



National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities
Association nationale des organismes de réglementation de la pharmacie

National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program Frequently Asked Questions

(October, 2014)

General Information

1. What is the estimated number of licensed pharmacy technicians in Canada?

According to our statistics, as of January 1, 2013 there were 1,428 licensed pharmacy technicians in Canada. It is important to keep in mind that this figure is inclusive of licensed pharmacy technicians from only five (5) provinces where they are a regulated profession: British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Manitoba.

Looking to the future, this number will increase as pharmacy technicians complete the process to become registered/licensed in the jurisdictions of British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Manitoba. Furthermore these figures will continue to grow as the process to regulate technicians in other jurisdictions evolves.

2. Where are pharmacy technicians regulated?

Currently there are five (5) provinces where technicians are regulated – British Columbia, Alberta, Ontario, Nova Scotia and Manitoba

You can learn more about becoming a regulated technician in these provinces by visiting the websites of each licensing body.

College of Pharmacists of British Columbia - <http://www.bcpharmacists.org/>

Alberta College of Pharmacists - <http://pharmacists.ab.ca>

Ontario College of Pharmacists - <http://www.ocpinfo.com/>

Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists - <http://www.nspharmacists.ca/>

College of Pharmacists of Manitoba - <http://mpha.in1touch.org>

The regulation of pharmacy technicians is also in progress in a number of other provinces. Check with the pharmacy regulatory authority in your area for further information/updates about the status of pharmacy technician regulation.

3. What is the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program?

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program was developed by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) to assist individuals already working in the role of pharmacy technician to upgrade their skills to align with changes in the scope of practice of pharmacy technicians, without returning to school to complete a full-time training program. The ultimate goal is a national strategy that will enable regulated pharmacy technicians to relocate and work anywhere in Canada without the need to requalify.

The Program addresses competencies required of regulated pharmacy technicians in both hospital and community practice. The Program of Studies includes the following four courses:

- Pharmacology for Pharmacy Technician Bridging
- Product Preparation for Pharmacy Technician Bridging
- Management of Drug Distribution Systems for Pharmacy Technician Bridging
- Professional Practice for Pharmacy Technician Bridging

The program is available in a ready-to-deliver format in both French and English and will be delivered both in-class and online.

4. How did the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program come about?

Timeline:

2008 – Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program

- originally developed and introduced in Ontario (CONNECT Strategic Alliances and the Ontario College of Pharmacists)

2010 – adapted for use in Alberta and British Columbia

2011 – ownership and responsibility for administration of the program assumed jointly by the pharmacy regulatory authorities (PRAs) of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario

2011-2012 – Other NAPRA members (PRAs) identified need to have a national curriculum to support consistency in knowledge and skills across Canada and facilitate labour mobility

2012 – NAPRA secured funding from Government of Canada (Inter-provincial Labour Mobility Initiative, HRSDC) to revise existing program to create material that is more suitable for national delivery

2013 – new national bridging education program completed. Traditional classroom and on-line delivery began in Fall 2013

5. Where is the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program offered?

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is delivered by educational institutions (local colleges or universities) across Canada. It is available for both in-class or online delivery in both English and French. Online delivery has been centralized through Selkirk College in British Columbia for students from all jurisdictions. Since a program was already in existence in Alberta and British Columbia prior to the completion of the national program, delivery institutions already involved may decide to continue to provide the program online in these provinces. However, in these instances, registration will be restricted to individuals from within their province only. Information about Selkirk’s online program, such as contact information, course offerings and registration information, is available on the [Selkirk College website](#). Classroom delivery is provided by educational institutions across Canada that have signed an agreement with NAPRA to be an authorized delivery agent. Course and Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition exam schedules at the various authorized delivery institutions are posted to the [NAPRA website](#) in the section of the same name.

6. How much does the Bridging Education Program cost?

Like many services that consumers purchase, prices can vary.

Cost structures may vary from one jurisdiction to another and from one educational institution to another. The course fees take into consideration elements such as cost to access the national program curriculum developed and maintained by NAPRA as well as costs related to program delivery.

7. I’ve been a pharmacy technician for 10 years, do I need to take the Bridging Education Program?

If your jurisdiction regulates pharmacy technicians and you would like to pursue registration/licensure, you may be asked to complete the Bridging Education Program.

NAPRA’s program was designed to assist individuals already working in the role of pharmacy technician to upgrade their skills to align with changes in the scope of practice of pharmacy technicians, without returning to school to complete a full-time training program. The regulation of pharmacy technicians has allowed for an expanded scope of practice for pharmacy technicians in those jurisdictions. The program’s courses will help to “fill in the gaps” between your work experience and the additional activities and responsibilities of a regulated pharmacy technician.

You should contact the pharmacy regulatory authority (PRA) in your province or territory for more information about if and when the Bridging Education Program may be required in your jurisdiction.

