

# QUB TEACHING AWARDS

## APPLICATION FOR A RISING STARS TEACHING AWARD 2017

*Patricia Holden, School of Pharmacy*

### 1. PREVIOUS TEACHING AWARDS (200 words maximum)

*If you have ever previously won a Queen's Teaching Award, please note the year and category (eg Rising Star, Team etc) below. You should also provide a short explanation of how the work outlined in this application differs from the work for which you were previously recognised.*

### 2. CONTEXT FOR THE APPLICATION (300 words maximum)

*Please provide a brief summary of your application and a context for your work. Examples of the information you might include are; the subject you teach or the area of learning support you work in, the type of learning and teaching/learning support activities you are involved in, how many learners are involved, your particular learning and teaching/learning support interests and an outline of your overall teaching/learning support philosophy?*

I was appointed as a Teaching Fellow [now Lecturer (Education)] in November 2012. Prior to that, I had 17 years' experience as a community pharmacist across a range of professional, clinical and managerial roles. As both a practising pharmacist and an educator my aim is to be a motivational role model to the students, helping them to develop the skills, behaviours and attributes required for their future career as healthcare professionals.

I completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education and Learning (PGCHET) within my first year and am involved in teaching across all four levels of the MPharm. I currently teach across 6 modules with a particular focus on the pharmacy practice elements, hence utilising my vast experience as a practitioner for the benefit of the students.

I deliver large and small group teaching to undergraduate pharmacy students, adopting a range of teaching methods from traditional lectures to workshops, tutorials and one-to-one role plays. As a member of the School's proactive Distance Learning Subgroup, I also support postgraduate teaching and learning.

My appointment was a result of a recommendation from the General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) which accredits pharmacy degrees. Their expectation is that pharmacy schools must provide students with opportunities for practical experience in interacting with patients, carers and other healthcare professionals, and such placements must be quality-assured.<sup>1</sup> Although community pharmacy placements have been a component of the MPharm for a number of years, this was on an informal basis, with students organising their own placements, with no quality assurance or oversight from the university.

I successfully developed an innovative quality assured scheme to deliver high quality community pharmacy placements for the undergraduate pharmacy students. It was officially launched by Professor James McElroy (as acting VC) in November 2013 and I continue to coordinate it for 350-400 students annually.

(Word count: 299)



**Figure 1 - Professor McElnay awarding Mr Anderson (Community Pharmacist and President of the Commonwealth Pharmacists Association) with his QUB Student Training Centre plaque.**

*“Mrs. Holden has done an excellent job in establishing and running a high quality student community pharmacy placement scheme as required by the MPharm accreditation body. It was by no means an easy task to get the agreement of community pharmacies to assist with the scheme in a voluntary, unpaid manner, particularly given the training requirement for pharmacist mentors, a key aspect of the Scheme. The Scheme now operates in a very effective manner and Mrs. Holden’s pharmacist experience has proven invaluable to the School. Her teaching is very well received by students. Mrs. Holden is, therefore, strongly recommended for confirmation in post.”*

*Prof David Woolfson, Head of School of Pharmacy  
Probation Report for Patricia Holden, 11/2015*

## 2. DISCUSSION (See Guidance Notes overleaf)

*You should illustrate your discussion throughout with reference to specific learning and teaching activities. You should also provide examples of the influence of student feedback on your learning and teaching practice.*

### (a) How you are promoting and enhancing the learners’ experience (1000 words maximum)

It has been long established that placements and patient contact are a key component in healthcare education. Experiential learning enables students to synthesise theory with practice in a variety of contexts and develops their ability to think both critically and reflectively.<sup>2</sup> Although community placements were a component of the MPharm, the lack of a quality assured framework was a concern. Additionally, anecdotal evidence suggested that it was particularly problematic for international students to secure placements.

