

BOARD NOTICE 276 OF 2022

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PHARMACY COUNCIL

COMPETENCY STANDARDS FOR PHARMACY SUPPORT PERSONNEL IN SOUTH AFRICA

The South African Pharmacy Council hereby publishes for implementation the **Competency Standards for Pharmacy Support Personnel** in terms of Section 33(o) of the Pharmacy Act, 53 of 1974.

SCHEDULE

1. Competency Standards for Pharmacy Support Personnel



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ACRONYMS

CPD	Continuing professional development
EML	Essential Medicines List
FIP	International Pharmaceutical Federation
HEQSF	Higher Education Qualifications Sub-framework
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OQSF	Occupational Qualifications Sub-framework
PAB	Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic)
PAPB	Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic)
PHC	Primary Health Care
PSP	Pharmacy Support Personnel
PT	Pharmacy Technician
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SFAP	Sub-framework assignment pending
SOP	Standard operating procedure
STG	Standard treatment guidelines

DEFINITIONS

Agent of a patient: A person nominated, either formally or informally, by the patient to collect medicines and accept information pertaining to a particular patient provided that the pharmacist is satisfied that patient safety, confidentiality and medicine quality are maintained and the patient has provided written consent.

Behavioural competency: Typical behaviour observed when effective performers apply motives, traits or skills to job-relevant tasks.

Caregiver: A person who has accepted responsibility for looking after a patient provided that the pharmacist is satisfied that patient safety, confidentiality and medicine quality are maintained and the patient has provided written consent.

Competence: Ability to carry out a job or task. The evaluation of competence is based on the exit level outcomes (ELO) developed for the pharmacy profession.

Competency: A quality or characteristic of a person related to effective or superior performance. Competency consists of aspects such as attitudes, motives, traits and skills.

Continuing professional development (CPD): A process by which registered persons continually ensure and enhance their competence throughout their professional careers. CPD encompasses a range of activities including continuing education and supplementary training.

Domain: Represents an organised cluster of competencies within a framework and the domains, with associated competencies.

GxP: A general term for guidelines for good manufacturing, clinical, laboratory, storage or distribution practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

The South African Pharmacy Council is committed to its mandate of ensuring that pharmacists and pharmacy support personnel have the necessary knowledge and skills to deliver the best possible pharmaceutical services to the people of South Africa. This is achieved by monitoring trends in education and practice, both nationally and internationally.

In recent years, competency mapping has been identified as a way of ensuring that pharmacy professionals are equipped with the specific skills, knowledge, abilities and behaviours that are needed to work effectively.

2. BACKGROUND

In 2018, the South African Pharmacy Council published Competency Standards for Pharmacists. Competency Standards had been developed and used as the basis for pharmacy education and practice since 2006. Internationally, however, a further aspect was identified and incorporated into both the education and practice of health care professionals, namely behaviours. The International Pharmaceutical Federation (FIP) Global Competency Framework (2012) included behavioural competencies that were used, together with other documents, to develop unique competency standards for South African pharmacists, considering the needs and characteristics of pharmacy practice in various practice settings.

The Competency Standards for pharmacists are currently used in the internship examination to guide examiners and interns in the evaluation of the Pharmacist Intern's competence in applying the standards in practice. They also form the basis of Continuing Professional Development activities and are used in the online CPD recording process.

It is important to note that 43 Competency Standards for pharmacists are located in six practice domains. Each Competency Standard has been specifically developed to identify competencies in three levels of practice, i.e., entry level (caters for the first three years of practice), intermediate practice (3 – 7 years of practice) and advanced practice (more than 7 years of practice). They can, therefore, be used by pharmacists to identify and plan their personal and professional development.

3. PHARMACY SUPPORT PERSONNEL

Three categories of pharmacy support personnel (PSP) have been identified:

- Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic);
- Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic); and
- Pharmacy Technician (i.e., on implementation of applicable legislation)

Each category has a specific and distinct scope of practice.

4. PSP QUALIFICATIONS

In March 2020, seven qualifications were registered on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). They have varying registration end dates.

Qualification Title	NQF Sub-Framework	NQF level	PSP
National Certificate: Pharmacist Assistance	SFAP	3	Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic)
Further Education and Training Certificate: Pharmacist Assistance	SFAP	4	Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic)
Occupational Certificate: Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic)	OQSF	4	Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic)
Occupational Certificate: Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic)	OQSF	5	Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic)
Higher Certificate: Pharmacy Support	HEQSF	5	N/A
Advanced Certificate: Pharmacy Technical Support	HEQSF	6	Pharmacy Technician
Occupational Certificate: Pharmacy Technician	OQSF	6	Pharmacy Technician

Note: Each of the two qualifications for Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic) and Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic) currently fall into two NQF levels, depending on the Sub-Framework within which it is registered. This anomaly arises because of the historic decision that the scopes of practice for PSPs required qualifications at the lower NQF levels. This document, and the development of competency standards for PSP, is based on the premise that the higher NQF level is appropriate for the two qualifications, Pharmacist's Assistant (Basic) and Pharmacist's Assistant (Post-Basic).

5. NQF LEVEL DESCRIPTORS

Level descriptors indicate the type of skills and abilities developed during education at each level and can therefore be extrapolated into the level of responsibility that may be assigned to the person holding the qualification.

Ten categories are used to describe applied competencies for each of the ten levels of the NQF viz,

- Scope of knowledge;
- Knowledge literacy;
- Method and procedure;
- Problem solving;
- Ethics and professional practice; and
- Accessing, processing and managing information.
- Producing and communicating information
- Context and systems
- Management of learning
- Accountability

Although level descriptors inform the competencies that must be achieved during education, it is also important they should be consistent with the workplace requirements of appropriate occupational levels.

For the purposes of competency standard development, the NQF level descriptors for each category of PSP must correlate with the relevant scope of practice.