

End-point Assessment Report for Level 2 ST0299 Pharmacy Services Assistant and Level 3 ST0300 Pharmacy Technician

November 2025

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Introduction

Welcome to our Lead Independent End-point Assessor (LIEPA) report. The purpose of this report is to provide our stakeholders with valuable and informative feedback emerging from end-point assessment (EPA) activities completed for apprentices registered and assessed against the ST0299 Pharmacy Services Assistant and ST0300 Pharmacy Technician (Integrated) apprenticeship standards. This review covers apprentices who have been registered and/or completed their end-point assessment between October 2024 and October 2025.

Our intention through this and related reports is to provide providers and employers with insights to ensure apprentices are fully prepared for, and experience, a high-quality end-point assessment with Open Awards. We are committed to publishing a report across all the apprenticeship standards we assess at least annually.

Open Awards End-point Assessment Delivery Team

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Evaluation of Registration, Gateway and Bookings

Registration with Open Awards

We would like to remind employers to ensure they register apprentices with Open Awards through their chosen training provider (the 'Provider') as soon as possible. This ensures that we can provide an efficient end-point assessment experience. A further benefit to registering apprentices promptly is to allow access to a growing range of practice and preparation materials to support and prepare apprentices for their end-point assessment.

As a minimum, our expectation is that registration takes place at least six (6) months before the apprentice reaches Gateway.

Delaying registering apprentices until they are close to Gateway may impact Open Awards ability to plan to assess the apprentice in a timely manner.

Gateway

Gateway is the point at which the employer, in conversation with the Provider, reviews their apprentice's knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs) and formally confirms the apprentice has reached occupational competency. It is also the point where the apprentice is confirmed to have completed all the mandatory elements of their apprenticeship programme and is ready for end-point assessment.

To support Providers to manage the process we have a generic Gateway support video available. Please speak to our Customer Service Team if you require help accessing this: customerservices@openawards.org.uk

Open Awards aims to make the apprenticeship Gateway submission and checking process as straightforward as possible. However, in a small number of instances, the necessary Gateway checks **cannot** be completed. This inevitably results in a delay to the apprentice being able to be assessed until the issue gets resolved.

Pleasingly, we are encountering fewer instances of Gateway submissions being rejected because Providers are being more familiar with the submission requirements.

Common reasons Gateway submissions are rejected

- **Incomplete Gateway documentation**
- **Missing or unacceptable signatures**
 - Signatures of the Provider, employer and apprentice play a vital part in supporting us to authenticate the Gateway evidence submitted. To help clarify what is acceptable, we have a guidance document which is available on our Secure Portal.
- **Missing or inconsistent dates**
 - We are unable to accept Gateway documentation which has been completed before the Gateway meeting has taken place or there are missing dates from the form itself. Therefore, please ensure Gateway documentation is formally completed and dated during or as soon as possible after the Gateway meeting.
- **Incomplete/ unacceptable English and maths evidence**
 - Please ensure that the evidence presented is appropriate, clear and readable. The Department for Education maintains a list of the current and prior qualifications accepted as meeting the minimum English and maths requirements for apprenticeships at Level 2 and above. Our Assessment Delivery Team use this as our reference to determine what evidence is acceptable.
 - From August 2025, the Department for Education updated English and maths requirements for apprenticeships in England. However, these changes do not apply to the Level 3 Pharmacy Technician Apprenticeship (ST0300). The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) sets its own entry and

qualification requirements for this apprenticeship, which take precedence over the DfE's general apprenticeship funding rules. Therefore, all English and maths evidence for Pharmacy Technician Apprentices must continue to meet the GPhC's requirements until further notice.

- For the Level 2 Pharmacy Services Assistant Apprenticeship (ST0299), please note that English and maths qualifications are not required for apprentices aged 19 and over, as this aligns with current funding and apprenticeship framework guidance. For apprentices under 19, the existing minimum requirements for English and maths still apply.
- **Portfolio of evidence**
 - Where a portfolio (or logbook etc.) is required to be submitted, there have been instances when these have not been shared with us as part of the Gateway submission process. This can lead to delays whilst our Assessment Delivery Team requests this information from the Provider. This most commonly occurs because security/ login details to access an e-portfolio/ electronic portfolio have not been provided.
 - In addition, there have been some instances where the format of the portfolio is not in line with the requirements of the relevant apprenticeship standard as set out in the associated assessment plan. It is important to ensure that the structure and amount of evidence are presented in line with the guidance provided in each standard-specific *EPA Handbook*.

Providers should be aware that Gateway evidence needs to be completed and submitted in a suitable timeframe. If there is a substantial delay between Gateway and submission, we may require further evidence the apprentice and employer are still happy to proceed with assessment.

Preparation for assessments

Providers should ensure they familiarise themselves with the materials Open Awards has available to support them, the employer, and apprentices for end-point assessment. This can all be found on our website and through our Secure Portal.