It was decided to develop a robust community placement programme with a quality assurance framework consisting of a trained and accredited network of community pharmacists, regular quality practice visits, online resources and communication, and regular formal and informal feedback mechanisms. Before commencing I researched placement programmes in other institutions and consulted the profession on content and implementation of the proposed programme.

Community placements rely on the professionalism and goodwill of the local pharmacy network, and overall there was a very positive response from the pharmacists. However, we did experience resistance just prior to the official launch; this required considerable negotiation and diplomacy on my part and we successfully launched the programme within the original timelines. It is rewarding to note that in spite of this initial resistance, the programme has continued to thrive, with the placement network currently full and a waiting list of pharmacies wishing to join.

Knowledge and preparation is crucial for pharmacists to enable them to maximise the learning opportunities and associated benefits from a placement. The logistics of delivering live training events across a wide geography can be problematic; therefore I developed an innovative online continuing professional development (CPD) accredited training programme. On completion of this, the pharmacist becomes an accredited partner of the Pharmacy Placement Network and receives a QUB 'Student Training Centre' plaque in acknowledgement of their commitment.

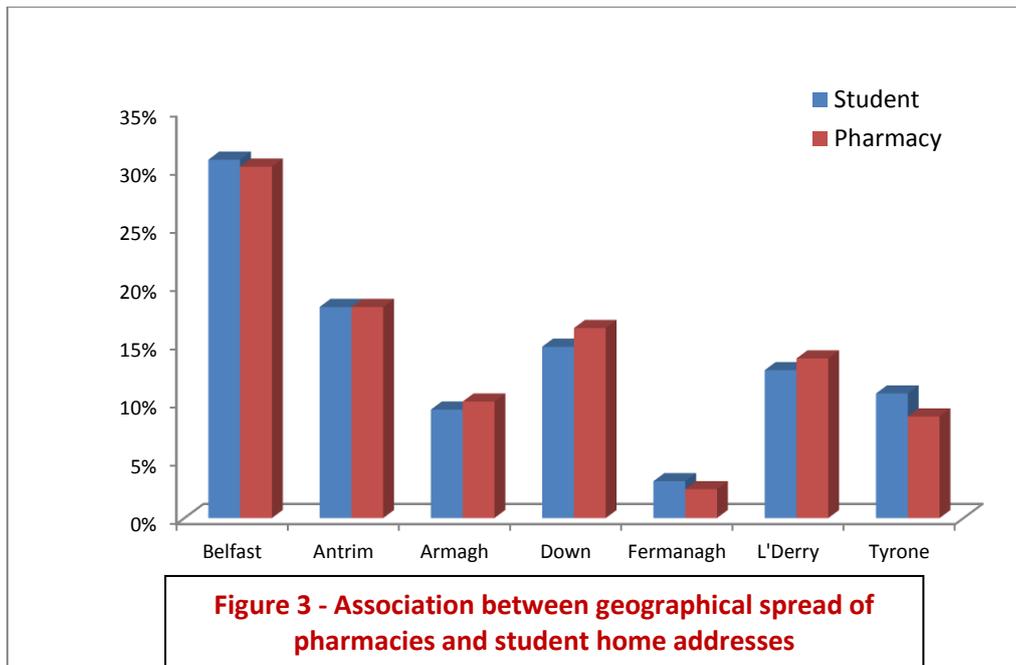
I carry out practice visits across the placement network; this is a vitally important tool in the quality assurance framework.

To ensure a streamlined process, a placement website was developed for efficient access to information, resources and feedback surveys.



