

Spring 2010

The Transition Times

HELPING YOU NAVIGATE CHANGE

Things to keep in mind while reading:

- When the term *pharmacy technician* or *technician* is used in this newsletter and in the practice standards, it refers to a regulated individual who will be registered with ACP.
- The Pharmacists Profession Regulation referred to is the legislation that defines professional roles for pharmacists and pharmacy technicians. It is currently being amended to accommodate regulated pharmacy technicians. As part of the amendments, the name Pharmacists Profession Regulation will change to reflect that it applies to both professions.
- The processes for technician regulation outlined here will come into effect once the amended Pharmacists Profession Regulation is enacted. That is expected to happen in late 2010.

Welcoming a new healthcare profession



Understanding the pharmacy technician regulation process

Alberta is looking forward to welcoming the new profession of regulated pharmacy technicians. This new profession will provide benefits to patients, pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, and our health system.

The framework and processes for regulating technicians has evolved over several years and has been shaped by the involvement of many individuals and groups. This newsletter outlines where we are today – including what possibilities were considered and what decisions were arrived at – and what the next steps will be.

Patients, professions, and the province will benefit from regulated pharmacy technicians

Regulated pharmacy technicians will be directly responsible and accountable for the technical functions related to prescription preparation and processing. They will have to demonstrate key competencies through nationally administered exams and will take on the responsibility, accountability, and any resulting legal liability for their work. They will then be authorized to

continued on page 2

alberta college of
pharmacists





FAQs from technicians

If I do not qualify to register will I lose my job?

ACP does not expect that all individuals currently working as technicians will pursue registration. Pharmacy licensees will not be required to hire a pharmacy technician. In fact, we anticipate that the process will be gradual and that there will continue to be a variety of viable pharmacy business models with and without regulated technicians.

Can I still use the title pharmacy technician if I don't qualify for regulation?

No. Only individuals who are registered on ACP's pharmacy technician register will be able to be called a pharmacy technician and only these regulated individuals will be permitted to practice unsupervised and conduct the final quality assurance check on dispensed prescriptions.

Once the legislation has been enacted, will there be a pay scale that has to be followed?

ACP is not legally authorized to set pay scales or negotiate reimbursement for pharmacists or pharmacy technicians, so will not be entering into any reimbursement discussions. ACP's mandate is to protect the public by setting and enforcing high standards of competence and ethical conduct.

Welcoming a new healthcare profession *continued from page 1*

work under the direction of a pharmacist (i.e., unsupervised), rather than under supervision. This change will produce many benefits.

Patients will benefit because pharmacists, freed from the technical aspects of the dispensing process, will be more accessible to patients and will be able to focus on more comprehensive patient care through medication management, prescription adaptation and initial prescribing, immunization, counseling and follow-up.

Pharmacists will benefit because the work in the areas of prescription processing and preparation can shift from the pharmacist to the technician, thereby allowing pharmacists to more appropriately use their skills and knowledge to deliver patient care. Pharmacists will be able to let go of some dispensing roles, knowing that pharmacy technicians have met educational standards and demonstrated their competency.

Pharmacy technicians will benefit because by having met defined and recognized standards for education and competency, they will have the knowledge, skills, legal authority and confidence to practice more independently and to take on more authority. While pharmacists will still be responsible for assessing the

appropriateness of each prescription and counseling patients, pharmacy technicians will be able to compound, dispense and sell drugs unsupervised. They will also be able to supervise other technicians, assistants and pharmacy technician students in the pharmacy.

The health system will benefit because health professionals' skills will be used more appropriately and patients will have increased access to care from pharmacists.

The Alberta College of Pharmacists will benefit because the regulation of pharmacy technicians helps fulfill two of the college's primary goals: protecting the public and optimizing the use of pharmacy professionals' skills.

Unlike a professional association or advocacy group which acts in the interest of its members, a professional college acts in the interest of the public. The mandate of the Alberta College of Pharmacists (ACP) is to protect the public's health and well-being. Therefore, ACP has a responsibility to ensure that only individuals who have the knowledge and who can demonstrate the required competencies be registered.

By regulating pharmacy technicians, ACP can be assured – and can assure the public – that these regulated individuals have met national and provincial entry-to-practice standards and are competent to take on more responsibility within the compounding and dispensing functions.

Acronym Key

ACP	Alberta College of Pharmacists
CAPT AB	Alberta branch of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians
CCAPP	Canadian Council on the Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs
CPTEA	Canadian Pharmacy Technician Educators Association
NAPRA	National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities
PEBC	Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada
PTCB	Pharmacy Technician Certification Board of Alberta (later known as PTeB)
PTeB	Pharmacy Technician Board of Canada
PTSA	Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta

Working toward regulation since 2003

For almost a decade, pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, and ACP have worked together to develop the framework for technician registration in Alberta.

