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Accreditation of postgraduate training programs in pharmacy

Quality standards

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Contents

Foreword	4
1. ASSESSMENT AREA: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES	5
1.1 MISSION AND OBJECTIVES.....	5
1.2 TRAINING OUTCOMES	5
2. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINING.....	6
2.1 TRAINING CONCEPT	6
2.2 PRACTICE ORIENTATION	6
2.3 MOBILITY AND MULTI-SITE TRAINING	6
2.4 BUILDING ON BASIC EDUCATION AND STRUCTURE	6
2.5 CURRICULUM.....	7
3. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINEES.....	8
3.1 TRANSPARENT AND FAIR ADMISSION CONDITIONS	8
3.2 CONSIDERATION OF SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS	8
3.3 SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING OF TRAINEES.....	8
3.4 CODIFICATION OF WORKING CONDITIONS.....	8
3.5 OPTION OF PART-TIME TRAINING	8
3.6 TRAINEE PARTICIPATION.....	8
4. ASSESSMENT AREA: ASSESSMENT OF TRAINEES.....	9
4.1 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION SYSTEM.....	9
4.2 EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS	9
5. ASSESSMENT AREA: STAFFING	10
5.1. APPOINTMENT POLICY.....	10
5.2. SKILLS AND EXPERTISE OF TRAINERS.....	10
5.3 BALANCE BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AND SERVICE FUNCTIONS	10
5.4 STAFF DEVELOPMENT	10
6. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINING SETTINGS AND RESOURCES.....	11
6.1. COLLABORATION AND ERROR MANAGEMENT.....	11
6.2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES	11
7. ASSESSMENT AREA: EVALUATION OF TRAINING	12
7.1 MECHANISM FOR EVALUATION OF TRAINING	12
7.2 FEEDBACK FROM TRAINERS AND TRAINEES.....	12
7.3 INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS.....	12



7.4 RECOGNITION AND MONITORING OF TRAINING SITES.....	12
8. ASSESSMENT AREA: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	13
8.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY	13
8.2 EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT	13
8.3 TRAINING BUDGET AND RESOURCES	13
8.4 ADMINISTRATION	13
9. ASSESSMENT AREA: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DEVELOPMENT	14

Foreword

In the Federal Act of 23 June 2006 on University-Level Healthcare Professions (Healthcare Professions Act, MedBG; SR 811.11)¹ mandatory accreditation is specified for postgraduate programs leading to a federal postgraduate title. The Act includes accreditation criteria (Art. 25 para. 1) which postgraduate training courses have to meet if they are to receive a positive accreditation decision. Here, the postgraduate training goals enshrined in the Act (Articles 4 and 17 MedBG) are of central importance.

The accreditation procedure assesses the quality of postgraduate training courses on the basis of the present quality standards. These give concrete form to the accreditation criterion specified in Article 25 paragraph 1 letter b MedBG and explain the other accreditation criteria given in the Act. Moreover, the quality standards provide the basis for accreditation decisions taken by the Federal Department of Home Affairs (FDHA). They are based on the internationally accepted World Federation for Medical Education (WFME) Global Standards for Quality Improvement in Postgraduate Medical Education², and also on the generic standards for Swiss academic programmes issued by the Swiss Center of Accreditation and Quality Assurance in Higher Education (OAQ). In addition, comparisons have been made with other international reference standards, in particular the Accreditation Standards for Continuing Pharmacy Education of the US Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE)³ and the Guidelines and Criteria for CCCEP Accreditation of the Canadian Council on Continuing Education in Pharmacy (CCCEP)⁴.

The quality standards are combined into general assessment areas, divided into sub-areas. Compared with the previous version of the standards for the other healthcare professions, this version of the quality standards includes additional content and has been tightened up. Redundancies and inaccuracies have been eliminated; certain standards have been deleted and several have been combined. The readability and usability of the standards should have improved as a result.

The quality standards and associated explanations serve as a basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by external experts. They represent an important tool for identifying strengths and weaknesses in a postgraduate training course. How the standards are complied with is to be described and documented in detail.

If a standard is not met, it is important to state the reasons and discuss planned measures. In order to meet all the accreditation criteria specified in the MedBG and thus to obtain a positive accreditation decision, it is not essential to comply fully with all the quality standards; the experts' recommendation on accreditation and the decision of the FDHA are based on a global evaluation.