**Figure 2 - The pharmacy placement website home page**

To date, 204 pharmacists have completed the online training. This corresponds to 159 pharmacies representing 30% of the total N.Ireland pharmacies ( $n=535$ ). The network covers all of NI, mirroring MPharm students' home geographical location. Figure 3 shows the breakdown of placement pharmacies by county compared to student home address. This geographical mirroring of placement sites to students' locations was strategic; not only would it be convenient for students but it was anticipated that this would also enable local relationship building and employability to be enhanced. Subsequent analysis shows that 44% of mentor pharmacists have indeed employed pharmacy student(s) as a direct result of a successful placement engagement. Anecdotal evidence would also suggest that relationships developed during the undergraduate placements help many students secure a post-graduation pre-registration position. This is truly gratifying, as employability is a key tenet of the QUB Education Strategy (16-21).<sup>3</sup>



Whilst we encourage the pharmacists to engage with the student, ask and answer questions and give open and honest feedback, we do expect the student to work through the required exercises autonomously. Encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning will help them acquire lifelong learning skills and instil habits of CPD and reflective practice that is vitally important in a healthcare profession.<sup>5</sup> This feeds into the QUB Education Strategy (16-21) - Education through partnership: Students as partners in learning and teaching.<sup>3</sup>

Feedback is crucial in order to assess the impact of the programme and we have online surveys for pharmacists and students. Analyses of these have been encouraging; 100% of mentors strongly agreed/agreed that the training has helped them support the student. 97% of student respondents believed the placement provided a good environment for learning and 91% gave their placement experience a mark of  $\geq 7/10$ .

Free-type comments are also analysed; examples are included in the tables below.

**Table 1 – Examples of Students' Feedback Comments**

**Applying your knowledge to patients is valuable experience!**

It enabled me to put what I had learnt in classes into practice and see how the different aspects of the course applied to community pharmacy

YYY was an excellent host. She had prepared extensively for my visit and ensured that we covered the content / tasks as detailed in the work book and much more!

Yes as it allowed me to get a feel for the day to day activities of a pharmacist and helped to improve my communication and people skills in a public environment.

**You can start to implement and make sense of the theory you have learnt in class**

The staff were friendly and keen to teach. They were interested in my learning, and wanted me to benefit from the placement as much as possible. Therefore they tried to give me as wide a range of tasks as possible, ranging from the entire dispensing procedure to monitoring blood pressure and counselling patients. This was a great learning experience!

My mentor pharmacist was extremely helpful and went above and beyond to ensure I understood everything in the workbook as well as lots more - I really enjoyed it and found it to be really worthwhile!

The placement was an invaluable way to help put theory into practice

The placement was great! Going out of lectures for some hands on experience is essential for skills development.

An important part of the process is to share personal feedback from the pharmacists, both positive and constructive, with the students. The number who refer to employment is noteworthy.

---

**Table 2: Examples of Pharmacist Feedback on the Programme and the Student**

All in all an excellent programme - excellent placement students this year with very professional attitude and very clear communication from Queens.

Placement allocations are an excellent method of introducing students to the broader spectrum of Pharmacy practice. Patricia in particular should be commended for her excellent work organising this programme.

Excellent student. She's next on the list for any **part-time work** that becomes available.

My boss is delighted I am taking part in this venture. We have **employed** one candidate from last year as a pre-registered student and are planning to offer temporary **employment** to one of the candidates this year.

Excellent student, very good communication skills and very confident at OTC and dispensing. She was always keen to learn and worked very well at any tasks delegated both independently and as part of the team. I would have offered her a **job** only she already works in a Pharmacy!!

XXXX was an excellent student; we **employed** her to help on Sunday's after her placement!

Couldn't speak highly enough. Excellent student - could have had a **job**!

Excellent student, very professional and very willing to learn. Would love to have back in our store for further placements, or indeed a **job**!

XXX is extremely enthusiastic and has a very professional approach to pharmacy. He has well developed interpersonal skills and interacted very well with patients and staff. He is a great ambassador for Queens university.

XXXX is fantastic student - a great worker, eager to learn, good at interacting with staff members and customers, and very knowledgeable. I would recommend her highly to anyone who asked me and am confident she will make a great Pharmacist some day!

---

In terms of internationalisation, the following quotes are very encouraging.

