

**National Pharmacy Technician  
Bridging Education Program**

**Student Guide**

**Fall 2017**

## Project History

Development of curriculum for the Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program was originally undertaken and completed in Ontario in 2008 by CONNECT Strategic Alliances (the marketing alliance of the Ontario college system) in collaboration with the Ontario College of Pharmacists. The financial support of the Government of Ontario through the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care is gratefully acknowledged. We also acknowledge the administrative support provided for the project by the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

On August 01, 2011, responsibility for administration of the Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program was assumed jointly by the Colleges of Pharmacists of Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario. Ownership of curriculum materials was transferred by CONNECT Strategic Alliances to these project partners.

In 2012, NAPRA secured funding from the Government of Canada's Labour Market Integration Program to revise the existing Bridging Education Program delivered in Alberta, British Columbia and Ontario to make it more suitable for national delivery. The development of a National Bridging Education Program for pharmacy technicians ensures that individuals already working in the role of pharmacy technician in regulated jurisdictions can upgrade their skills to align with changes in the scope of practice, without returning to school to complete a full-time training program. The ultimate goal is a national strategy that will enable regulated pharmacy technicians to re-locate and work anywhere in Canada, without the need to re-qualify.

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# The Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program

## I. Introduction – Becoming a Regulated Pharmacy Technician

This is an exciting time for pharmacy technicians. Regulation of pharmacy technicians has been introduced as a logical and essential step in the evolution of pharmacy practice. The development of consistent competency requirements and standards enables the regulated pharmacy technician to carry out and be accountable for technical responsibilities related to pharmacy practice. Regulation of pharmacy technicians also contributes to enhanced public safety and confidence.

The regulation of pharmacy technicians must be supported by legislative changes in each jurisdiction\* in Canada. Currently, the legislative framework and regulatory controls required to support the regulation of pharmacy technicians are in place in several Canadian jurisdictions and are in progress in others.

\*Note: Here and in all documentation and curriculum materials, the term “jurisdiction” is used as a reference to the Canadian provinces, territories, and Canadian Armed Forces-Pharmacy Services.

### A. Understanding the Scope of Practice for Pharmacy Technicians

With the regulation of pharmacy technicians, questions and, in some cases, misconceptions and confusion have arisen about the distinct roles and responsibilities of the pharmacist and pharmacy technician with respect to their scope of practice and responsibility related to dispensing a prescription. This activity carries a shared responsibility and pharmacists and pharmacy technicians need to become comfortable working as a team in this new capacity. The following points are intended to help clarify the role and responsibility of regulated pharmacy technicians, and specifically those activities that, as regulated professionals, they have the authority to complete and for which they will be held accountable.

- Technicians are responsible for the technical aspects of filling a prescription. This means ensuring accurate preparation of the product pursuant to the prescription. They must address the Five Rights to ensure that the prepared product matches the prescription, meaning that the container contains the right drug in the right dosage form, in the right strength, is labelled with the right time/frequency and right prescriber and is given to the right patient, according to the prescription. (Therefore they need to sign off that they have accurately completed these functions.)
- Where legislated, pharmacy technicians have the authority to release the final product. This includes the responsibility to check the technical aspects of the prescription\* to ensure that the prescription product is verified against the prescription prior to release. This requirement applies to all new and repeat prescriptions, including controlled substance prescriptions. They also need to ensure that collaboration with the pharmacist has occurred to confirm that the pharmacist has reviewed every prescription for therapeutic appropriateness (both new and repeat prescriptions).

\*Best practice dictates that the check of the technical aspects of the prescription be performed by a pharmacist or regulated pharmacy technician who did not enter the prescription into the dispensing software system or who did not select the drug from stock.

- Where legislated, pharmacy technicians are able to accept verbal prescriptions, with the exception of controlled substances as defined in the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*.
- Where legislated, pharmacy technicians are able to independently receive and provide prescription transfers.

Pharmacists remain responsible and accountable to ensure the therapeutic and clinical appropriateness of the prescription for the patient. This responsibility extends to both refills and new prescriptions; therefore the pharmacist needs to ensure that this review has been performed.