For observations in the workplace, we recommend employers make the apprentice's work colleagues and others in the immediate work environment aware in advance an assessment will be taking place so as to not affect the assessment. For example, in one instance an assessment was interrupted by someone undertaking a scheduled equipment audit.

It is vital that apprentices bring suitable photographic ID with them to each assessment to confirm their identification. This is required for every assessment the apprentice is due to undertake. If they fail to have this ID with them, the independent end-point assessor (IEPA) **cannot** let the assessment proceed.

Standard specific guidance

Below is standard-specific information for the ST0299 apprenticeship standard to ensure there is sufficient evidence to support meaningful conclusions to be drawn.

Standard Overview – ST0299 Pharmacy Services Assistant

Level 2 apprenticeship standard with a minimum duration of 8 months

External Quality Assurance Provider: Ofqual

The end-point assessment consists of three (3) distinct assessment methods which are separately graded.

Knowledge Test (must be passed first)

A 90-minute test with a structure of 40 multiple choice questions (1 mark each) and 5 scenario-based multiple-choice questions (2 marks each). The pass mark for the test is 65%.

Simulated observation with question & answer session

Two simulated observations lasting 20 minutes each, followed by a 10-minute Q&A session.

Professional discussion

The Professional discussion is a two-way dialogue between the IEPA (Independent End-Point Assessor) and the apprentice, lasting 30 minutes.

General Pharmaceutical Council On-programme Requirements

Please may we take this opportunity to remind training providers and employers that it is their responsibility to ensure that they comply with the requirements stipulated by the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC), outlined in the document entitled “Requirements for the education and training of pharmacy support staff”. Available from the GPhC website, this document sets out the GPhC regulatory requirements effective from October 2020, that Pharmacy Support staff must hold a GPhC approved qualification at Level 2. Open Awards will not check whether these GPhC requirements have been met as part of the end-point assessment provision.

Findings

This year’s Level 2 (ST0299) Pharmacy Services Assistant data relates directly to the last year’s performance. Lead Independent End-Point Assessor (LIEPA) report remains relevant and continue to inform best practice across the Pharmacy apprenticeship provision.

The review found that all apprentices completing assessments achieved successful outcomes, with 90% gaining a Pass and 10% achieving a Distinction. This marked a notable improvement from the previous reporting period, with the fail rate reduced from 4% to 0%, demonstrating the effectiveness of provider preparation and apprentice engagement.

Knowledge Test: The pass rate increased slightly from 70% to 71% on first assessment, with consistent performance across assessment cycles. All learners who undertook a resit or retake passed, resulting in a 100% overall success rate.

Simulated Observation and Q&A: Following resits, outcomes show a clear uplift in performance, with 100% of apprentices achieving at least a pass compared with 96% the previous year. Notably, distinction performance remained strong (39%), supported by clear demonstration of procedural knowledge and professional conduct.

Professional Discussion: 96% of apprentices achieved a positive outcome on their first attempt, reflecting strong communication skills, reflective practice, and understanding of professional standards.

Areas of good practice-

- 100% achievement rate— every apprentice successfully passed their end-point assessment.
- No fails were recorded, showing a clear improvement in overall quality and preparation compared with the previous year.
- Pass rates improved: Level 2 Pharmacy Services Assistant rose from 85% to 90%, while the distinction rate remained steady at 10%.
- There was a slight improvement in pass rate on the knowledge test on the first attempt (from 70% to 71%), indicating effective preparation and understanding of core theoretical knowledge.
- Apprentices showed strong grasp of underpinning pharmacy principles, legislation, and practice requirements.
- Apprentices demonstrated excellent ability to explain stock management processes, including receiving, rotation, and discrepancy handling.
- After resits, all apprentices achieved at least a pass, showing resilience and effective support from providers.

Apprentices showed particular strength in the following areas:

- Reflective practice – clearly articulating personal growth and development.
- Understanding GDPR principles and data protection responsibilities.
- Health promotion awareness – those working in community settings especially excelled in patient-focused discussions.
- Apprentices who achieved distinctions provided clear, confident, and contextualised examples of their work practice.
- Providers have clearly improved Gateway compliance and familiarity with documentation processes since the previous review.
- Employers were praised for supporting apprentices during practical assessments, during practical assessments.

Areas for development

- Incomplete demonstration of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs): Failures were usually caused by gaps in evidence showing full adherence to pharmacy SOPs during dispensing and stock processes.
- Missing patient information leaflets (PILs): Apprentices often failed to include PILs when dispensing split or broken-down packs — a compliance requirement.
- Lack of contingency awareness: Apprentices needed stronger understanding of actions to take when stock is unavailable, and which records must be completed.
- Employer support issues: Some assessments were delayed or disrupted because the employer's named contact was unavailable.
- Insufficient examples for distinction criteria: Some apprentices did not provide enough depth or multiple examples where two were required, limiting their ability to achieve distinctions.
- Poor time management: A number of candidates ran out of time, leaving criteria partially addressed.
- Preparation gaps: Providers should better support apprentices in understanding the grading criteria and expectations before assessment.
- Candidates should be confident in GDPR principles and healthcare promotion topics, which were noted as strengths among higher performing apprentices.