---

**As an international student the new placement programme is excellent, the fact that we are allocated to placements is so helpful as it can be more difficult or even scary to try to organise yourself.**

**Being very honest I haven't previously employed many international students but having had a couple of excellent international students on placement I'm glad to say that my approach has changed.**

---

A particular area for improvement that has been identified is the perceived lack of business skills of pharmacy students. Community pharmacy is unique in its duality of healthcare and retail business; business acumen is therefore a skill we should be equipping the students with, to enhance their employability and entrepreneurial spirit. I am currently developing a programme to address these deficits to be delivered as part of the Development Weeks in line with the new academic year structure.

The placements are linked into the practice modules of the MPharm and develop in duration, content and complexity over the 4 years. Having this clear link can help the students integrate and consolidate their knowledge and skills, and also apply this real-life experience in future learning. For example, the Level 3 placement introduces the student to the knowledge and skills that will be formally taught in the Level 4 module 'Responding to Symptoms'.

I am the lead academic for a group of students ( $n=25-35$ ) in this module and am passionate about challenging and motivating them to achieve their full potential. Patient consultation role-plays are a significant component of the module and I encourage the students to reflect back on their placement experience and on their own performance before I give instant verbal feedback. This is followed by detailed individual written feedback, not only on their clinical knowledge, but crucially on their

communication skills. This is then consolidated into generic class feedback. My feedback content and style have regularly been acknowledged by students (Table 3).

I strive to teach the class in a stimulating and authentic way and I am passionate in preparing the students for future practice and instilling principles of life-long learning rather than help them to simply 'pass an exam'. There is nothing so personally rewarding as witnessing the progress and confidence gain of the students over the module. (Word count: 997)

Table 3: Exemplar Student Quotations from Teaching Evaluation Questionnaires

*"Genuinely I could not have asked for a more helpful person to take me through RTS. Thank you so much Patricia with everything, you really helped me with my confidence and made RTS enjoyable for me as well as making it worthwhile. Thank you again!"*

*"Best teacher I have had throughout the course."*

*"Patricia thank you. You have really helped me progress through my RTS classes. Your feedback (both verbal and written) are always so detailed and extremely fair. I really appreciate all your help and you did an amazing job as class lead this year. Well done!"*

*"Patricia was brilliant in this class, really friendly and approachable and helped me a lot. She made RTS enjoyable and I feel that she really helped me improve over the weeks and helped us prepare for real life responding to symptoms in practice. Thank you!"*

*"Patricia was really helpful in building our confidence and knowledge for future careers. She made this class very enjoyable."*

*"A brilliant class lead for RTS - very approachable and extremely thorough in her teaching and feedback. I have learnt a lot from being taught RTS by Patricia and am extremely happy she was our class lead."*

**(b) How you support colleagues and influence support for student learning**  
(maximum 350 words)

The quality assurance pharmacy practice visits provide an invaluable opportunity for relationship building with these important stakeholders in our teaching and learning. We discuss issues, opportunities and share two-way feedback. This regular communication helps me to influence the pharmacists, increase their engagement in the programme, ultimately leading to an enhanced learning experience for the students.

One of the recurring feedback themes relates to students' communication and counselling skills. From this feedback, I offered to facilitate the communication and counselling skills workshops delivered at Level 1 by a number of colleagues. I felt it was an important opportunity for teaching staff to emphasise to the students the importance of these transferable skills alongside their theoretical knowledge. I share feedback with colleagues who are involved in teaching in modules relating to the placements so they are aware of particular themes and can adapt their teaching accordingly.

As a member of the School of Pharmacy Teaching & Learning, Reaccreditation and Distance learning committees, I help to deliver School and institutional initiatives. I am involved in peer mentorship and review of colleagues, and was an integral part of the team that met with the GPhC team during their Reaccreditation Interim visit in March 2015. The placement programme was scrutinised and commended by the Panel as resolving the concerns that had been raised by them in 2012.