Each professional is accountable and responsible for practicing within his/her own scope and meeting the standards of practice associated with the profession. For more information on the scope and standards of practice for pharmacy technicians, please review the *Model Standards of Practice for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians* (NAPRA, November 2011)

## **B. Registration/Licensure Requirements**

The Pharmacy Regulatory Authority (PRA) in each jurisdiction is responsible for establishing registration/licensure requirements. In jurisdictions where the appropriate legislative and regulatory controls are in place to support regulation of pharmacy technicians, registration/licensure requirements for individuals wishing to become regulated pharmacy technicians may include a combination of some or all of the following:

- Successful completion of the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) Evaluating Examination\* (or the Alberta or Ontario College of Pharmacists Certification Exam before 2008)
- Successful completion of the Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program or a CCAPP accredited Pharmacy Technician Program
- Successful completion of the PEBC Qualifying Examination
- Successful completion of a jurisprudence examination or assessment specific to the jurisdiction of practice
- Successful completion of a structured practical evaluation or other workplace evaluation component administered by the PRA in their jurisdiction
- Registration with their Pharmacy Regulatory Authority

**Note:** If you want to become a Regulated Pharmacy Technician, **you will not be allowed to sit the PEBC Qualifying Exam, without providing proof of successful completion of either an authorized provincial certification exam, the PEBC Evaluating Exam, or graduation from a CCAPP accredited program.** There are eligibility criteria in place for the Evaluation Exam and deadlines for completion of the Exam are in place in several jurisdictions. You should check the PEBC website ([www.pebc.ca](http://www.pebc.ca)) for details about exam eligibility and your PRA website for any deadlines.

In addition, the order in which you complete the various steps to registration/licensure varies from one jurisdiction to another. In some jurisdictions you must have successfully completed the PRA Certification Exam or the PEBC Evaluating Exam **before** you enroll in Bridging Education; other jurisdictions allow candidates to enroll in Bridging Education before completion of the Evaluating Exam.

Other registration/licensure requirements may apply, but vary slightly from one jurisdiction to another. Please check registration/licensure requirements posted on the PRA web site in your jurisdiction or contact the PRA directly for specific details on registration/licensure requirements and eligibility.

Note:

- 1) Completion of the Bridging Education program is **not** required by PEBC in order to register for the PEBC Qualifying Examination. However, some PRAs may require students to complete the Bridging Education Program first. Even if not required by the PRA in your jurisdiction, it is strongly recommended that you complete the Bridging Education program before attempting the PEBC Qualifying Examination, since the Bridging Education Program specifically addresses the expanded scope of practice for regulated pharmacy technicians.
- 2) Graduates of full-time CCAPP accredited Pharmacy Technician programs (2008 and on) pursuing the pathway for recent CCAPP accredited program graduates are normally exempt from the requirement to complete the Bridging Program. However, those pursuing the transitional pathway for individuals with current practice experience will still be required to complete the Bridging Program. You should consult the PRA in your jurisdiction to find out whether you are required to complete the Bridging Program. Even if the PRA in your jurisdiction does not require you to complete the Bridging Program, should you choose to do so, you are allowed to take one or more courses in the Bridging Education Program to upgrade your skills before you sit the PEBC Qualifying Examination.

**\*\*If you want to pursue registration/licensure, it is your responsibility to make sure you meet the eligibility criteria and deadlines for Bridging Education in your jurisdiction. If you do not take the Bridging Education Program at the correct point in the registration/licensure process or if you do not meet the eligibility criteria or deadlines in your jurisdiction, you may be required to re-take the Program or you may jeopardize your ability to continue with the registration/licensure process. \*\***

### **C. The Bridging Education Program**

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program has been developed to assist individuals already working in the role of pharmacy technician to upgrade their skills to align with changes in the regulation and scope of practice of pharmacy technicians, without returning to school to complete a full-time training program.\*\* The Bridging Education program was developed and introduced in Ontario in 2008, and then adapted for use in Alberta and British Columbia in 2010.

This current version is a national curriculum developed by NAPRA from the existing Bridging Programs to meet the needs of pharmacy technicians across Canada who are

interested in pursuing registration/licensure. The ultimate goal is a national strategy that will enable regulated pharmacy technicians to be able to re-locate and work anywhere in Canada, without the need to re-qualify. Delivery partners for Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education include the Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities in all participating jurisdictions and a variety of educational institutions across Canada.

Some of the courses in the original Bridging Education Program integrated provincially-specific content related to legislation and regulatory frameworks. To accommodate national delivery, that content has been removed to present a generic curriculum appropriate for delivery across Canada. NAPRA recruited subject matter experts from across Canada to review the curriculum and complete the necessary changes to ensure an appropriate and effective product for national delivery.