¹ www.bag.admin.ch/themen/berufe/00993/index.html?lang=de (homepage of the FOPH in German and French)

² The WFME standards are available online at www.wfme.org

³ http://www.acpe-accredit.org/pdf/CPE_Standards_Final.pdf

⁴ <http://www.cccep.ca/file/Guidelines%20and%20Criteria%20-%202010-06-03%20rev.pdf>

1. ASSESSMENT AREA: MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

1.1 MISSION AND OBJECTIVES

The mission of the postgraduate training course is defined in consultation with the principal stakeholders, stated in writing and published. The field and the outcome objectives to be attained by a trainee specialist in pharmacy are described in the mission statement of the training program⁵. The training is consistent with the role of the pharmacist within the healthcare system. The objectives are defined in accordance with the legal requirements.

1.2 TRAINING OUTCOMES

The professional association defines the competencies which must be acquired by trainees at the end of training. The competencies are described in detail, verifiable and communicated to everyone concerned. Assessments of needs are regularly conducted with regard to the competencies. The outcome objectives are periodically reviewed on this basis. The training fosters professional independent professional practice, enabling the pharmacist to act in the best interests of the patient and the public. The competencies are defined in accordance with the legal requirements⁶:

1. Pharmaceutical core competencies
 - Interprofessional attitude based on pharmaceutical & medical knowledge and skills⁷
 - Consequent respect of ethical and legal foundations⁸
 - Aptitude and willingness for continuing professional development, research⁹
2. Pharmaceutical core knowledge
 - System-based
 - Symptom-based
 - Specific aspects of the specialty¹⁰
3. Professional pharmaceutical core competencies and skills
 - Patient treatment and client care¹¹
 - Communication, collaboration, interpersonal skills¹²
 - Organizational planning and service provision, management skills¹³.

⁵ Cf. Articles 4, 17 and 22 MedBG.

⁶ Cf. Articles 4, 6, 7, 9 and 17 MedBG.

⁷ Cf. Art. 4 para. 2 lett. b, Art. 17 para. 2 MedBG.

⁸ Cf. Art. 4 para. 2, Art. 6 para. 1 lett. g and Art. 17 MedBG.

⁹ Cf. Art. 17 para. 2 lett. h MedBG.

¹⁰ E.g. emergencies, Art. 17 para. 2 lett. d MedBG.

¹¹ Cf. Art. 4 paragraphs 1, 2 lett. a, Art. 17 para. 2 letters a–e MedBG.

¹² Cf. Art. 4 para. 2 letters c, d, f, Art. 17 para. 2 letters b, g MedBG.

¹³ Cf. Art. 4 para. 2 lett. e, Art. 17 para. 2 letters f, g MedBG.

2. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINING

2.1 TRAINING CONCEPT

The professional association describes the structure and the generic and discipline-specific components of training in a training programme¹⁴.

2.2 PRACTICE ORIENTATION¹⁵

The training is practice-based and involves the personal participation of trainees in service delivery, with a continuously increasing degree of responsibility in advising and serving patients and clients at the training site.

2.3 MOBILITY AND MULTI-SITE TRAINING

The mobility of trainees is promoted by access to individual training opportunities at other training sites in Switzerland or abroad which meet the requirements for the completion of training. Coordinated multi-site training within the chosen field should be facilitated, so as to expose trainees to different areas and management of the discipline.

2.4 BUILDING ON BASIC EDUCATION AND STRUCTURE

The training course builds on the basic education and fosters and strengthens professionalism in the field concerned. The structure, composition and duration of training and professional development are described, with clearly defined milestones. The ratio of compulsory and optional components is clearly specified¹⁶.

The training promotes the deepening, broadening and improvement of professional competencies through lifelong continuing professional development (CPD). The training course includes CPD components which are offered by the professional association and can be attended by trainees¹⁷.

¹⁴ Cf. Art. 18 and Art. 25 para. 1 lett. d, f, h, i MedBG.

¹⁵ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. f, g, i MedBG.

¹⁶ Cf. Art. 6, 9, 17 and Art. 25 para. 1 lett. d MedBG.

¹⁷ Cf. Art. 17 para. 2 lett. h and Art. 40 lett. b MedBG.



2.5 CURRICULUM

The training has a clear curriculum which defines the course content, reflecting the international state of knowledge in the field and meeting the legal requirements (MedBG). The program is structured to comprise both practical training and theoretical instruction¹⁸.

The training expands and develops the knowledge, skills, attitudes and personal attributes acquired in basic education, enabling those who complete the course to fulfil their roles as pharmaceutical expert, health advocate, communicator, collaborator, scientist, administrator and manager in a self-responsible manner¹⁹. The content is formulated under the headings of knowledge, competencies and attitudes.

The training includes formal instruction in critical appraisal of literature, scientific data and evidence-based pharmacy. This will include practice in the exercise of critical information and media skills, enhancing the ability to distinguish between information and advertising, or between knowledge and commercial interests.