I facilitate student recruitment by supporting School of Pharmacy open days and attending high school and STEM science and careers events. I also work very closely with the lead academic for careers within the School, passing on contacts, opportunities and assisting at the careers events she organises.

I am a reserve professional member of the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Fitness to Practice scrutiny committee and a PSNI nominated representative on the National Appeal Panel which determines entry onto the pharmaceutical list for community pharmacies. I deliver training to qualified pharmacists as part of the Northern Ireland Centre for Pharmacy Learning and Development's regional programme. I also am an examination question writer for the PSNI pre-registration exam, which determines entry into the profession. (Word count: 346)

**(c) Professional development activities you've undertaken and the impact of these activities on student learning (350 words maximum)**

As a registered and practicing pharmacist, continuing profession development (CPD) is a fundamental requirement to ensure patient safety, and as such has been a significant component of my practice for many years. However I take my responsibility for CPD even more seriously now that I am teaching the next generation of pharmacists and therefore need to be absolutely sure that everything I am imparting to them is contemporary, accurate and evidence-based. I am also passionate about developing my teaching to ensure that the students understand the concept of life-long learning and the importance that skill mix and development, as well as clinical knowledge, will play in their future careers as healthcare professionals.

Conscious that I am an early career academic, I feel it is important to explore all avenues to help build my competence and confidence in teaching. Therefore not only do I ask for peer review of my teaching, I also actively seek to peer review others as I believe I can learn so much from their experience and approach.

I found the PGCHET very helpful, having never previously been involved in delivering education, and regularly use many of the exercises and practices to reflect on my teaching in order to continually

improve. I actively pursue student feedback, employing minute papers, real time 'post it note' feedback as well as the standard teaching evaluation questionnaires. I have found that I get such a huge reward from positive feedback from the students and this inspires me to always strive for better. To think that I have inspired or encouraged a student to become the best pharmacist they can be is very rewarding and motivating.

*Hello Patricia,*

*I just wanted drop an email to say thanks for all your help this semester. You were a great class lead and handled all our near mental breakdowns brilliantly each week! I really don't think I could have pulled up my marks if it wasn't for you and your encouragement and help. So thanks for everything, you've definitely contributed to me (and probably everyone else) becoming a better pharmacist!*

*Have a great Christmas!*

(Word count: 349)

## References

1. General Pharmaceutical Council (GPhC) Standards of initial education and training for Pharmacists <http://www.pharmacyregulation.org/education/education-standards>.
2. Maudsley, G. & Strivens, S. (2000). Promoting professional knowledge, experiential learning and critical thinking for medical students. *Medical Education*, 34, 535–544.
3. Queen's University Belfast (2011). Education Strategy 2011-16
4. Professional placements. Higher Education Academy (HEA); 2014. [www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Professional\\_placements.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Professional_placements.pdf)
5. Shah, R. (2004). Improving Undergraduate Communication and Clinical Skills: Personal Reflections of a Real World Experience. *Pharmacy Education*, March 2004 Vol. 4 (1), pp. 1–6.

## Teaching Awards 2017 Guidance

The following are suggestions of the type of information you might wish to include in your analytical application - it is not an exhaustive list. You may also wish to draw upon educational literature within your application.

<p><b>How you are promoting and enhancing the learners' experience</b></p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• how you stimulate and inspire learners</li> <li>• how you develop, organise and present resources</li> <li>• how you assess learners appropriately</li> </ul>
<p><b>How you support colleagues and influence support for student learning</b></p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ways in which you contribute to the development of colleagues within your area e.g. mentoring, membership of Working Groups/Committees, developing policies etc</li> <li>• how you contribute to institutional initiatives</li> <li>• your contribution to regional/national/international initiatives</li> </ul>
<p><b>Professional development activities you've undertaken and the impact of these activities on student learning</b></p>	<p><u>Evidence of</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional development activities undertaken</li> <li>• how you have used these activities to review and enhance your practice</li> <li>• how this has led to improvements for your learners.</li> </ul>