As a requirement for registration/licensure, candidates will still be responsible for demonstrating understanding of specific legislative and regulatory requirements associated with their jurisdiction. Several self-study research projects have been integrated into the curriculum to assist students to prepare for this requirement. The Pharmacy Regulatory Authority in each jurisdiction is responsible for determining specific requirements and assessing a candidate's competency in this area. Again, you will need to check the PRA website for details on how this assessment occurs in your jurisdiction.

As an additional requirement for registration/licensure, candidates may be required to complete a supervised, practical evaluation in the workplace to demonstrate their proficiency in product release (specifically, independent final check) and other skills as determined by the PRA in their jurisdiction. This component is managed by the Pharmacy Regulatory Authority in each jurisdiction. You will need to consult your PRA's web site for specific requirements and timelines related to the workplace evaluation in your jurisdiction.

***\*\*Note:*** *You need to understand that the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is not intended as direct and exclusive preparation for the PEBC Qualifying Exam. If, in the course of your Bridging Program studies, you uncover areas where further study and preparation are needed, it is your responsibility to address those weaknesses prior to attempting the national exam.*

## II. The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program

### A. Program Structure

#### Program of Study

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program addresses competencies required of regulated pharmacy technicians in both hospital and community practice, and includes the following **four courses**:

#### **Professional Practice for Pharmacy Technician Bridging (39 Hours)**

Students focus on four key areas of practice: ethics and professionalism, legal requirements, scope of practice, and communication skills. Through a variety of learning tools, students will enhance their ability to practice competently within the professional practice framework.

#### **Product Preparation for Pharmacy Technician Bridging (33 hours)**

This course addresses the theoretical knowledge and practical skills essential for safe and accurate preparation of sterile and non-sterile pharmaceutical products. For non-sterile preparation, students will focus on equipment and tools and compounding practices for various internal and external preparations and specialty dosage forms. For sterile product preparation, topics include aseptic technique, parenteral dosage forms, appropriate use of equipment, TPN, chemotherapy medications and quality control. Pharmaceutical calculations receive particular emphasis.

#### **Pharmacology for Pharmacy Technician Bridging (33 hours)**

This course provides a practical, applied approach to pharmacology. Through a variety of assignments, quizzes, case studies and group work, students will enhance their ability to practice competently and contribute to a safe patient care setting. Participants will gain basic knowledge related to the pharmacological uses of drugs within a variety of commonly encountered medical conditions.

#### **Management of Drug Distribution Systems for Pharmacy Technician Bridging (39 hours)**

This course examines various drug distribution systems in pharmacy practice, with a focus on safe and effective drug supply and distribution in both institutional and community practice settings. Topics include inventory management and various business practices. Accurate product release within the parameters of the pharmacy technician role receives special emphasis.

You are not required to complete the 4 courses in any particular order, but it is recommended that the Professional Practice course be completed either as a first course or early in the program since it provides a solid foundation for the rest of the Bridging Education Program study.

**NOTE: The time allocations identified above reference the actual hours of instruction that are provided in traditional classroom delivery. They do NOT represent the total time commitment expected of students in the Bridging Education Program. Each of the courses in both traditional and online delivery includes readings and assignments that must be completed as 'homework'. You**

can expect to spend a minimum of 3 hours weekly completing assignments and preparing for the next class. In addition, some courses and individual lessons are considerably more demanding and as a result, will require time commitments that exceed this estimate.

As noted above, the 'course hours' are a standard that applies to traditional delivery and have no direct reference to online courses. Success in the online version of the Bridging Education Program requires a time commitment that matches or at times exceeds expectations for students enrolled in traditional classroom courses.

Please keep these requirements in mind as you register for Bridging Education courses. Most participants find it best to register for only one course each semester.

## **B. Eligibility for Bridging Education**

Although regulation of pharmacy technicians is not currently in place in all jurisdictions, it is anticipated that completion of Bridging Education will be a mandatory requirement for individuals intending to pursue registration/licensure in most Canadian jurisdictions. Before taking any of the Bridging Education courses, you are advised to contact the Pharmacy Regulatory Authority (PRA) in your jurisdiction to determine if the Bridging Education Program is required and if there are any additional requirements that may impact your eligibility or suitability to complete the Bridging Education Program. In some jurisdictions there may be time limits or pre-registration requirements that you need to know about first.