2003 A steering committee comprised of pharmacy technicians and pharmacy technician educators was established by the Alberta branch of the Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians (CAPT AB) and the Pharmacy Technician Certification Board of Alberta (PTCB, later known as PTEB) to consider the merits of self-governance of pharmacy technicians.

2005 The CAPT AB/PTCB steering committee made a proposal for technician regulation to the provincial Minister of Health. At that time, the Minister indicated support for the idea, but said no new professions would be recognized until all of the current professions said were recognized under the *Health Professions Act*.

2006 Pharmacy technicians formed the Pharmacy Technician Regulatory Committee of Alberta. This committee was comprised of volunteers from CAPT Alberta and PTEB and other interested individuals.

2007 The Pharmacy Technician Regulation Working Group was established to develop a plan to achieve technician regulation in Alberta.

- 4 appointees from ACP, 3 appointees from the Pharmacy Technician Regulatory Committee of Alberta
- This group recommended that pharmacy technicians in Alberta be regulated within the Alberta College of Pharmacists.

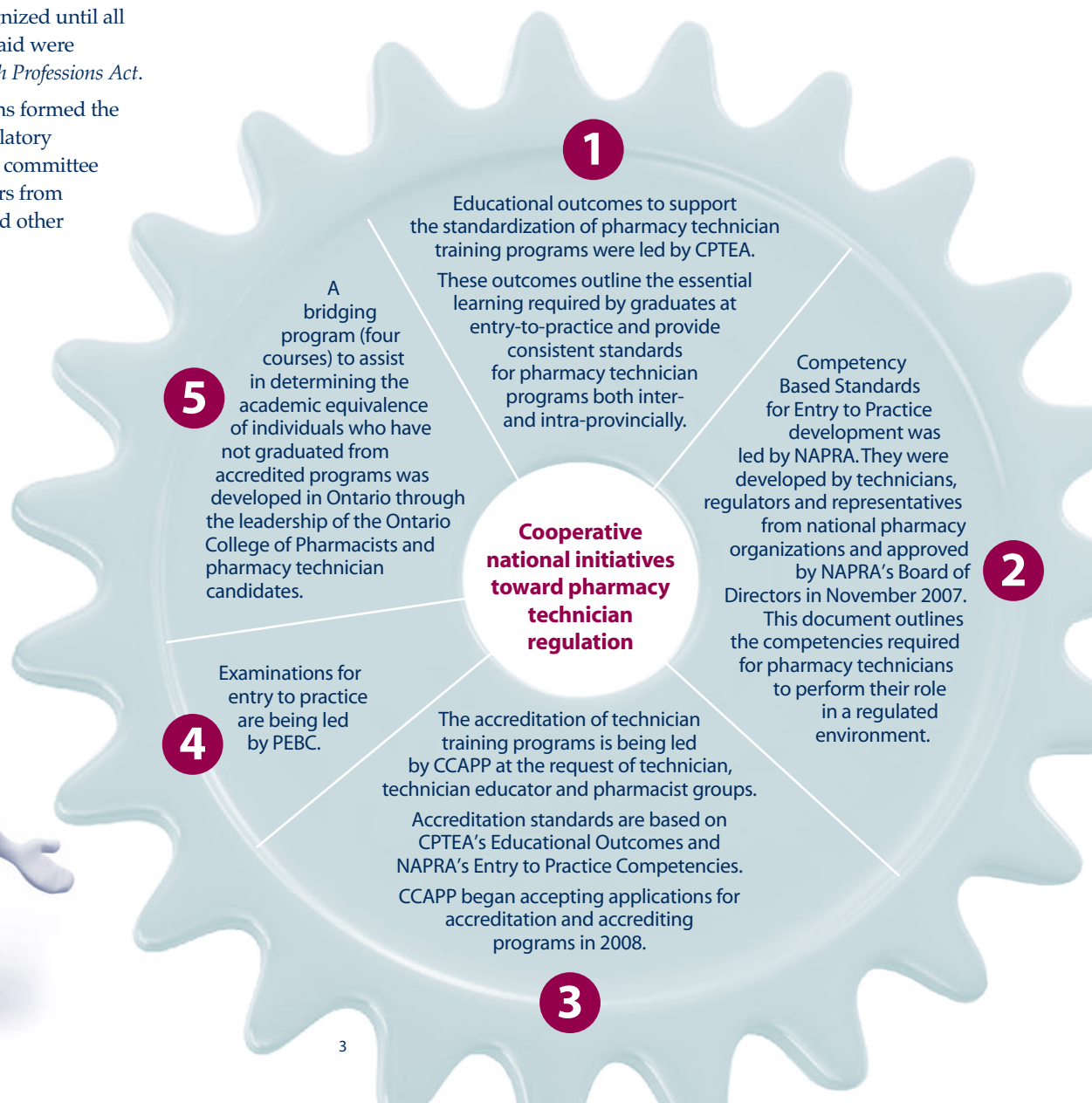
2008 ACP began accepting applications for the voluntary Pharmacy Technician Register. To date there are 975 pharmacy technician members of ACP.