¹⁸ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. e, f MedBG.

¹⁹ Cf. Art. 7 and 17 para. 1 MedBG.

3. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINEES

3.1 TRANSPARENT AND FAIR ADMISSION CONDITIONS²⁰

The conditions for admission of trainees are formulated, providing clear information on the selection process. The selection policy defines criteria which consider specific capabilities of potential trainees. The selection procedure is transparent, and admission is open to all graduates with a federal or a recognized foreign diploma. Equal opportunities are assured for women and men.

3.2 CONSIDERATION OF SOCIAL REQUIREMENTS

Mechanisms ensure that the number of postgraduate training positions is subject to continuous review by all stakeholders and is defined in accordance with social requirements.

3.3 SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING OF TRAINEES²¹

Training is appropriately managed and trainees are guided by supervision, with regular assessments and feedback. Counselling is provided for all trainees. This involves access to designated mentors and tutors. As well as academic and career guidance, counselling should also address social and personal needs and financial matters.

3.4 CODIFICATION OF WORKING CONDITIONS

The conditions of service and the rights and duties of trainees are defined and made known to all parties.

3.5 OPTION OF PART-TIME TRAINING

The option of part-time training exists. Part-time training is structured according to an individually tailored programme and the service background. The total duration and quality of part-time training are not less than for full-time training. Interruption of training for reasons such as pregnancy, sickness, military service, etc., is to be duly compensated for by additional training²².

3.6 TRAINEE PARTICIPATION²³

It is ensured that there is appropriate active participation of trainees in the design and evaluation of the training course, working conditions and other relevant matters.

²⁰ Cf. Art. 19 and Art. 25 para. 1 lett. c MedBG.

²¹ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. e, g MedBG.

²² Cf. Art. 18 para. 2 MedBG.

²³ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. i MedBG.



4. ASSESSMENT AREA: ASSESSMENT OF TRAINEES²⁴

4.1 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION SYSTEM

The training course includes a process of performance assessment. The methods used for assessment of trainees, including the criteria for passing examinations, are defined. Assessment involves formative and summative methods, with ongoing feedback.

The criteria for admission to and passing of the final examination, and for the award of the specialist title, are specified and are communicated both to trainees and to trainers and examiners.

The performance of trainees is measured with reference to the training programme and the stated mission and objectives of training.

4.2 EVALUATION OF ASSESSMENT METHODS

The reliability and validity of the methods used for assessment is documented and evaluated. The assessment methods are appropriate to their objectives.

²⁴ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. e MedBG.

5. ASSESSMENT AREA: STAFFING

5.1. APPOINTMENT POLICY

The policy on appointment of teaching staff for the training course specifies the professional experience required, as well as areas of responsibilities and duties. In the selection of teaching staff, educational experience and scientific expertise are considered. Teachers' activities in the industrial or contract research sector are to be disclosed; potential individual or institutional conflicts of interest are made transparent.

5.2. SKILLS AND EXPERTISE OF TRAINERS²⁵

The trainers have didactic skills and appropriate expertise. They have a federal or recognized foreign specialist title in the relevant field. Other activities of trainers in the industrial or contract research sector are to be disclosed.

5.3 BALANCE BETWEEN EDUCATIONAL AND SERVICE FUNCTIONS

The trainers' work schedules explicitly specify the balance between training, service and other responsibilities. Potential individual or institutional conflicts of interest are made transparent.

5.4 STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The staff policy covers the continuing education, development and assessment of trainers and teachers. It ensures that meritorious academic activities – including functions as trainers, tutors and teachers – are recognized.

²⁵ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. g MedBG.

6. ASSESSMENT AREA: TRAINING SETTINGS AND RESOURCES

6.1. COLLABORATION AND ERROR MANAGEMENT²⁶

The training promotes working in a team with colleagues, other health professionals and members of other professions. The ability to act as a team member or leader is fostered. The training process allows learning in a multi-disciplinary team and the development of competencies in guiding and teaching other health professions. Each institution is committed to establishing a climate in which errors can be dealt with openly and constructively. In addition, the use of modern information and communication technology is promoted so as to facilitate collaboration in networks. This relates both to internal and external processes.

6.2. INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESOURCES²⁷

The training sites have the necessary facilities and educational expertise to allow the training programme to be conducted in accordance with the stated objectives. Access to a pharmaceutical laboratory must be ensured. The training enables trainees to gain a wide range of experience in their chosen field, including experience in emergency service delivery. The number of patients and the case-mix allow for experience in all aspects of the chosen field, including training in health promotion and disease prevention. The quality of training settings is regularly monitored.