If the requirements for registration/licensure have not been set in your jurisdiction, there is nothing to prevent you from taking the Bridging Program in anticipation. However, there is an element of risk to taking the courses without knowing what the requirements will be in your jurisdiction, as there is no guarantee that doing so will eventually count towards potential future requirements.

Individuals are allowed to take National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program courses simply to further their own knowledge. You may be a pharmacy assistant who wants to take one or more courses as continuing professional development, but may not want to complete all four courses or complete the other steps in the registration/licensure process. This is allowed, as long as you understand that this will not lead to registration/licensure. Should you decide to pursue registration/licensure at a later time, there is no guarantee that you will receive credit towards registration/licensure requirements for courses completed in the past.

**If you want to pursue registration/licensure, it is your responsibility to make sure you meet the eligibility criteria and deadlines for Bridging Education in your jurisdiction. If you do not take the Bridging Education Program at the correct point in the registration/licensure process or if you do not meet the eligibility criteria or deadlines in your jurisdiction, you may be required to re-take the Program or you may jeopardize your ability to continue with the registration/licensure process.**

## C. Grading and Evaluation

The Course Outline for each of the courses clearly identifies how your progress in the course will be assessed, when you are required to submit the specific evaluations and their value in the overall evaluation plan for the course. Each course includes a final exam.

### **1) What mark do I need to achieve to pass each of the Bridging Education courses?**

To successfully complete each Bridging course, you must achieve an overall average of 70% with a minimum of 70% in the final exam. You must submit all graded assessments (including those graded as Requirements Met/Not Met) to complete the course. All requirements of individual assignments must be addressed; incomplete assignments are not acceptable and will result in a grade of 'zero' for the course.

### **2) How will my final grade be recorded?**

Students' overall performance in each course is recorded using a **Pass/Fail or Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory** transcript notation. You will not receive the results of final course exams, or final grades expressed as percentages or letter grades. However, your instructor may use percentage or letter grades to indicate your performance in tests and/or assignments throughout the course.

You are responsible for ensuring that the Pharmacy Regulatory Authority (PRA) in your jurisdiction receives an official transcript or other acceptable documentation as evidence of successful completion of each of the courses in the Bridging Education Program. Please check with your PRA to determine specific requirements.

### **3) What happens if I fail a Bridging Education course?**

If you fail a Bridging Education course, regardless of the mark achieved, you will be required to repeat that course, either through online or traditional classroom delivery. **Supplemental examinations will not be provided.** This is a consistent delivery policy for Bridging Education that overrides policies established by individual educational institutions delivering the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program. In most situations, candidates are allowed a maximum of three attempts (including a PLAR attempt) to secure credit for any particular course.

### **4) What happens if I miss a course quiz, test or final exam?**

If you miss a course quiz, test or final examination because of illness or family emergency, you must provide your instructor with medical or other appropriate documentation validating your absence within one business day of the date of the quiz, test or exam. In addition, you must make arrangements with the course faculty to write the missed quiz, test or examination before results are released to the other students in the course. No concessions will be made for missed quizzes, tests or examinations that result from situations other than illness or family emergency. **Failure to comply with these requirements within the time specified will result in a grade of zero for a missed quiz or test, or a course failure for a missed final examination.**

### **5) What happens if I can't complete a test or final exam because of illness?**

If you become ill while writing a course test or final examination and are unable to complete it, you must provide your instructor with appropriate medical documentation validating your illness within one business day of the date of the test or exam. In addition, you must make arrangements with your instructor to complete the missed test or examination before results are released to the other students in the course. Failure to comply with these requirements within the time specified will result in a failing grade for the incomplete test, or a course failure for the incomplete final examination. (Note: because quizzes are of much shorter duration, it is anticipated that they can be completed, once begun, even in cases of illness.)

### **6) Will I be able to keep copies of tests and examinations administered during the course?**

**You will not be allowed to take home or retain copies of any tests or examinations administered during the course. The same restriction applies to quizzes not identified as “take-home” assignments.** This approach is required to maintain some degree of integrity for the examination process, when evaluation materials are limited.

## **D. Your Responsibilities as a Bridging Education Program Student**

In pursuing Bridging Education, you are expected to demonstrate a level of professionalism and integrity appropriate for an individual interested in becoming a regulated health professional. As a result, it is expected that your conduct as a student in a course offered in the classroom or online will demonstrate your commitment to the ethics and standards of your profession. Specific responsibilities include but are not limited to the following:

- **Active participation in course activities and discussions** The effectiveness of the learning experience in a traditional or virtual classroom is enhanced considerably by the level of exchange among students and between the students and the faculty member. You have valuable experience and skills to contribute. Please remember that you will enhance your own learning and the value that your fellow students derive from the learning experience by freely sharing your opinions, perspectives and experiences.

