

BECOMING A PHARMACIST: IN NUMBERS

The path to becoming part of the profession can be a rocky one for some. Here are an aspiring pharmacist's chances at each stage of the process, based on the best available data. Would you make it now?

DAWN CONNELLY

APPLYING FOR THE MPharm

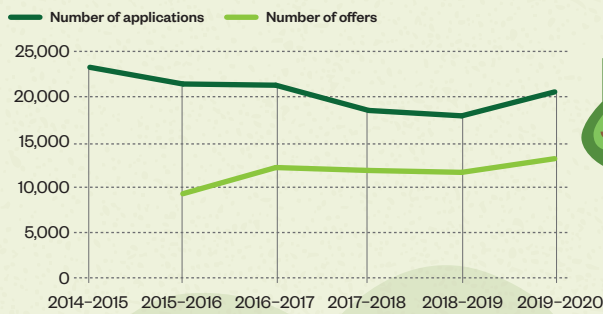
64%

Nearly two-thirds of applications to MPharm degrees receive an offer

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- Students at school or college can apply for up to five different degree courses each year via the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service process, so, for example, 20,000 applications equates to around 4,000 prospective students.
- The offer rate of 64% for MPharm courses has been consistent over recent years but is higher than in 2015–2016, when it was 44%.

Applications to the MPharm fell until 2019–2020 despite an increase in schools of pharmacy and removal of the cap on student numbers in 2015–2016.



- The fall in applications could be attributed to the popularity of other subjects, such as medicine, as well as fears about job prospects because of a potential oversupply of pharmacists.
- In addition, the number of 18-year-olds has been steadily falling since 2009 and is not projected to recover until 2020.

Number of students obtaining a place via clearing has increased since 2015–2016



- Applying through clearing — a system universities use to fill spaces on courses at the end of the academic year — avoids multiple open days and means students only apply to schools they have the grades for. Students can also “trade up” via clearing after doing better than predicted in their examinations.

Sources: General Pharmaceutical Council; Office for National Statistics; Higher Education Policy Institute; Universities and Colleges Admissions Service.

Editorial advisers: Andrew Thompson, deputy head of department at the school of pharmacy, University of Bath, and chair of the admissions sub-group of the Pharmacy Schools Council; Katrina Bicknell, head of the school of pharmacy at University of Reading

UNIVERSITY

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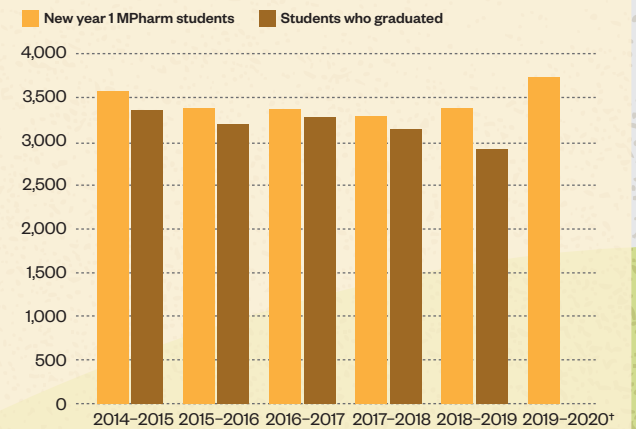
- The number of students undertaking year 1 of the MPharm for the first time is at its highest level for a decade, despite one school of pharmacy – Sussex – closing to new entrants in 2019.

86%

The vast majority (at least 86%) of students who start the MPharm course graduate four years later*

*This calculation assumes that equal numbers of students retake or are on a five-year course each year

The number of students who graduate each year has fallen in line with the decrease in students starting the course



- The proportion of new year 1 MPharm students who graduate four years later has fallen from 92% in 2014–2015 to 86% in 2018–2019.

*Data for students who graduated in 2020 are not yet available

- Overall, there is a 12-percentage-point gap between the proportion of white students getting a higher (first or upper second class) degree and their black, Asian and minority ethnic counterparts, but this varies between schools of pharmacy from 37% to -5%.