While technician regulation is a provincial

responsibility, there has been national coordination to ensure that processes are similar and credentials are transferable across the country.

The diagram below summarizes other key national initiatives in which pharmacists and pharmacy technicians have partnered to facilitate technician regulation. All provinces pursuing technician regulation are basing their programs on these initiatives.

In all cases there has been direct participation or consultation with pharmacy technicians or pharmacy technician educators from across Canada, including Alberta.



Technician observers appointed to ACP council in 2008

In 2008, the ACP council appointed two technician observers, Robin Burns and Teresa Hennessey, from a list of nominations submitted by technicians. Robin and Teresa have participated in all council discussions, particularly those related to the regulation of pharmacy technicians. They, and other ACP staff, have presented at many technician conferences and meetings. Robin and Teresa have also contributed input on the amendments to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation and the development of national fluency requirements for pharmacy technicians at entry to practice.



Robin Burns



Teresa Hennessey

Technician scope of practice



The biggest changes resulting from the regulation of pharmacy technicians will not only be in the scope of their practice, but in the fact that technicians will become legally responsible and accountable for their work. Although practitioners feel a personal responsibility for the work they undertake now, this is different than the legal accountability and liability conferred with regulation.

Some non-pharmacists may now be performing at higher levels than others in pharmacy settings, but there is currently no regulatory process which holds them *directly responsible* to the public for their practice. Having mechanisms to ensure accountability is important to the public, the profession, and the college. The regulation of technicians will provide a greater degree of protection for the public as pharmacy technicians move to higher levels of responsibility (e.g., conducting restricted activities unsupervised and supervising others) and permit more effective use of the skills of pharmacists.

What will a regulated pharmacy technician be able to do?

Schedule 19 of the *Health Professions Act* (as proposed in the *Health Professions Amendment Act*) provides the following role statement for pharmacy technicians:

In their practice, pharmacy technicians promote safe and effective drug distribution and, in relation to that, do one or more of the following under the direction of a pharmacist:

- a) receive, gather, enter and store prescription and patient information,
- b) store and repackage products,
- c) participate in the management of systems for drug distribution and inventory control,
- d) participate in the research, development, implementation and evaluation of quality assurance and risk management policies, procedures and activities,
- e) provide restricted activities authorized by the regulations,
- f) instruct patients about the use of health aids and devices, and
- g) teach the practice of pharmacy technicians.

Subsection (e) refers to restricted activities. What are these?

The amendments to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation propose that, under the direction of a clinical or courtesy pharmacist, a pharmacy technician be authorized to:

- a) dispense a Schedule 1 drug or Schedule 2 drug;
- b) compound, provide for selling or sell a Schedule 1 drug or a Schedule 2 drug;
- c) compound blood products.

A pharmacy technician may only perform the restricted activity if:

- a pharmacist has evaluated the prescription for the drug,
- a pharmacist has assessed the patient, the patient's health history and medication record and has determined that the drug therapy is appropriate for the patient, and
- a pharmacist is available to counsel the patient and to monitor the patient's drug therapy.

What does "under the direction of" mean?

For the purpose of this section, "under the direction of" means that the clinical pharmacist or courtesy pharmacist who is providing the direction must

- practice at the same pharmacy* as the pharmacy technician, unless otherwise authorized in writing by the Registrar,
- ensure there is a system in place in the pharmacy that complies with the Standards of Practice under which
 - a pharmacist is available to consult with, provide guidance to and, if necessary, provide assistance to the pharmacy technician,
 - the involvement of the pharmacy technician in the restricted activities can be monitored and assessed,
 - the pharmacy technician reports to the pharmacist who is responsible for providing direction to the pharmacy technician; and
- be authorized to perform the restricted activities for which the pharmacist is providing direction to the pharmacy technician.

* Note the difference between *direction* and *supervision*.

Supervision is provided by the pharmacist on shift that day and that pharmacist must be available to provide hands-on assistance, either immediately or within a reasonable period of time.

Direction is provided by a pharmacist who works in the same pharmacy, but not necessarily on the same shift as the technician. That pharmacist is responsible for ensuring that there are appropriate policies and procedures in place to maintain the integrity of the dispensing and compounding processes and for making sure that a pharmacist is available to work with the technician as required in the regulations and the standards.

Role comparisons

Roles

Pharmacists will

- assess patient
- review patient history, medication history
- ensure appropriate drug therapy
- counsel patient
- monitor ongoing therapy
- provide direction to technician

(Pharmacists will continue to be authorized to conduct all pharmacy technician roles.)