**In online courses, attendance expectations are equivalent to what is expected in a traditional classroom. As an online student, you have the responsibility to actively participate in all of the small and large group discussions that are integrated into the course. Your activity in the website can be monitored to ensure that you are accessing all of the course materials (including those designated as independent study resources or activities) and that you are keeping up with all of the course requirements. If you are absent from the website for a period of time, or choosing not to participate in course discussions, you could lose participation marks. At a minimum, regular attendance requires at least a weekly log-in to the course**

**site to determine lesson requirements and to facilitate active participation in the multiple discussion forums integrated into the lessons.**

- **Regular Attendance:** Attendance is mandatory for all Bridging Education courses; you must comply with the policy that is presented on each Bridging Education Course Outline. This policy applies to students who are completing the course either in traditional classroom delivery or online. In traditional classroom delivery frequent and/or unjustified absence from class may result in a request for you to withdraw from the course. (Please see the bullet above for an explanation of how attendance is interpreted in the virtual classroom.) You should consult your educational institution's policy for information on how to manage emergency situations or illness.
- **Respectful and courteous behavior:** It is acknowledged that participation in the Bridging Education Program requires a significant contribution of time and resources by busy individuals. There may be times when you feel less than committed to your Bridging Education study. In spite of these feelings, however, your interactions with fellow students and your instructor should at all times be considerate and professional and designed to contribute to a positive environment for learning and sharing.
- **Commitment to ethics and integrity:** The goal of Bridging Education is to prepare pharmacy technicians already in the workplace for an enhanced scope of practice and the responsibilities of a regulated health professional. While engaged in Bridging Education study, it is anticipated that you will model the same concern for ethics and integrity that you will be expected to demonstrate in carrying out your duties as a regulated pharmacy technician.

Essentially, this means that as a participant in the Bridging Education Program, you agree to the following:

- You must not submit an essay or assignment written, in whole or in part, by someone else as your own work, or permit your own work to be submitted under the name of another student.
- During a quiz, test or examination, you must not copy from another student or knowingly permit another student to copy material.
- You must not use unauthorized aids or materials in a quiz, test or examination.
- You must not obtain an examination, quiz or test in advance of the scheduled date and time for writing through any means.
- You must not share the content of an examination, quiz, test or assignment with other students.

## **Meeting Course Standards**

**Avoiding Plagiarism** You need to be particularly diligent about avoiding **plagiarism**. Plagiarism refers to the presentation in whole or in part of material created by someone else, or the ideas, language or other intellectual property of someone else as one's own work without appropriate acknowledgment of the source

of the material. It also includes incorporating direct quotations or large sections of paraphrased material in an assignment without appropriate acknowledgement of the source. (The prohibition against plagiarism applies to all assignments.)

**Instances of plagiarism by Bridging Education Program participants will not be tolerated and are subject to the penalties for this offence established by the educational institution. Many educational institutions provide their faculty with electronic plagiarism detection software – Turnitin is an example of this kind of software. Even without the advantage of electronic software, faculty are generally quite skilled at detecting plagiarized material.**

**Citing References** Several of the assignments in the Bridging Education Program courses require you to research specific topics and record the results of that research. In addressing this assignment requirement, you will be expected to acknowledge your sources of information using the standardized, referencing system adopted by the American Psychological Association (APA). Use of a referencing system other than APA will result in a score of zero for the referencing component of the assignment rubric.

For a full discussion of APA referencing, please consult the sixth edition of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, July 2009*. There are also online resources that will help you make sense of APA referencing standards:

<http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/02/>  
[http://www.library.dal.ca/Files/How\\_do\\_I/pdf/apa\\_style6.pdf](http://www.library.dal.ca/Files/How_do_I/pdf/apa_style6.pdf)

**Ensuring Appropriate Style** In some of the Bridging Education Program courses, you are required to submit written assignments. Generally, some marks are assigned for style and grammar. If you feel that you need some assistance with grammar and sentence structure, you may want to access the Online Writing Lab presented by Purdue University. This site which is open to users worldwide presents useful exercises and other free resources: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>

## **E. Program Delivery Options**

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is available online for students in all jurisdictions. In some areas, the Program may also be offered in a traditional classroom setting. Each delivery model has unique advantages and characteristics. You are already familiar with the traditional classroom approach to learning. However, you may not have had experience with online learning.