8. How do I know if I am eligible to take the Bridging Education Program?

You should contact the PRA in your jurisdiction to determine if you meet the requirements to take the Bridging Education Program. In some jurisdictions, there may be time limits or pre-registration requirements that you need to know about first. For example, in some jurisdictions, you must preregister with the PRA and/or complete the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Evaluating Exam before taking the Bridging Program. Some jurisdictions have also set specific deadlines for each step in the registration/licensure process. Please check the requirements posted on the [PRA website in your jurisdiction or contact your PRA directly](#) for specific details on registration/licensure requirements, eligibility for bridging and applicable deadlines.

If the requirements for registration/licensure have not been set in your jurisdiction, there is nothing to prevent you from taking the Bridging Program in anticipation. However, there is an element of risk to taking the courses without knowing what the requirements will be in your jurisdiction, as there is no guarantee that doing so will eventually count towards potential future requirements.

Individuals are allowed to take National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program courses simply to further their own knowledge. You may be a pharmacy assistant who wants to take one or more courses as continuing professional development, but may not want to complete all four courses or complete the other steps in the registration/licensure process. This is allowed, as long as you understand that this will not lead to registration/licensure. Should you decide to pursue registration/licensure at a later time, there is no guarantee that you will receive credit towards registration/licensure requirements for courses completed in the past.

If you want to pursue registration/licensure, it is your responsibility to make sure you meet the eligibility criteria and deadlines for Bridging education in your jurisdiction. The educational institutions will not verify your eligibility prior to enrollment. If you do not take the Bridging Education Program at the correct point in the registration/licensure process or if you do not meet the eligibility criteria or deadlines in your jurisdiction, you may be required to retake the program or may jeopardize your ability to continue with the registration/licensure process.

9. How can I register for the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program?

Registration for Bridging Education Program courses will not be through NAPRA or the PRA in your jurisdiction. You will have to contact the college or university where you want to take the courses in order to register. The list of educational institutions offering the program and contact information for these educational institutions can be found on the NAPRA website (<http://napra.ca/pages/bridgingprogram/courseandplarschedules.aspx>). Once you decide which educational institution you would like to attend, you will need to review their website or contact them directly to find out how to register.

10. I can't find a program in my area. What can I do?

If you are unable to find an educational institution that is offering the Bridging Education Program in-class in your (geographic) area, you can always consider taking the courses online. Selkirk College (www.selkirk.ca) is the authorized educational institution for the delivery of the online courses. Even though the college itself is located in British Columbia, the online courses are available to all Canadian residents.

For more specific information about Selkirk's delivery of the Bridging Education Program, please visit their website at <http://selkirk.ca/program/pharmacy-technician-bridging-national-education-program>.

11. I do not live in British Columbia, can I still take the courses online from Selkirk College?

Yes, the online courses at Selkirk College are available to all Canadian residents. All aspects of the courses are completed in an online environment; students will not be required to travel to the campus in BC at any time. Selkirk College has developed a process through which students arrange to write their examinations online. Once you register for a course or PLAR exam at Selkirk College, you will be provided with instructions for setting up your exams.

12. Do I need to take the four courses in any particular order?

No, you are not required to complete the 4 courses in any particular order, but it is recommended that the Professional Practice course be completed either as a first course or early in the program since it provides a solid foundation for the rest of the Bridging Education Program study.

13. Once I've taken the Bridging Education Program, will I be a regulated pharmacy technician?

No, the Bridging Education Program is only one of the many steps in the pathway to registration/licensure that may be required by the pharmacy regulatory authority (PRA) in your jurisdiction. Please contact the PRA in your province or territory for more information on the other steps required to become a regulated pharmacy technician in your jurisdiction.

14. Will the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program prepare me for the PEBC Qualifying Examination?

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is not intended as direct and exclusive preparation for the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Qualifying Exam. It was developed to assist individuals already working in the role of pharmacy technician to upgrade their skills to align with changes in the scope of practice of pharmacy technicians, without returning to school to complete a full-time training program. If, in the course of your Bridging Program studies, you uncover areas where further study and preparation are needed, it is your responsibility to address those weaknesses prior to attempting the PEBC Qualifying Exam.

15. I have already taken some courses from the previous bridging education program. Will I be required to retake these courses from the national program?

The national version of the Bridging Education Program is very similar to the previous program delivered in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia, except that it has been updated and that it no longer contains province-specific information. For this reason, students should not have to retake any courses which they have successfully completed in the past. However, you should contact the PRA in your jurisdiction for more details on this and any other requirements for registration/licensure in your jurisdiction.

16. How does my college become an authorized delivery agent of the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program?

The criteria to become an authorized delivery agent for the Bridging Education Program consist of the following:

- i. full accreditation status from the Canadian Council for the Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP) for an existing pharmacy technician or pharmacy program in Canada
- ii. a signed licence agreement with NAPRA
- iii. licence fees paid for the use of the material



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If interested or to learn more, please contact the program coordinator Sarah Marshall, Manager of Professional and Regulatory Affairs either by e-mail at smarshall@napra.ca or by phone at 613-569-9658, ext. 230.