Responsibilities

- continue to be accountable for the overall supervision of pharmacies and the systems that are in place to ensure the safe storage, compounding, packaging and distribution of drugs.
- continue to be solely responsible and accountable for assessing the appropriateness of drug therapy (both new and continuing) and providing patient consultation. A prescription cannot be released to the patient without a pharmacist having performed these functions.

Pharmacy Technicians will (proposed)

- prepare and distribute prescriptions
 - compound
 - sell
 - check to ensure correct drug is dispensed
 - copy prescriptions for authorized recipients
 - transfer prescriptions to, and receive prescriptions from, other pharmacies
 - receive and transcribe verbal prescriptions given by a prescriber
 - instruct patients re: health aids and devices
 - be authorized to check work of individuals employed in a pharmacy
- Always practice in an environment where:
 - procedures are in place to ensure the safety and integrity of the dispensing or compounding process (i.e., under the direction of a pharmacist).
 - a pharmacist is available to ensure appropriateness of drug therapy and consult with patients.
 - Exercise professional judgement at all times and be able to recognize when the clinical expertise of the pharmacist is required.



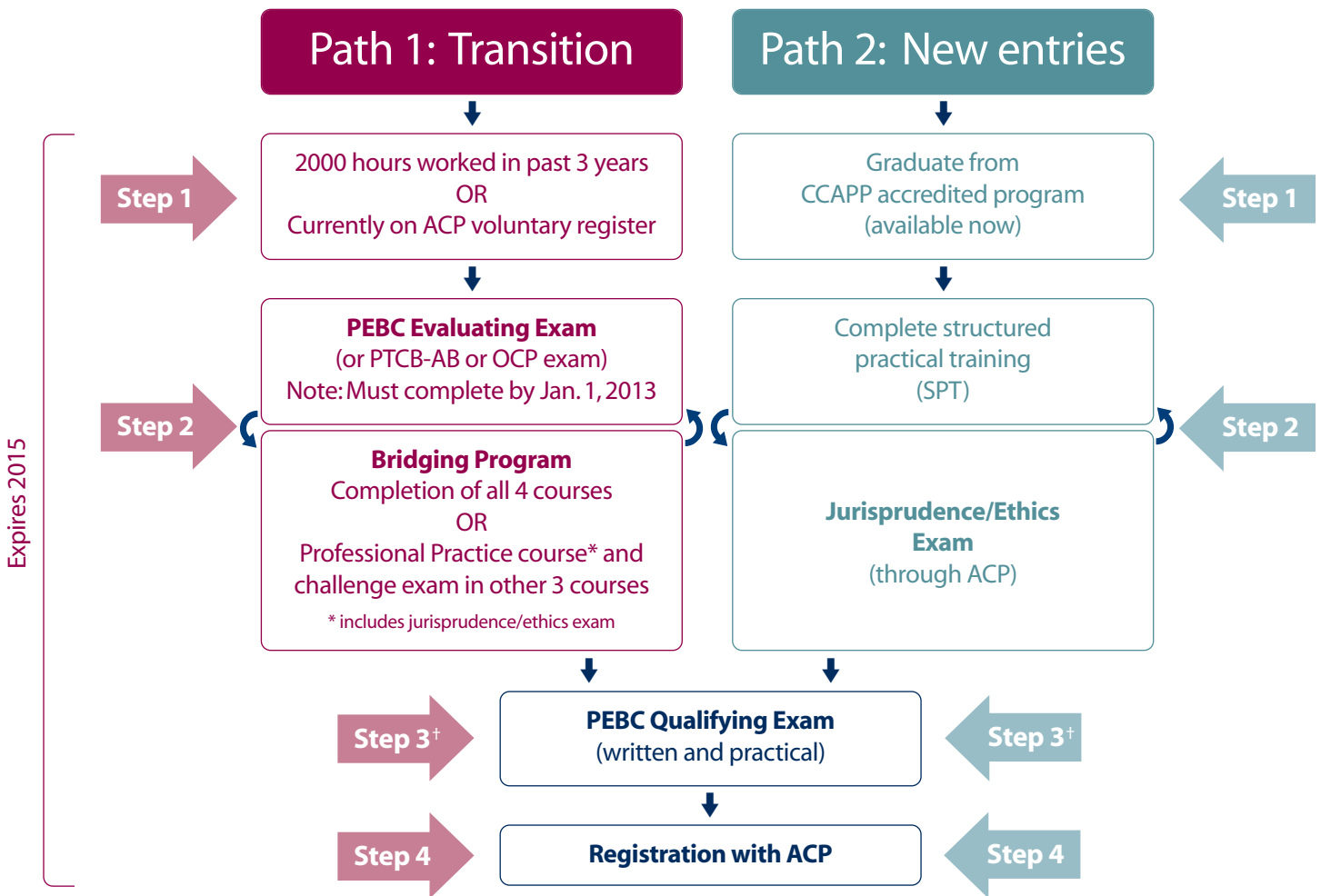


Steps to regulation

All provincial bodies pursuing technician regulation have agreed that requirements for pharmacy technicians will parallel the process for pharmacists where possible and will be in keeping with the Agreement on Internal Trade. Adhering to the Agreement means technician qualifications will be recognized across the country. This will enable pharmacy technicians to work anywhere in Canada without having to re-qualify.