The findings reaffirm the overall high quality of delivery and assessment across this Pharmacy apprenticeship standard, as well as the ongoing commitment of providers and employers to ensure apprentices meet sector expectations. These outcomes will continue to inform the approach to supporting future Level 2 Pharmacy Services Assistant cohorts when registrations resume.

Standard Overview – ST0300 Pharmacy Technician (Integrated)

Level 3 apprenticeship standard with minimum duration of 24 months.

External Quality Assurance Provider: The General Pharmaceutical Council

End-point assessment is fully integrated into Open Awards GPhC approved Level 3 qualification. Apprentices are required to complete the mandatory units of the Level 3 approved qualification - Level 3 Diploma in Principles and Practices for Pharmacy Technicians (RQF) (Integrated Apprenticeship) and have it externally quality assured in advance of Gateway checks. This qualification forms the entire assessment for the Level 3 apprenticeship in line with the temporary dispensation.

Once the Gateway checks have been completed, the apprentice's evidence will be presented to a **Final Awards Board (FAB)** for validation (there is NO additional assessment requirement post-Gateway for this integrated apprenticeship)

Please note- that apprentices will not achieve the integrated qualification without completing the Gateway requirements and having their achievement confirmed by a panel at the FAB.

Common areas that need to be addressed to strengthen the Gateway checking process, beyond what is highlighted in the *Gateway* section of this document, relate to the use of **Appendix 1a** and **Appendix 1b**.

Appendix 1a

The General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) allows up to three (3) months of work experience completed before the start of a Pharmacy Technician course to be counted towards the required 24 months. Appendix 1a must **only** be completed if the apprentice has been on the Pharmacy Technician programme for **less than 24 months** and meets the GPhC work-experience criteria.

Appendix 1b

Appendix 1b should be completed when apprentices are being put forward for the FAB but have not yet achieved the full 24 months of work experience. In these cases, the employer must confirm that the apprentice **will** complete the 24 months before the FAB and must also commit to continuing the apprentice's employment until this requirement is fully met.

These appendices are only required when the apprentice has **not yet completed** the full 24 months of work experience. Over the past year, we have revised the Gateway forms so that this information is collected through a declaration rather than a free-text box, making the process clearer and easier to complete. All relevant sections must be completed by the **Designated Educational Supervisor (DES)**.

Following the FAB, Open Awards will issue a transcript of completion and claim the apprenticeship certificate from DfE (Department for Education) alongside issuing the qualification certificate.

You can find the dates of our monthly FAB meetings, including Gateway submission deadlines and results release dates on our website.

2025- [epa-st0300-final-awards-board-dates-2025.pdf](#)

2026- [epa-st0300-final-awards-board-dates-2026.pdf](#)

Key Recommendations for Employers and Providers

Practice to Avoid	Recommended practice
Registering apprentices in the same month they complete Gateway, causing possible delays in planning assessments.	Ensure timely registration of apprentices with Open Awards and provide an early estimate of the anticipated Gateway date.
Unfamiliarity with the EPA process adds confusion and stress to planning assessments.	Maintain a comprehensive knowledge of the EPA process.
Apprentices do not access or read the standard-specific EPA Handbook.	Ensure apprentices receive and review the relevant standard-specific EPA Handbook.
Lack of understanding among apprentices regarding the KSBs and their assessment.	Ensure apprentices have a clear understanding of the KSBs and how they will be assessed.
Gateway preparation is often incomplete or delayed, with little use of sample or mock tests to support apprentices.	Ensure thorough and timely Gateway preparation, including the use of sample and mock tests to help apprentices become familiar with the process.
Failure to appoint a primary contact for workplace assessments results in insufficient support during the EPA at the employer's location.	Designate a primary point of contact responsible for workplace assessments who will be available on-site at the employer's location throughout the entire duration of the EPA.
Failing to prepare in advance and relying on improvisation causes unnecessary stress and errors.	Ensure apprentices are well-prepared in advance and avoid last-minute improvisation.
Apprentices do not bring their ID on the assessment day, preventing the EPA from proceeding and potentially incurring cancellation fees.	Ensure apprentices bring their ID on the assessment day; without it, the EPA cannot proceed, and cancellation fees may be incurred.
Lack of effective communication among the apprentice, awarding organisation, and training provider leads to confusion, missed deadlines, and inadequate support.	Maintain effective communication between the apprentice, awarding organisation, and training provider.

- We are always looking to continually improve our end-point assessment service and therefore will be looking to gather feedback on your experience and support us to continually improve. Please look out for the survey link in your inbox which will be sent to you following the assessment.

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