The origin of resources (third-party funding such as sponsorship) for training is disclosed. Appropriate tools, such as a Critical Incident Reporting System (CIRS), are used to support a positive error management culture. A policy is in place to promote effective use of information and communication technology.

²⁶ Cf. Art. 4 para. 2 letters d, f, Art. 6 para. 1 lett. f, Art. 9 lett. e and Art. 17 para. 2 lett. g MedBG.

²⁷ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. h MedBG.

7. ASSESSMENT AREA: EVALUATION OF TRAINING

7.1 MECHANISM FOR EVALUATION OF TRAINING²⁸

The professional association establishes an internal mechanism for the evaluation of training, which monitors the training process, the training sites and the progress of trainees, ensuring that concerns are identified and addressed.

7.2 FEEDBACK FROM TRAINERS AND TRAINEES

Feedback about the quality of training is systematically sought both from trainers and teachers and from trainees and is analysed and used for continuous improvement of the training program.

7.3 INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

The evaluation of training involves the managers and administration of training sites, trainers and teachers, and trainees, and is communicated to all stakeholders.

7.4 RECOGNITION AND MONITORING OF TRAINING SITES²⁹

Training sites are recognized on the basis of well-defined criteria. Decisions on recognition or, if appropriate, the withdrawal of recognition are taken by the competent organization. A system is established for monitoring training and other educational facilities via site visits.

²⁸ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. h MedBG.

²⁹ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. h MedBG.

8. ASSESSMENT AREA: GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION

8.1 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY³⁰

The responsibilities of the professional/scientific leadership for the postgraduate training course in pharmacy are specified. The responsibility and authority of management are clearly defined, as are the organization, coordination and implementation of training. All parties concerned are duly informed.

8.2 EVALUATION OF PROFESSIONAL MANAGEMENT

The professional/scientific leadership is periodically evaluated by the professional association respectively by the responsible organisation according to Art. 25 para. 3 MedBG with respect to achievement of the mission and outcome objectives of the training course.

8.3 TRAINING BUDGET AND RESOURCES

The line of responsibility and authority for the training budget is clearly defined and transparent. Financial resources for the training course are assured for the long term and are in line with the resources of the professional association. Any external funding or third-party resources are to be disclosed; potential individual or institutional conflicts of interest are to be made transparent.

8.4 ADMINISTRATION

The administrative staff is capable of supporting the implementation of the training course and ensures that resources are responsibly and effectively managed and deployed.

8.5 APPEAL BODIES³¹

Independent and neutral appeal bodies are established for:

- complaints concerning the crediting of postgraduate training periods
- complaints concerning examination results, admission to and passing of final examinations, and the award of the specialist title
- Complaints concerning the selection process for trainees
- Complaints concerning the recognition of training sites

³⁰ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. a and Art. 25 para. 3 MedBG.

³¹ Cf. Art. 25 para. 1 lett. j and Art. 55 MedBG.

9. ASSESSMENT AREA: QUALITY ASSURANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

An effective internal and external quality assurance system is in place.

The process of renewal is based on the results of internal and external quality assurance and leads to revisions of postgraduate training course policies in accordance with past experience, present activities and future perspectives.

A self-reflective basic attitude is promoted which makes it possible to assess the strengths and weaknesses of training realistically, and hence to develop ways of eliminating weaknesses and maintaining strengths. This also involves the ability to anticipate future challenges and opportunities for training and to take appropriate strategic action. In the self-evaluation report, an action plan is proposed, based on the current analysis and covering the period up to the next accreditation³².

Continuous renewal/internal quality assurance is in accordance with legal requirements and addresses the following issues:

- Adaptation of the mission and outcome objectives of postgraduate training to scientific, socioeconomic and cultural developments.
- Modification of the competencies required on completion of postgraduate training in the chosen field in accordance with the needs of the national and international environment.
- Adaptation of postgraduate training structures and processes to ensure that they are appropriate and relevant.
- Adjustment of the structure, content and duration of postgraduate training courses to reflect
 - a) developments in biomedical sciences, clinical sciences, psychosocial sciences;
 - b) changes in the demographic profile and health/disease pattern of the population;
 - c) socioeconomic, legal and cultural conditions.
- Development of assessment methods according to changes in training objectives and learning methods.
- Adaptation of admission conditions and selection methods to changing expectations and circumstances, the need for trained pharmacists, changes in basic education in pharmacy, the requirements of postgraduate training and the health policy framework.
- Adaptation of recruitment policy for professional/scientific staff to changing needs and duties in postgraduate training.
- Refinement of monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Development of the organizational structure and management principles to meet changing needs in postgraduate training and to accommodate the various stakeholders.

³² Cf. Art. 22 para. 2 and Art. 26 para. 2 MedBG.