To become a regulated pharmacy technician, individuals currently working in the field as well as those just entering the profession will need to successfully complete the required steps outlined below.

Technician Regulation Process



† Although PEBC does not require individuals to have successfully completed all four bridging courses (Path 1) or all three levels of SPT (Path 2) before sitting the Qualifying Exam, both PEBC and ACP strongly recommend this step. The extra knowledge and resource information attained will help candidates achieve success on the Qualifying Exam.

Steps to Regulation

Path 1: Transition

Individuals already working in the field who did not graduate from a CCAPP-accredited program will have until Jan. 1, 2015 to register via Path 1. After that time, anyone wishing to become regulated will have to take Path 2 and successfully complete a pharmacy technician program offered through a CCAPP-accredited institution.

STEP 1 Meet Minimum Criteria

To enter the process, a current technician must either be on ACP's voluntary register or have worked in *pharmacy practice* for a minimum of 2000 hours in the past 3 years. Specific duties defined as *pharmacy practice* are identified on the Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC) website at www.pebc.ca (Note: if a current technician does not meet the minimum criteria, they would seek regulation through Path 2 by enrolling in an accredited pharmacy technician program.)

STEP 2 PEBC Evaluating Exam and ACP Bridging Program

Contrary to some other provinces that require candidates to complete the PEBC Evaluating Exam prior to enrolling in bridging courses, ACP is letting candidates complete these in any order. ACP's goal is to provide as much flexibility as possible for each candidate to meet the requirements.

The completion of both the PEBC Evaluating Exam and the ACP Bridging Program is required¹ by all individuals seeking regulation via Path 1. (Note: the only exception, as per PEBC's policy, is that those who successfully completed the PTCB-AB (up to 2008) or OCP (up to 2008) exam do not need to sit the PEBC Evaluating Exam. They are still required to complete the bridging program.)

The **PEBC Evaluating Exam** is a 3 hour, 150 multiple choice question exam. The exam is offered by the PEBC two times per year in

key locations across Canada. More details on the Evaluating Exam, including the exam sitting schedule, are available at www.pebc.ca.

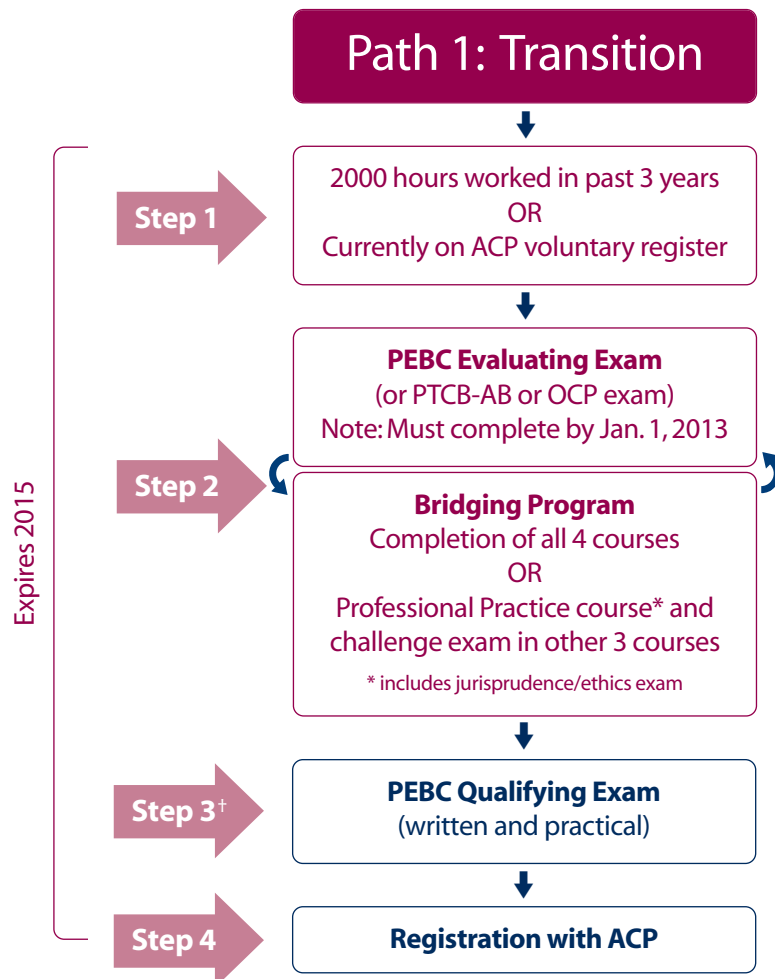
Note: Path 1 candidates must complete the PEBC Evaluating Exam by Jan. 1, 2013.