90%

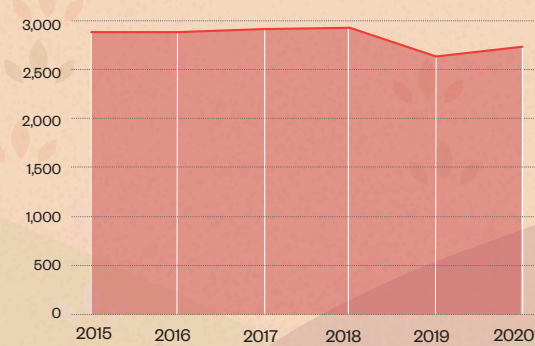
The majority of MPharm graduates go on to start preregistration training*

*This calculation assumes equal numbers defer preregistration training each year

PREREGISTRATION TRAINING

- Between 86% and 93% of UK MPharm graduates started preregistration training each year between 2015 and 2020.
- From July 2021, a new foundation year programme will replace the preregistration training scheme, although details of how it will work 'in practice' are still being decided.

The number of UK MPharm graduates starting preregistration training is consistently between 2,500 and 3,000 each year*



*1 July to 30 June. *Data correct to 1 October 2020; more students may still apply

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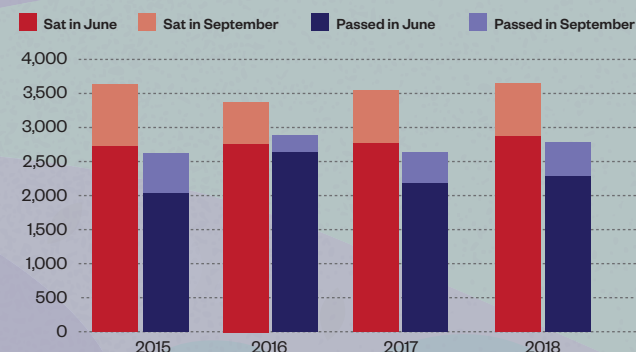
GPhC REGISTRATION

- Pharmacists have a two-year window in which to join the register after passing the registration assessment.
- In 2020, preregistration trainees were allowed to join a provisional register because the registration assessment was delayed owing to the coronavirus pandemic.
- Between 500 and 1,000 UK graduates fail one attempt at the registration assessment each year; some 50 to 100 UK graduates fail for the third and final time.
- Hospital trainees, females, those aged 25 years and under, and those training in Scotland, had higher pass rates in the 2019 June assessment.
- There is wide variation in pass rates between graduates from different schools of pharmacy, ranging from 47% to 93% in June 2019.
- Around 61% of black-African trainees passed in June 2019, compared with 91% of white British trainees. A 2016 GPhC investigation suggested this could be because many black-African candidates are mature or overseas students, and because some experience bias and prejudice.

72% to 86%

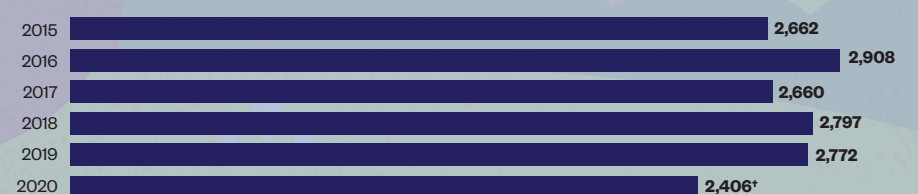
Between 72% and 86% of UK MPharm graduates pass the registration assessment each year

Percentage of UK MPharm graduates that passed the registration assessment each year between 2015 and 2019



The registration assessment for 2020 has been postponed because of the coronavirus pandemic.

At least 2,500 UK graduates join the GPhC register each year*



*1 August to 31 July. *2,388 UK graduates joined the provisional register and 18 UK graduates joined the register in 2020.