

Declaration of Competence

Factsheet

This factsheet describes what the Declaration of Competence system is, why it is needed and how pharmacy professionals may be able to use it to demonstrate their competence to deliver locally commissioned services.

1. What is the Declaration of Competence system?

The Declaration of Competence (DoC) system has been developed to help pharmacy professionals (pharmacists and pharmacy technicians) to deliver sustainable quality pharmacy services to patients. It provides a self-assessment framework which enables pharmacy professionals to assure themselves, commissioners and employers that they are competent and meet the requirements to provide a service. It is supported by a robust learning and assessment pathway.

2. Why was DoC developed?

The concept of the DoC system stemmed from the self-declaration approach of the new medicine service. Under the previous accreditation system, primary care trusts developed services and then determined the training and assessment requirements for pharmacy professionals to deliver them. The commissioning of most local services has now transferred to local authorities and clinical commissioning groups. For some commissioners it is their first experience of working alongside pharmacy.

Pharmacy can make a significant contribution to local healthcare services and local commissioners were looking for support to ensure that pharmacists were competent to deliver services. The Community Pharmacy Competence Group (CPCG), now known as the Pharmacy Competence Group (PCG), was formed to do this.

3. Is the DoC system approved?

After an initial pilot period in the north west of England, NHS England now supports the Declaration of Competence (DoC) system for use across England.

The DoC system was developed by the Pharmacy Competence Group, with key engagement from the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE), and includes representation from the Royal Pharmaceutical Society (RPS), NHS England and key pharmacy stakeholder organisations.

4. What does it mean for the pharmacy professional?

Pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are professionally responsible for keeping their knowledge and skills up-to-date and relevant to their roles and responsibilities (as set out in the General Pharmaceutical Council's (GPhC) [Standards for pharmacy professionals](#)).

The DoC system guides pharmacy professionals through a structured approach of self-assessment that allows them to reflect on the learning and training they have completed and the practice experience they have gained, in relation to a specific service. Any gaps in competence can be addressed by working through elements of the learning and assessment pathway.

Once the pharmacy professional is confident they meet the competencies within the framework, they can print and sign their own personal declaration statement, which can be used as evidence to assure commissioners and employers they have worked through the system.

If the service is not currently commissioned locally, then working through the DoC system will enable the pharmacy professional to be 'service ready' and also provide assurance of competence in daily practice.

5. What does it mean for pharmacy?

The DoC system empowers pharmacy to take a proactive approach in engaging with commissioners to seek opportunities for new and innovative community pharmacy services and allows the profession to be 'service ready', rather than waiting for training opportunities.

6. What does it mean for commissioners?

An increasing number of commissioners across England are already using the DoC system. By including the DoC system within service specifications and accessing the pharmacy professional's personal declaration statement, the commissioner can be assured that the pharmacy professional has taken steps to work through the system and takes professional responsibility for their own competence to provide the service.

The main learning and assessment is developed and delivered by the Centre for Pharmacy Postgraduate Education (CPPE), based at the University of Manchester. Training delivered by employers and other training providers may also be used to demonstrate competence.

7. What does the DoC system look like?

There are three sections to the DoC system.

- **Section A** is the DoC framework which lists the key knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of all pharmacy professionals providing the service and where the pharmacy professional records their evidence to demonstrate competence.
- **Section B** includes the suggested learning and assessment for the service.
- **Declaration:** The final part is the Declaration of Competence statement that pharmacy professionals must print and sign to acknowledge professional responsibility that they are competent to deliver the service.

Some of the DoC frameworks currently available on the CPPE website still include a 'Section C: Tools to support your professional development' – this is being removed when they come up for review as the same information is available in the 'Supporting your professional development'

section of '[*A guide to using the Declaration of Competence \(DoC\) system*](#)'.

8. How should a pharmacy professional complete the DoC system?

If you have not used the DoC framework before or would like a reminder of how to work through the DoC system, access *A guide to using the Declaration of Competence (DoC) system* from:

cppe.ac.uk/doc

9. What happens to the personal Declaration of Competence statement?

The signed statement should be kept on the pharmacy premises and made available to employers, commissioners and others when requested.

Locum pharmacists should ensure that each contractor is aware they have signed the declaration for a particular service.

10. If the pharmacy professional has been providing the service for several years, can they automatically sign the statement?

Signing the personal Declaration of Competence statement purely based on having provided the service for several years would constitute a false declaration. The PCG have been advised that the GPhC would view a false declaration by a pharmacy professional as a breach of the *Standards for pharmacy professionals* and therefore this would become a GPhC disciplinary matter. Even the most experienced practitioners should work through the DoC system to assure themselves that they remain competent.

However, it may be that previous learning and assessment and the experience of delivering the service over a number of years means that the pharmacy professional will be able to answer 'yes' to the majority of questions in Part B. As a result the amount of new learning *may* be minimal, but this will be for the individual professional to determine.

11. Is workshop attendance an essential part of DoC?

Workshop attendance is not necessarily an essential part of the DoC. Using the DoC means the pharmacy professional is certifying competence to deliver a service. If they have attended a workshop previously then they should make their own judgement as to whether additional workshop attendance would be beneficial to update and refresh local knowledge or other skills, such as consultation skills.

However, some commissioners may insist that a particular workshop should be attended as part of the service specification/agreement. Pharmacy professionals should ensure they check local requirements to see if this is the case.

12. Apart from learning, assessment and workshops, what else can be done to support competence?

Pharmacy professionals are encouraged, whenever possible, to use additional methods to assure competence and develop practice. Examples include peer review by an experienced colleague who already delivers a successful quality service, and work-shadowing a fellow healthcare professional in a similar role (eg, shadowing the role of a sexual health nurse). It is important to remember that employers often provide access to training and some pharmacy bodies (for example, the RPS) also provide access to events where knowledge can be updated and maintained.

The DoC recording system and many of the training programmes and assessments are provided through CPPE. Access to CPPE's [Declaration of Competence webpage](#) also provides guidance for pharmacy professionals and commissioners on the DoC system.

13. How often should pharmacy professionals work through the DoC system?

Personal competence level should be maintained and kept under continual review by keeping up-to-date with new guidance, standards, and learning programmes and assessments. This is particularly the case when patient group directions (PGDs) are involved, because these may change regularly – you should always be working to the most recent PGD.

The full DoC system should be completed at least every two years (or sooner if stipulated in the DoC, your service specification or in the contract with your commissioner).

14. Where should I go if I want to learn more, or work through the DoC system?

You can access information relating to the DoC system on CPPE's [Declaration of Competence webpage](#). If you have any further detailed questions that cannot be resolved by reading the briefings on the CPPE website or the DoCs themselves, then you can email CPPE at info@cppe.ac.uk