The **bridging program** is designed to prepare individuals for their role as regulated health professionals, including the additional responsibilities described in the entry-to-practice competencies for a pharmacy technician.

One of the most essential requirements for entry to practice is completion of an

approved education program. Until CCAPP accreditation in 2008, there was no system to ensure consistency across education programs, and no standard requirement for an individual choosing to become a pharmacy technician. As a result, there is a high degree of diversity among those choosing to become regulated pharmacy technicians. Their knowledge and skills, and roles and practice settings differ. This poses a challenge; as a regulatory body, ACP needs to ensure that individuals applying for registration have demonstrated the defined competencies to

continued on page 8



¹ Where candidates have not graduated from a CCAPP-accredited education program, PEBC requires that candidates also successfully pass an Evaluating Exam. This is not an ACP policy, but rather a PEBC policy consistent for both pharmacist and PT candidates.

† Although PEBC does not require individuals to have successfully completed all four bridging courses before sitting the Qualifying Exam, both PEBC and ACP strongly recommend this step.

Path 1: Transition *continued from page 7*

practice safely and effectively within the scope of their profession.

Because of the diversity amongst individuals and the absence of previous educational standards and measures, the college is incorporating a bridging education program that will prepare individuals to practice in the new regulated role. Building on the knowledge these individuals have gained through formal education or on-the-job training, this bridging program will prepare them to meet the educational requirements and responsibilities of a regulated pharmacy technician.

The bridging program is divided into four courses: Pharmacology, Professional Practice, Management of Drug Distribution Systems, and Product Preparation. The content is being developed nationally and then modified as required for each province.

Technicians who feel that they already have the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities to challenge a particular bridging course may do so through an exam process referred to as Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR). The PLAR option was incorporated so technicians who are confident in their skills can “fast track” bridging. All bridging courses, with the exception of the Professional Practice module which is mandatory for everyone in Path 1, are PLAR-eligible.

■ **Pharmacology** (33 hours)

This course provides a practical, applied approach to pharmacology. Through a variety of learning tools such as 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.

■ **Professional Practice** (45 hours) – **mandatory, no PLAR**

Students will be prepared for entry to practice in five main areas of focus: legal requirements, scope of practice, ethical principles, professionalism and

communication skills. Students will enhance their ability to practice competently within the professional practice framework. To minimize learners’ costs and time, APC has incorporated the jurisprudence exam as part of this course, rather than a separate element.

■ **Management of Drug Distribution** (39 hours)

This course will examine various drug distribution systems in pharmacy practice, and prepare learners to effectively manage operations in different practice settings to ensure safe and effective drug supply and distribution. Learners will explore distributive functions in institutional settings, as well as common drug plans and their formularies, adjudication challenges, inventory management elements and common business practices. Accurate product release within the parameters of the pharmacy technician role receives special emphasis.

■ **Product Preparation** (33 hours)

This course deals with 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 compounding practices for various internal and external preparations and specialty dosage forms, equipment and tools, professional guidelines, standards and legislation, pharmaceutical calculations, and documentation requirements. For sterile product preparation, areas of emphasis include infection control, aseptic technique, parenteral dosage forms, accurate calculations, appropriate use of equipment, and quality control. Best practices associated with the preparation of Total Parenteral Nutrition (TPN) and antineoplastics are also covered.

ACP is working with three publicly funded colleges to offer the bridging program. Each course will be offered online as well as in classroom. Each of

continued on page 10



FAQs re: process for individuals who did not graduate from a CCAPP-accredited program

Overall process

Why was Jan. 1, 2015 picked as the end date for current technician transition? Is that still feasible given that bridging hasn't started yet?

A deadline was required that allowed enough time for individuals currently working in the field to complete transition without a great deal of pressure, but that sent a clear message that those entering the field today are expected to attend an accredited program rather than attempt to begin working in the field. This date is consistent with the date that other provinces are using.

Availability of the bridging courses has been delayed, but is expected by fall 2010. That will still allow more than four years to complete the transition.

If the deadline for transition is Jan. 1, 2015, why does the PEBC Evaluating Exam have to be completed by Jan. 1, 2013?

The transition pathway (Path 1) is intended for individuals who are now working in the field. The deadline to complete the Evaluating Exam was set to clearly indicate to individuals who are entering the field now that they must attend an accredited program and qualify via Path 2. In addition, completion of the Evaluating Exam by Jan. 1, 2013 ensures individuals working toward regulation via Path 1 will have time to complete all the requirements by 2015.

