Nova Scotia
College of
Pharmacists

NSCP Pharmacy Technician Assessment
(NSCP-PTA)

CANDIDATE GUIDE

The NSCP Pharmacy Technician Assessment (NSCP-PTA) Assessor Guide. important information about being an NSCP-PTA Assessor. Further information can be found on the NSCP Pharmacy Technician Assessment (NSCP-PTA) webpage.

WHAT IS THE NSCP-PTA?

The NSCP-PTA is the NSCP's competency-based practice assessment. A competency-based assessment provides assurance to the pharmacy regulator that a pharmacy technician candidate possesses the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to practice pharmacy safely, effectively, and ethically within their legislated scope of practice. The NSCP-PTA focuses on demonstrated performance.

WHO MUST COMPLETE THE NSCP-PTA?

Pharmacy technician candidates who have completed an approved bridging program or who have been internationally trained are required to successfully complete the NSCP-PTA. The assessment is conducted by an approved NSCP-PTA Assessor in an approved NSCP-PTA Assessment Site.

BEFORE YOU APPLY FOR THE NSCP-PTA

☑ Review the NSCP-PTA program information found on the NSCP website.

☑ Review the NSCP-PTA Assessment Tool to understand what you are expected to be able to do.

☑ Complete the NSCP-PTA Online Self-Assessment Survey to ensure you are ready for the NSCP-PTA.

☑ Ensure that you have gained adequate experience working within the scope of practice of a pharmacy technician and are comfortable performing these activities. Individuals registered with the NSCP as pharmacy technician candidates are authorized to undertake activities that fall within the scope of practice as a pharmacy technician under the supervision of a pharmacist or pharmacy technician.

> **TIP:** *Pharmacy Technician Candidates should only attempt the NSCP-PTA when they feel they are well-prepared for the assessment.*

WHEN YOU ARE READY TO APPLY FOR NSCP-PTA

☑ Secure an Assessment Site and Assessor (Approved assessment sites and contact information are listed on the NSCP website).

☑ Submit a completed NSCP-PTA Candidate Application.

☑ Pay the assessment fee.

☑ Allow 10 business days for your NSCP-PTA Application to be processed. The NSCP will send you an email once your application has been approved. Do not commence your assessment until you receive written approval from the NSCP.

☑ Check with your employer about workplace insurance coverage during your assessment.

> **TIP:** *It is advisable to apply to complete the NSCP-PTA in a similar setting to where you have previous experience (e.g., community, hospital, similar workflow and/or pharmacy software).*

AFTER YOUR NSCP-PTA APPLICATION HAS BEEN APPROVED

☑ Confirm with your assessor the start date for the assessment and discuss arrangements for any pre-assessment orientation.

ORIENTATION

Before the assessment is commenced, it is important that you are properly orientated to various aspects of the assessment site (pharmacy) to ensure you are sufficiently prepared to engage in practice at that site. The amount of time required for orientation to the assessment site will be influenced by your prior practice experiences.

☑ Become familiar with the pharmacy workflow and software by observing the assessor and the other pharmacy staff.

☑ Use the NSCP-PTA Orientation Checklist as a guide for the orientation.

☑ Ask questions to ensure you understand any relevant site-specific process and procedures.

☑ At the end of the orientation, confirm to the assessor that you are ready to proceed to the assessment.

> **TIP:** *You should not engage in practice as a pharmacy technician during orientation but may assist with the dispensing / drug distribution process (assistant activities) to ensure you are prepared to engage in practice at that site.*

ASSESSMENT

The length of the assessment is a minimum of 35 hours completed over a 1-week period. If necessary to accommodate working schedules and to allow for sufficient time for you to adequately demonstrate competence in all key competency areas, the assessment period can be extended to a maximum of 70 hours completed over a 2-week period.

You will be expected to match your assessor's schedule throughout the assessment period and should make arrangements to ensure your availability before applying for the NSCP-PTA.

During the Assessment

☑ You will practice within the scope of practice of a pharmacy technician under the direct supervision of the NSCP-PTA Assessor.

☑ You must demonstrate your readiness to practise as a pharmacy technician in a safe, effective and independent manner.

☑ You can only practise when your assessor is present and able to provide direct supervision.

☑ Do not ask your assessor for feedback on your performance or about their chosen ratings.

DECISION MAKING DURING THE ASSESSMENT

You will be making decisions during your assessment period. The assessor may choose to step in when your decision is not in alignment with policies or processes at the assessment site, but you will not be penalized for making a different 'customer service' decision that did not compromise patient safety.

OUTCOME

The submitted final assessment will be reviewed by the NSCP, and a decision will be made on the outcome of the assessment. There are two possible outcomes:

1. **Competence Demonstrated**
    The candidate has successfully demonstrated entry-to-practice competency through the completion of the NSCP-PTA and has met the registration requirement.

2. **Development Required**
    The candidate has not successfully demonstrated entry-to-practice competency through completion of the NSCP-PTA and further development is required before re-attempting the NSCP-PTA.

The NSCP will endeavour to inform you of the status of your assessment decision within ten (10) business days after submission by your assessor.

UNSUCCESSFUL NSCP-PTA

If the outcome of the assessment is "Development Required", the NSCP will provide you with a performance profile that identifies the relative strengths and gaps in your performance in relation to the competencies being assessed. *Do not contact your assessor to discuss the results of your assessment.*

Prepare for Further Development

You are encouraged to:

☑ Review the performance profile.

☑ Prepare a learning action plan which includes defining learning objectives and goals for each competency area that requires development and identifying how you can improve your knowledge, skills and abilities for these areas.

☑ Engage a coach (or coaches) who can help guide your self-directed, individualized training and help you prepare for your next NSCP-PTA attempt.

> **TIP:** *It is in the candidate's best interest to choose someone who is able and willing to help them succeed in preparing for their next NSCP-PTA attempt and the practice site should provide enough opportunities for the candidate to fulfill their goals as set out in their learning action plan.*

IMPLEMENT THE LEARNING PLAN

☑ Training/development could include your coach identifying and discussing with you relevant study materials (e.g., learning modules, practice tools) to improve your knowledge, and defining or identifying suitable practice opportunities to help you apply your knowledge to improve your skills and abilities.

☑ Actively seeking feedback to help you address areas you need to improve in your practice.

COMPLETE THE LEARNING PLAN

☑ When you believe you are ready to re-attempt the NSCP-PTA, you can submit a completed NSCP-PTA Candidate Application, choosing a different assessment site and assessor, and pay the assessment fee.

> **TIP:** *The duration of the development period will depend on the number of areas identified through the NSCP-PTA assessment as requiring development and the amount of time it will take to address them. You will not be able to reapply for the NSCP-PTA for a minimum of four (4) weeks.*

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE NSCP-PTA?

See FAQs for NSCP-PTA Applicants on the NSCP Pharmacy Technician Assessment (NSCP-PTA) webpage.