Online learning for the National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is presented as instructor-led, independent study. Each course is facilitated by an instructor who makes him/herself available to answer questions and provide feedback on performance, etc. Tests and assignments are generally submitted online.

Examination procedures for online students may vary. You are responsible for following the examination procedures established by your educational institution. In some jurisdictions, you may be required to write the exam in person, in the presence of a proctor/invigator, at a location specified/approved by the delivery institution. (A

proctor/invigator is someone who supervises students as they write exams.) You may be responsible for arranging your own proctor/invigator and covering any costs associated with the invigilation. You should consult your educational institution for details on the examination and invigilation process that is in place at that institution for online delivery.

Students enrolled in online Bridging Education Program courses delivered by Selkirk College are required to take their final examinations online, in the presence of an approved proctor/invigator, who is able to monitor the computer used by the student. Students are responsible for identifying a proctor, arranging the location and date of the exam, covering costs associated with these arrangements, and complying with all examination requirements specified by Selkirk College. Specific procedures apply for securing approval of the proctor you have selected, and for accessing the examination. Please consult the Bridging Education Program website at Selkirk College for more information.

### **Some Key Points about Online Delivery**

Taking courses online is a popular option which offers many advantages. However, as an online student you must be comfortable with the specific approaches and responsibilities associated with online learning. To succeed with online learning, you must:

- *Be comfortable following written instructions and viewing lesson materials using the computer.*
- *Have the necessary discipline to take responsibility for your own learning, visit the course site at regular intervals, and meet deadlines.*
- *Be committed to writing your thoughts and perspectives on specific topics and participating in written discussions with fellow students.*
- *Have the time to commit to an online course.*

That last point may seem strange to you. It is a common misconception that taking a course online is easier and less time-consuming than the traditional classroom approach to learning. It is true that online students save the time required to travel to a course site, and are free to work when and where they choose. However, the time commitment required for online study is significant – studies have indicated that students taking an online course regularly commit 5 – 12 hours weekly to their online study.

In addition, for a satisfying online study experience, you need to have good computer skills. It is essential that you know how to:

- *Perform basic functions on the computer – turning it on and off, rebooting, using a mouse, saving a file, etc.*
- *Organize your electronic files efficiently, so that you can find them easily*
- *Locate lost files on your hard drive*
- *Use word processing software to create and edit documents*

- *Use the Internet to send and receive email, including email messages with a file attached*
- *Use URLs or web addresses to locate articles, readings, etc.*

Finally, before you commit to an online course, you need to make certain that you are able to meet the technical and/or software requirements that are necessary to access the course materials easily. At a minimum, you will need the following:

- *Regular access to a computer with an Internet connection and Web access. Consult the course provider for specific information on processor requirements, RAM, operating system requirements, etc.*
- *An Internet account, ideally with a high speed connection. A Dial Up connection may work, but you will spend a lot of time waiting for files to download.*
- *A web browser that meets specifications*
- *A personal email account, or the ability to access an assigned email account within your course*
- *Specific software to access course materials, create and edit documents, access examinations if required, etc.*

The educational institution offering the National Bridging Education Program has likely prepared a more detailed guide about hardware and software requirements to assist you in ensuring a successful online learning experience.

### **III. Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR)**

The National Pharmacy Technician Bridging Education Program is intended for pharmacy technicians who are already working in hospital or community-based pharmacies. You may have completed your initial training either through a public college or university program (prior to the introduction of CCAPP program accreditation), a private career college or 'on-the-job.' Depending on the length of time you have worked as a pharmacy technician, and the practice settings in which you have worked, you may be able to demonstrate the necessary competencies addressed in one or more Bridging Education courses. As a result, a Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) Challenge Examination process has been established to enable Bridging Education candidates to earn educational credit for what they already know.

#### **Frequently Asked Questions about PLAR**

##### **1) *Can I challenge all the courses in the program?***

No. The PLAR Challenge process is available for three courses only: *Management of Drug Distribution Systems, Pharmacology and Product Preparation.*

You must complete the **Professional Practice** course either online or in traditional classroom delivery. This course provides an essential foundation for the pharmacy technician's new and expanded role.