Will individuals in other provinces be able to write the PEBC Qualifying Exam and become a regulated technician (in Alberta or elsewhere) without taking the bridging program?

All provinces currently pursuing technician regulation require completion of a bridging program. At present that, includes Ontario, BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia.



How do I know the bridging program is of value?

All four bridging courses have now been delivered twice in Ontario. Participant evaluations show that 81% of learners felt the courses met their learning needs. Furthermore, 83% of learners felt that the participant materials provided with the course were useful.

Why must technicians be evaluated more than once on the same subject matter (e.g., through bridging and/or PLAR and PEBC exams)?

Bridging is not an evaluation mechanism, but a process to supplement the knowledge gained through formal education and on-the-job training with the competencies that will be required to take on the role and responsibilities of a regulated pharmacy technician.

The requirement to take both the Evaluating and Qualifying Examinations is a PEBC requirement, consistent with their requirement for pharmacists. PEBC is making one exception in their process: anyone who successfully completed PTCB-AB (up to 2008) or OCP (up to 2008) exam is exempt from writing the Evaluating Exam. This will minimize time and costs for candidates.

Path 1: Transition *continued from page 8*

the four courses is in various stages of development and modification and the anticipated rollout is September 2010. Course information will be posted on the ACP website as it becomes available.

Costs and grant information

Final course costs will be determined by the colleges delivering them. It is estimated that the cost to complete all four courses of the program will be approximately \$1400.00. The cost of the PLAR process is not yet known; however, it is expected to be approximately half the cost of completing the full module. ACP has requested that Alberta Health and Wellness provide a grant to reimburse candidates for at least a portion of the registration costs for the bridging courses.

STEP 3 PEBC Qualifying Exam

The PEBC Qualifying Exam consists of two parts – a written multiple choice question exam (MCQ) and a performance-based exam called an Objective Structured Performance Exam (OSPE). PEBC is expected to offer the exam nationally at key locations twice a year.

Note: Although PEBC does not require individuals to have successfully completed all four bridging courses before sitting the Qualifying Exam, both PEBC and ACP strongly recommend this step. The extra knowledge and resource information attained from the bridging courses will help candidates achieve success on the Qualifying Exam.

STEP 4 Register with ACP

Other requirements at entry to practice such as fluency, good character, professional liability insurance, product release proficiency, and registration and annual permit fees will be established by ACP council to coordinate with the amendments to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation (see pages 14 and 15 for details).

All registration requirements are consistent with those for pharmacists and other regulated health professionals governed by the *Health Professions Act*.

PEBC Examinations for technicians

If I passed the PTCB exam several years ago but did not recertify with PTCB, will I have to write the PTCB exam again?

No. Anyone who successfully completed the PTCB exam is able to write the Qualifying Exam without writing the Evaluating Exam. (You will still be required to complete the bridging program.)

What type of work “counts” toward the 2000 hours of work experience listed in Path 1?

The PEBC website includes a list of duties that qualify for the 2000 hours of work experience. It does not matter what your job title is as long as you have been completing duties that are included on the list for at least 2000 hours in the past 3 years.

If I am currently voluntarily registered with ACP, do I still need to submit 2000 hours of work experience to be able to take the PEBC evaluating exam?

Yes. PEBC will require information about your work experience when you register to write the Evaluating Exam.

When will the exams be available?

The next Evaluating Exam (which must be completed before the Qualifying Exam) will be offered on Sept. 18. The application deadline is June 28.

The next Qualifying Exam will be offered on Aug. 28 and 29. The application deadline is June 4. See the PEBC website (www.pebc.ca) for the most current exam schedule.

What happens if I write the Qualifying Exam and do not pass?

As with pharmacists, pharmacy technicians may attempt the PEBC Qualifying Exam three times. The ACP Registrar has the option to permit a fourth attempt, but may require the applicant to complete coursework, examinations and structured practical training before the fourth and final attempt.



Why wouldn't grandfathering current pharmacy technicians be wise?

An accelerated regulation process for pharmacy technicians sounds appealing at first. However, there are many reasons why ACP council decided against grandfathering current technicians.

1. To date there has been no standardized education, scope of practice, role definition, restricted title, or legal responsibility for individuals identified as pharmacy technicians. The result is a very mixed population of "technicians." ACP respects that, amongst these, some individuals do perform at higher levels than others as a result of their education and experience. However, without the proposed process, the college currently has no way to measure the competence of pharmacy technicians and thus cannot assure patients, technician peers, pharmacists, other health professionals, and the public of their competency.
2. Pharmacy technicians have no history of being regulated, contrary to other professions that are becoming self-regulated under the *Health Professions Act*. Pharmacy technicians will be a **new** regulated profession.
3. Pharmacy technicians have had no requirement to maintain personal competence, regardless of how they have gathered knowledge and skills to perform their roles. Therefore, ACP has no means of ascertaining the maintenance or growth of an individual's knowledge and skills during the period of their past practice.
4. Pharmacy technicians have only been authorized to practice under supervision, and have held no legal responsibility, accountability, or shared in any potential liability when providing this assistance.

