Introduction
This fact sheet gives information on a range of common enquiries we receive from pre-registration trainee pharmacists.

Setting up pre-registration training: the contract of employment
We suggest that you get a written copy of the contract of employment before your training begins and read it through carefully. Note you are entitled to a written statement of your main terms and conditions of employment within two months of starting work.

The contract sets out rights and responsibilities of the employer and employee. The rights set out in the contract are in addition to rights under law such as the right to paid holiday and the right not to be discriminated against on the grounds of race, sex, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, or gender reassignment.

Note that the contract of employment can give additional rights, for example, more paid holiday than the legal minimum, but it cannot take away or reduce legal rights.

On leaving employment employees are entitled to be paid any outstanding holiday pay and notice pay if applicable.

If you have queries about your contract of employment, Pharmacist Support may be able to help by referring you to a specialist Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) adviser. The Pharmacists Defence Association (PDA) may also be able to help (see Employment problems section below).

No income before or after training programme
You may be without income, for example:-

• after the end of your university course and before you have started a training programme; or
• after your training programme has finished but before you start work; or
• if you fail the registration assessment and are not working.

If you are available for work and actively seeking work, you may be entitled to receive jobseeker’s allowance (JSA), but you will have to be able to demonstrate that you are both available for work and actively seeking work. You may also be entitled to housing benefit for help with rent and council tax benefit. If you are not a British citizen you may not be entitled to claim benefit and we suggest you seek advice from a benefits adviser.

If you are entitled to benefit it will be payable from the point you start your claim so it is important to do this as quickly as possible. You can start a claim by ringing a ‘contact centre’. Your local Jobcentre Plus office will be able to give you the correct telephone number.

Your local CAB can help with information on benefit entitlement and Pharmacist Support can also refer you to a specialist CAB adviser for free and confidential telephone or email advice.

Financial difficulties before, during and after pre-registration training
Pharmacist Support may be able to provide financial assistance in the form of grants to pre-registration trainees facing particular hardship. All applications for grants are considered on a case by case basis and will take into account income and outgoings as well as additional circumstances. We will also need to be sure that you have claimed any benefits to which you are entitled. Please contact us on 0800 168 2233 to find out more.

Problems with debts
Pharmacist Support can provide free and confidential advice from a Citizens Advice Bureau specialist debt adviser. The adviser can help with managing debt. For example, if you have multiple debts and are facing pressure from creditors, the adviser can help with negotiating with creditors and rescheduling payments.

Employment problems
You may be experiencing employment problems, for example, unauthorised deductions from your wages, disciplinary issues, bullying and/or harassment.

Pharmacist Support can refer you to a Citizens Advice Bureau specialist employment adviser for free and confidential advice.

The Pharmacists Defence Association (PDA) also offers free membership to pre-registration trainees which includes legal defence.
I need some help with an addiction problem
If you have an addiction problem – drug, alcohol, gambling or any other kind of dependency – or if you know of a friend or colleague with a problem, you can contact the Health Support Programme (HSP) for advice. This service is completely confidential.

The HSP can be contacted directly on: 0808 168 5132.

When do I have to start repaying my student loan?
Student loan repayments are due from the April following the end of your course. However, you will only be required to make repayments if you earn more than £15,795 if you began studying before 2012 and £21,000 if your study began on or after 2012. If you are employed, repayments will be deducted from your salary. If you are self-employed, you are responsible for calculating and making your own repayments.

For further information on repayment of student loans, see the Student Loans Company website: http://www.slc.co.uk/

The Registration assessment (exam)
The GPhC Trainee Manual is now available online in the Pre-registration trainee section of the GPhC website: http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/ and contains information about the registration assessment, including applying to enter it, deciding whether to enter, problems on the day, syllabus and example questions. The Pre-registration trainee section of the GPhC website also contains further information on the registration assessment.

Am I eligible for support from Pharmacist Support
Anyone who is a pre-registration trainee is eligible for help from Pharmacist Support services. This includes someone who is undertaking their training year, someone who has finished their training prior to taking their exam and someone who has failed the assessment, as long as they intend to retake it and have made arrangements with the GPhC in this respect.
Working in the UK
Overseas students who are not from an EEA country and who successfully complete their MPharm course and wish to apply for a pre-registration training placement may need to apply for permission under the points-based system to allow them to work in the UK.

The visa they need to apply for depends on whether they plan to do a hospital or community pre-registration placement. For those planning a hospital placement, the salary meets the minimum requirement for a visa under Tier 2. Those planning a community placement will need to apply for a Tier 5 visa. As there are now minimum requirements for a Tier 5 visa, the Royal Pharmaceutical Society’s (RPS) Pharmacy Professional Sponsorship scheme (PPSS) enables successful applicants to apply for a Certificate of Sponsorship which then allows them to apply for a Tier 5 visa.

This scheme applies to individuals from overseas (outside of the European Union) who have graduated or will graduate with an MPharm from a School of Pharmacy in Great Britain between 2012 and 2015 but who do not have rights of residence.

More information on the scheme and how to apply is available on the RPS website: http://www.rpharms.com/preregistration-trainees/pharmacy-professional-sponsorship-scheme-for-overseas-pharmacy-students.asp

The UK Borders Agency website has information on the rules on working in the UK. www.bia.homeoffice.gov.uk

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) has a wealth of information on its website on working in the UK, including answers to frequently asked questions and information sheets on the rules and applying to stay. If you cannot find the information you need, UKCISA also runs an advice line Mon-Fri from 1.00pm to 4.00pm. Tel: 020 7107 9922 http://www.ukcisa.org.uk/