## **2) What does the PLAR Challenge involve?**

To earn credit for any one of the three Bridging Education Program courses that are eligible for PLAR, you must successfully complete the Challenge Examination that has been developed for the course. Challenge examinations are offered at regular intervals by several educational institutions involved in the delivery of Bridging Education.

As one option, you may register for the Challenge Exam at your nearest educational institution offering the Challenge exam, and make arrangements with the Program Coordinator to sit the examination. If you live within reasonable driving distance of the educational institution, you will be expected to access the examination at the established site. If driving is not feasible, arrangements can be made for you to write the examination at a secure location in your community. However, extra fees may apply to cover the cost of invigilation, facility rental, etc. You need to confirm arrangements with the Program Coordinator at the educational institution where you intend to register.

As another option, if you live in a community not served by an accredited delivery institution offering the Bridging Education Program PLAR Challenge examinations, you may register for a Challenge Exam given by an authorized online delivery institution. You may be responsible for arranging your own proctor/invigilator and any costs associated with these arrangements. You should contact the online delivery institution for details on the procedure that is in place for PLAR examinations at that institution.

## **3) Is the Challenge Examination the only requirement to earn the course credit?**

For the *Management of Drug Distribution Systems* course, a successful outcome in the Challenge Exam will earn you the course credit.

However, for the *Product Preparation* and the *Pharmacology* courses, additional requirements apply before you attempt the Challenge Exam. For Product Preparation, you must demonstrate competency in both non-sterile and sterile product preparation using checklists (available on the NAPRA web site) established for this purpose. You need to arrange to demonstrate your product preparation skills in the workplace, or in some other practice site – e.g. former employer, college laboratory, etc. For the Pharmacology course, you are required to verify your competency in demonstrating the use of a variety of medical devices (Epipen, blood pressure monitor, etc.) Demonstrations must be completed in the workplace, under supervision, using the checklist provided for this requirement.

You will not be allowed to write the PLAR Challenge Exam for *Product Preparation* or *Pharmacology* without submission of the completed checklists.

Each checklist requires the signature of an authorized assessor, ideally a pharmacist registered with the Pharmacy Regulatory Authority. In situations where it is not possible to have a pharmacist complete the documentation, a registered/licensed pharmacy technician may assess and sign off on the demonstration, provided that he/she has demonstrated expertise in the skills you are demonstrating (i.e. both non-sterile and sterile product preparation for the Product Preparation requirement, and use of medical devices for Pharmacology.) In rare instances, when students have been unable to

complete these requirements at an actual pharmacy practice site, assessments have been completed by a pharmacy technician program faculty member. However, this option presents some logistical challenges and should only be considered as a last resort if all other strategies for completion in the workplace have proved to be impossible. If you plan to have someone other than a registered pharmacist or registered/licensed pharmacy technician assess your competency, you need to confirm an individual's eligibility to act as a reviewer for these situations with the Program Coordinator at the educational institution where you plan to register for the Challenge Exam.

Candidates pursuing the PLAR Challenge option for *Product Preparation* must be able to demonstrate skills in both non-sterile and sterile product preparation. This means that you should have previous experience working in a hospital or other sterile product preparation practice site at some point in the past. If you are not currently working in a hospital or other sterile product preparation practice site, it is your responsibility to use your personal network to find a practice site where you can demonstrate the competencies required for sterile product preparation. NAPRA will accept a simulation done under the supervision of an authorized assessor, provided that the conditions under which the demonstration is completed replicate as closely as possible actual working conditions in a sterile product preparation practice site. You must be able to demonstrate appropriate set up and gowning and gloving techniques; you must have access to the necessary ingredients (placebos, talc, sterile water, etc. are acceptable) and equipment (vials, ampoules, IV bags, etc.) that enable you to perform a final check on the finished "sterile product". If you do not have access to an actual Laminar Air Flow Hood, you must complete the simulation using a cardboard replica or partitioned desk top or some other simulated component that enables you to demonstrate appropriate positioning of ingredients, and accepted aseptic technique. Demonstrations should occur in a hospital or sterile product preparation practice site. Demonstrations completed in a community pharmacy are acceptable **only** if the above conditions can be met. The educational institution may ask for clarification and/or may refuse to accept the checklist if there is any doubt as to whether the appropriate conditions have been met. If you are not sure whether your proposed practice site or proposed assessor are acceptable, please contact the Program Coordinator at the educational institution where you plan to register for the PLAR Challenge Exam to verify prior to completing the checklist.

