qualitative observational study using semi-structured interviews

Study type(s)

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied

Undergraduate pharmacy experiential learning

Interventions

Qualitative semi-structured interviews.

Sample: Consistent with reflexive thematic analysis, sample size will be guided by the richness and relevance of the data.

Participants will be purposively sampled from Foundation Training Year pharmacists across Scotland, including those undertaking hospital-only training placements, split training

placements (placements split between hospital and primary care) and modular training programmes (placements split between community pharmacy and health board settings [e.g., acute hospital, specialist, or primary care])

Intervention Type

Other

Primary outcome(s)

1. Perceptions and experiences of undergraduate experiential learning measured using semi-structured interviews analysed using thematic analysis at during foundation trainee pharmacist year (FTY cohort 2025/2026)

Key secondary outcome(s)**Completion date**

03/08/2026

Eligibility**Key inclusion criteria**

Participants are Foundation Trainee Pharmacists working within NHS Scotland who have completed an MPharm degree in one of the Scottish Schools of Pharmacy and are undertaking their Foundation Training Year in hospital, primary care, or community pharmacy settings. This cohort comprises individuals in their final year of supervised training prior to eligibility for registration as pharmacists. Those who provide informed consent within this cohort will be included in the interview study.

Healthy volunteers allowed

Yes

Age group

Mixed

Lower age limit

18 Years

Upper age limit

100 Years

Sex

All

Total final enrolment

0

Key exclusion criteria

Foundation trainee pharmacists who did not complete their MPharm at a Scottish School of Pharmacy

Date of first enrolment

01/12/2025

Date of final enrolment

03/08/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment

United Kingdom

Scotland

Study participating centre

Pharmacy Services NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

Pharmacy Education and Training, Clarkston Court, 56 Busby Road, Clarkston
Glasgow

Scotland

G76 7AT

Study participating centre

NHS Lanarkshire Pharmacy Education and Training

Kirklands Hospital, Fallside Road, Bothwell

Glasgow

Scotland

G71 8BB

Study participating centre

Highlands and Islands Pharmacy Education and Research

NHS Highland, UHI House, Old Perth Road

Inverness

Scotland

IV2 3JH

Study participating centre

NHS Grampian Pharmacy Education and Training

Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road

Aberdeen

Scotland

AB15 6RE

Study participating centre

NHS Lothian Pharmacy Education, Research and Development
Western General Hospital, Crewe Road
Edinburgh
Scotland
EH4 2XU

Sponsor information

Organisation

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde

ROR

<https://ror.org/05kdz4d87>

Funder(s)

Funder type

Funder Name

NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde Pharmacy Services Catalytic Research Funding

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Not expected to be made available