Pharmacy at the University of Manchester

Guidance and procedure for applicants to the Master of Pharmacy (MPharm) Programme

The Legal Situation
The University of Manchester ("**University**") has certain obligations under the Equality Act 2010 ("**the Act**"). The University's key obligations in relation to disability under the Act are:

1. a prohibition on discrimination arising from disability; and
2. a duty to make reasonable adjustments.

The University is required to take reasonable steps to ensure that disabled students, including prospective students, can fully participate in the education and services provided by the University for students. This is implemented by the University making 'reasonable adjustments'.

The reasonable adjustments duty is to avoid, as far as possible, by reasonable means, the disadvantages which a disabled student experiences because of their disability. The duty requires the University to take positive steps to ensure that disabled students can fully participate in the education and other benefits, facilities and services provided for students.

Notwithstanding this general obligation to make reasonable adjustments, the University **is not** required to make any reasonable adjustments to the application of a competence standard.

Within the Act 'competence standards' are defined as the 'academic, medical or other standard(s) applied for the purpose of determining whether or not a person has a particular level of competence or ability'. In the case of vocational courses, competence standards are based on the requirements of the regulatory bodies and decisions of fitness to practise should be made with reference to these. A competence standard must not in itself be unlawfully discriminatory. It must therefore apply equally to all students, be genuinely relevant to the course, and be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim.

Pre-Acceptance
A list of the core competencies will be displayed on the website and the attention of applicants called for interview will be directed to this information.

A potential student with a health or disability related problem may be concerned as to their ability to fulfil the competency standards of the course. Any such applicants are encouraged to contact Occupational Health and/or The Disability Support Service at an early stage in order to explore the situation in depth and consider the feasibility of making reasonable adjustments. Hopefully the process will prove helpful to the student in deciding whether to pursue an application.

Possible Action
- Obtain further specialist information (with informed consent).
- Arrange for the student to undertake work experience/ observation/assessment. In some cases this may best be arranged in a clinical skills laboratory.

The intention is for all involved and most especially the potential student to explore the situation in depth and, where necessary, consider the feasibility of making reasonable adjustment. In the rare cases where a significant impairment may preclude the student from meeting the core competencies they will be advised appropriately. The intention is that the student will recognise that the decision has been taken after very careful consideration (see note re decision to refuse student a place on page 4) and will give them the opportunity to consider alternatives.

Student Offered a Firm Place Subject to Medical Clearance
Following a successful application all students complete a Pre-Acceptance Medical Questionnaire which is returned to the Occupational Health Department having been checked and countersigned by their GP. All such forms are screened to decide whether, on the basis of the information provided, the student would be able to fulfil the competencies of their chosen course.

Examples of impairment needing careful assessment to ensure safe pharmaceutical practice include:

- Mobility
- Upper limb function
- Vision
- Hearing
- Speech
- Literacy and numeracy
- Skin function
- Interruption of consciousness
- Concentration, awareness, memory and ability to learn and understand

For further information see 'Pharmacy Students – Standards of medical fitness to train' published by the Higher Education Occupational Physicians/Practitioners (HEOPS) and available at https://heops.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/bsk-pdf-manager/2019/09/1521730902HEOPS_Pharmacy_Students_fitness_standards_2013_v5.pdf

Following Receipt of the Medical Questionnaire
The medical questionnaire is then 'flagged' as follows:

Green:
The applicant is considered fit to start the course based on the information supplied on the pre-acceptance form alone. Then there is no need for them to be seen by the Occupational Health staff for a formal assessment, either before or on arrival at the University, other than for routine blood screening/vaccinations etc.

Yellow:
The applicant is considered fit to start the course based on the information supplied on the pre-acceptance form. However, they need to be seen by an Occupational Health professional on arrival at the University for support/monitoring. This is additional to the routine appointments for blood screening/vaccinations.

Red:
It is considered that additional information/action is required prior to making a decision on the applicant's fitness to commence the course.

Further Action - Red Flagging
This may include:

1. Occupational Health and/or Disability Support will seek additional information (with informed consent) where appropriate and this may include a referral for a further specialist opinion.

2. It may be decided that based on the information available the student is advised to defer starting the course.

Reasons for deferment:

- There is concern that the student's functional capacity has been diminished through current or recent illness and where deferment will allow for a recovery and/or additional treatment.
- In cases where the prognosis for recovery of an illness is not yet clear the decision on fitness for the course may be deferred.
- It may be necessary to obtain additional information.
- It may take time to make "reasonable adjustments".

3. In only extremely rare situations would a decision be made at this stage that the applicant is medically unfit for the course (see note re decision to refuse student a place on page 4).

4. If there are concerns as to whether he/she will be able to fulfil the competencies a case conference will be arranged.

5. A case conference (again with informed consent) will involve a Disability Support Adviser, representative of the course, Occupational Health and on occasions the student concerned. Such a meeting would be an opportunity to highlight the areas of concern and explore the possibility of appropriate adjustments. The outcome of such a meeting would depend on the nature of the condition/disability and may include:

   A Work Place Assessment with appropriate supervision normally to include an experienced practitioner and disability support at an appropriate venue e.g. clinical skills laboratory/hospital ward/classroom etc.
   A Risk Assessment to consider the possibility of reasonable adjustments.

Following Case Conference/Assessment etc

- Depending on the outcome, the student may decide that they are unwilling to take the risk that they may fail to gain the competencies to qualify (even with adjustments) and may decide to withdraw.

- The School of Health Sciences may decide to refuse the student a place. **It will only be lawful to refuse entry to a course of an otherwise qualified applicant where there is material and substantial reason to believe that the person will be unable to achieve one of the curriculum outcomes, or where the nature of concern is patient safety and where a specific assessment of the risk has been undertaken including consideration of adjustments that could be put in place to contain any risk**.

- The School of Health Sciences may decide that it is possible to make reasonable adjustments and will appoint a co-ordinator/mentor for the student. This should be an experienced member of staff who will liaise with placement supervisors etc and co-ordinate responses and communicate with Occupational Health/Disability Support and the School of Health Sciences. Normally regular reviews/appointments will be arranged with Occupational Health and/or Disability Support and as considered necessary review meetings will be arranged for those involved with the initial case conference and others if necessary.

Please note. Communication between those involved is essential and it is acknowledged that to fulfil these recommendations an appropriate time will be necessary.