Note: Forged checklists constitute academic dishonesty and will result in disciplinary action by the educational institution. This may include termination of your right to continue in the Bridging Education program.

#### **4) Is there a fee for PLAR?**

Yes, a fee applies for each of the Challenge examinations. Consult the educational institution where you intend to register for the PLAR Challenge Exam for information about fees and exam schedules. Please note as above that PLAR candidates may incur additional costs associated with invigilation/facility rentals, etc.

### **5) How should I prepare for the Challenge Exam?**

When you apply for a PLAR Challenge Exam, the expectation is that your work and life experience have already prepared you for a successful outcome. Therefore, minimal preparation should be required for the examination.

To determine whether you have knowledge and skills that are equivalent to what is expected in the course, you need to review the Course Outline for the course that you are thinking about challenging. Course outlines are available on the NAPRA website. Pay particular attention to the Learning Outcomes and Learning Elements provided in the Outline – they are the standard you have to meet for the course. In addition, look at how much time is allocated in the course for particular modules/topics – that will be a cue for you about the emphasis that a particular topic should have in the PLAR exam. If you decide that you need a little review in a particular topic – pharmacy calculations, for example - it is your responsibility to find the appropriate resources.

Keep in mind, as well, that the National Bridging Education Program addresses competencies required in both community and hospital-based pharmacy practice settings. It is not wise to attempt a PLAR Challenge exam in the Management of Drug Distribution Systems course, if you do not have relatively recent work experience in both areas of pharmacy practice. Similarly, success in the PLAR Challenge for Product Preparation requires experience with both non-sterile and sterile product preparation.

### **6) What grade do I need to pass the PLAR Exam?**

70% is the minimum required grade for successful completion of the PLAR exam for each of the eligible courses. Your results will be transmitted using a **Pass/Fail** or **Satisfactory/Unsatisfactory** designation.

### **7) What happens if I fail the PLAR Challenge Exam?**

A PLAR Challenge exam can be attempted **only once** for each eligible course, regardless of the mark achieved. **There is no opportunity for any supplemental examination.** So, if you fail the PLAR Challenge Exam, you will be required to take the course either online or in a classroom.

Before you attempt any PLAR Challenge Exam, you will be required to sign an *Information/Privacy Waiver and Confidentiality Agreement* acknowledging that you are aware of these conditions, and confirming that you will not share any details of the content of the examinations with your colleagues. Your Pharmacy Regulatory Authority monitors the results of PLAR Challenge exams received from the various delivery institutions to identify any instances of repeated attempts to secure credit for the same course. Candidates who fail to comply with this requirement may jeopardize their ability to continue with the registration/licensure process.

**8) Can I use PLAR to get credit for a Bridging Education Course which I previously failed?**

If you fail a Bridging Education course, you should critically examine your performance in that course and determine your areas of weakness. Based on the results of this self-analysis, you may decide that it is feasible to attempt PLAR as a strategy to earn credit for the failed course.

However, you can only use PLAR to challenge a course which you have previously failed if following the course failure, you engage in some remedial self-study and/or work experience to address the weaknesses that led to your failing grade. This requirement for remedial work has been introduced to maximize your potential for success in the PLAR Challenge examination. A period of time sufficient to accommodate the necessary remedial activity must elapse between your course failure and the attempted PLAR Challenge Exam.

You will have to think about your performance in the course in which you were not successful and give some thought to the type of remedial work best suited to your situation. For example, if you know that you had particular difficulty with the calculations in the Product Preparation course, you should work at enhancing your mathematical abilities before attempting the PLAR examination. As another example, if you've always worked in a community pharmacy and struggled to understand the hospital drug distribution procedures discussed in the MDDS course, you should identify some strategies (visits to hospital sites, tutoring by a technician in hospital practice, etc.) that will help you gain a better understanding of hospital practice requirements before you attempt the PLAR Challenge exam for that course.

Depending on PLAR registration procedures in place at the educational institution administering the PLAR Challenge Exam, you may be required to provide some details about the remedial self-study and/or work experience you have completed as preparation for the Challenge examination. Again, failure to comply with this requirement for remedial work may jeopardize your ability to continue with the registration/licensure process.

Please keep in mind that you are allowed only one PLAR Challenge per course, so you need to ensure that you are fully prepared before you attempt to gain credit for a course using this approach.

Please note as well that a fee applies for PLAR, even if you have previously paid tuition fees for a course.