

# ARE THEY READY FOR PRACTICE?

## A NEW APPROACH TO ASSESSING CANDIDATES AT ENTRY-TO-PRACTICE

One of the College's fundamental responsibilities as the regulator for the profession of pharmacy is to ensure candidates are qualified and have the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary to safely and ethically practice pharmacy in Ontario.

As a requirement to register with the College, every candidate must demonstrate their competence and readiness to practice by successfully completing a structured practical training program.

Earlier in 2016, the College began piloting a new approach to assessing candidates' readiness for practice. PACE — or Practice Assessment of Competence at Entry — is currently being tested with pharmacist candidates and is designed to meet the requirement for structured practical training.

### ABOUT PACE

The purpose of PACE is to ensure candidates are qualified to begin practising as pharmacists in Ontario. College-appointed pharmacists — PACE Assessors — assess a candidate's knowledge, skills and abilities to ensure they are competent to become pharmacists.

A diagram of the PACE process can be found on page 13.

### ORIENTATION

During orientation, the candidate spends 35 hours over one week to become accustomed to the pharmacy's workflow and processes.

### ASSESSMENT

The assessment spans 70 hours over two weeks (full time) or three-weeks (part time). The assessor observes while the candidate engages in the scope of practice of a pharmacist. The assessor avoids providing feedback during the assessment and only intervenes if necessary to ensure patient safety. The candidate's competence is assessed using a tool jointly developed and validated by the University of Toronto, University of Waterloo, the Ontario hospital residency program, and OCP. This ensures that candidates are evaluated on the same criteria whether through University of Waterloo or University of Toronto experiential rotations, or through PACE. The College applies standardized weightings to competency items to determine the final outcome of the assessment in a fair and objective manner.

### OUTCOME

Within two weeks of completion of the assessment, the candidate will receive news about whether or not they have been successful in demonstrating competence. If the candidate has demonstrated competence they have met the College's registration requirement for structured practical training and can move forward with the next step(s) of their registration process. If the candidate has not successfully demonstrated competence, he or she will receive a performance profile from the College, indicating areas of competency gaps, as well as feedback and guidance in creating a plan for self-directed development before attempting the assessment again.

**DEVELOPMENT**

The development phase of PACE is only for candidates who do not demonstrate competence during the assessment. Development will occur for as long as required, but not less than 4 weeks. The purpose of this phase is for candidates to create and implement an action plan to address the practice gaps that were identified during the assessment.

A College registration advisor (RA) will consult with the candidate to review their performance profile and encourage the candidate to reflect on areas where enhancement is needed to meet the standards for practice. The RA will discuss the resources and options that are available to support additional learning in the specific identified areas. With guidance from the RA, the candidate will create their own personalized learning action plan tailored specifically to their development needs.

Candidates will select a practising pharmacist to act as a mentor as they undertake their personalized learning action plan during the development phase. The mentor will supervise the candidate in practice, help the candidate to address areas needing development, and will also provide additional development feedback such as fine-tuning subtle practice points.

The mentor and candidate both acknowledge in writing when the candidate's development has been successfully completed as per the individualized learning action plan, signalling to the College that the candidate is ready for re-assessment.

**PACE HIGHLIGHTS**

**TIME REQUIREMENT – ORIENTATION, ASSESSMENT, DEVELOPMENT**

- 35 hours of orientation
- 70 hours of assessment over two or three weeks
- Development (if required) – minimum 4 weeks, may be longer if needed to complete personalized learning action plan

**ASSESSMENT PHASE**

- Assessment without feedback
- Assessor uses validated and standardized assessment tool

**DEVELOPMENT PHASE (IF REQUIRED)**

- Occurs separately from assessment
- Self-directed
- Individualized learning action plan supported by OCP and third-party mentor
- Based on performance profile and identified competency gaps

**ROLE OF PACE ASSESSOR**

- College-appointed volunteer position
- Stringent screening criteria
- Avoids providing feedback – assesses only
- Consistently observes, intervenes only when required to ensure safety

**ROLE OF PACE MENTOR**

- Volunteer position (not College-appointed)
- Demonstrated capacity to support candidate's development needs
- Observes and develops candidate based on personalized development plan
- Adjusts level of supervision and observation based on performance
- Provides mentorship and feedback
- Determines candidate's readiness for re-assessment

**RE-ASSESSMENT**

OCP will assign a new assessor in a new location and the candidate will repeat the PACE assessment process, starting from the orientation phase.

**WHO CAN BE A PACE ASSESSOR?**

The College is currently recruiting PACE Assessors. If you are interested in applying, please review the Assessor Criteria and apply online at <http://www.ocpinfo.com/about/key-initiatives/pace/>

**PACE Assessors should:**

- Be experienced community or hospital pharmacists registered and practicing in Ontario, or other Canadian jurisdiction with similar scope of practice, for at least two years providing patient-centred care
- Have an understanding of and commitment to pharmacy regulation, Standards of Practice and the Code of Ethics
- Have a strong sense of professional responsibility demonstrated by a commitment to continuing professional development
- Be experienced in fostering collaborative relationships with excellent verbal, written and listening skills

- Be currently practicing a minimum of 25 hours per week in a community or hospital pharmacy in Ontario that supports a diverse patient population and is engaged in the delivery of a wide-range of pharmacy services
- Be willing to participate as a PACE assessor a minimum of three times per year, which requires direct supervision of candidates for 70 hours over a three week period for each assessment

**PACE Assessors should not be:**

- New to practice — Assessors must have at least two years experience providing patient-centred care
- Practising with a limited breadth or not practising to full scope
- Practising in an overly specialized pharmacy
- Practising in a pharmacy where management is in transition
- Pharmacy technicians (PACE is currently being piloted for pharmacists only)

**APPLYING TO BECOME AN ASSESSOR**

Pharmacists can apply, at any time, to the College for consideration as a PACE assessor by completing the

application form. The application will be reviewed by the College and successful candidates will be notified of their appointment as a PACE assessor. Assessors will be required to successfully complete assessor training and must continue to meet the criteria outlined in the initial application. Visit <http://www.ocpinfo.com/about/key-initiatives/pace/> for more information.

**WHO CAN BE A PACE MENTOR**

Ideal mentors for PACE candidates will be pharmacists in good standing with the College whose practise site allows for a full scope of practice opportunities. Mentors will support development of the candidate through supervision, feedback, and facilitation of practise opportunities based on an individualized learning action plan created by the candidate, and supported by the College.

**NEXT STEPS**

The College is currently recruiting and training assessors for the PACE pilot. Stay tuned to the PACE – Key Initiatives page on the College website for more information! **PC**

**THE PACE PROCESS:**