The competencies for entry to practice cannot be measured through a single examination or by a single evaluation tool.

Grandfathering alternatives are at the best subjective and introduce an unacceptable level of risk; it is not possible to objectively identify programs or cut-off dates that would provide confidence to ACP or fairness to all candidates.

Throughout the planning, council has always sought to minimize time and costs to participants while still protecting the public. This is demonstrated through:

- the option for when candidates may write the PEBC Evaluating Exam,
- ACP's work to ensure the bridging courses will be offered in class and online from multiple colleges,
- the incorporation of the jurisprudence exam into the Professional Practice course,
- the PLAR option in bridging, and
- ACP's pursuit of government funding to offset bridging program costs for technicians.

ACP council believes that the proposed framework for pharmacy technician candidates to transition to regulated health professionals appropriately balances accountability, accessibility, and affordability.

ACP's approach to evaluating pharmacy technician candidates at entry to practice is consistent with that being pursued by other provinces and with the processes established under the *Health Professions Act*, as used in evaluating pharmacists at entry to practice.

What grandfathering alternatives were considered?

Extending the recognition date for those graduating from now-accredited programs

Recognizing those who graduated from a CCAPP-accredited program for a set number of years before accreditation was considered by ACP council. For example, although Red Deer College's program was only accredited in 2009, recognition could have been extended to those who graduated two, five, or eight years earlier. However, council realized that it was impossible to know how educational programs had changed over the years, and thus to know how many years was enough or too many. A line had to be drawn at some point; council decided that CCAPP accreditation was the best place to draw the line.

Grandfathering those with formal education

There was no standardization of education programs prior to the development of CPTEA educational outcomes and the resulting CCAPP accreditation standards. Therefore, programs offered very different levels of knowledge and practical experience. It is impossible to evaluate and compare programs that were delivered in the past, in some cases many years ago, so a fair assessment can not be made. Because there have been no requirements for continuing education, the college also can't know if individuals maintained all the knowledge and skills required of pharmacy technicians. Additionally, graduates of each program have different practice experiences since graduating, depending on their employment.

Applying conditions on the title or having two levels of technicians

The *Health Professions Act* outlines one scope of practice for a pharmacy technician and all national documents, including entry to practice competencies and educational outcomes, describe a single group of competencies for a pharmacy technician. Individuals who wish to qualify as a pharmacy technician must demonstrate all the required competencies.

Keep in mind that the regulation of pharmacy technicians does not preclude pharmacists from hiring unregulated persons to work in the pharmacy. A pharmacist may hire whomever they wish to assist them as long as the pharmacist provides direct supervision and takes responsibility for the work completed by the unregulated individuals.

Grandfathering individuals already on the ACP voluntary register

The voluntary register established in 2008 was always intended to be an interim step toward the regulation of pharmacy technicians. All candidates were informed that registration on the voluntary register would not imply eligibility as a regulated technician because additional evaluation would be required.

Steps to Regulation

Path 2: New entries

STEP 1 CCAPP-Accredited Program

An accredited program is a program of study offered by either a public or private post-secondary institute that has met the accreditation standards for a pharmacy technician program established by the Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP). The CCAPP accreditation process ensures that accredited programs contain the necessary content to teach the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) necessary for successful graduates to safely and effectively do the job of a regulated pharmacy technician.

In Alberta, four colleges began offering CCAPP-accredited Pharmacy Technician programs: NorQuest College in 2008, and Red Deer College, Bow Valley College, and CDI (Edmonton) in 2009.

The CCAPP-accredited programs are a minimum duration of 34 weeks and consist of a minimum of 26 weeks instruction (25 hours/week in class or lab; 5 days/week), and 8 weeks of practicum experience (35 hours/week; 7 hours/day). The program curriculum covers the same broad content areas as found in the bridging program required for current technicians:

- Pharmacology
- Professional Practice
- Management of Drug Distribution
- Product Preparation

STEP 2 Structured Practical Training (SPT) and Jurisprudence/Ethics Exam

Once a student has graduated from a CCAPP-accredited program, they will be required to successfully complete a Structured Practical Training (SPT) program²; a supervised competency-

based training period within a pharmacy that includes regular assessment by a pharmacist or another regulated technician. This training allows soon-to-be-regulated technicians the opportunity to practice their skills in a supervised practical environment before assuming sole responsibility.

The Alberta College of Pharmacists' pharmacy technician SPT program is divided into three levels:

Level I – minimum 320 hours*

- The learner is required to acquire and/or demonstrate competencies at an acceptable level. The focus of this

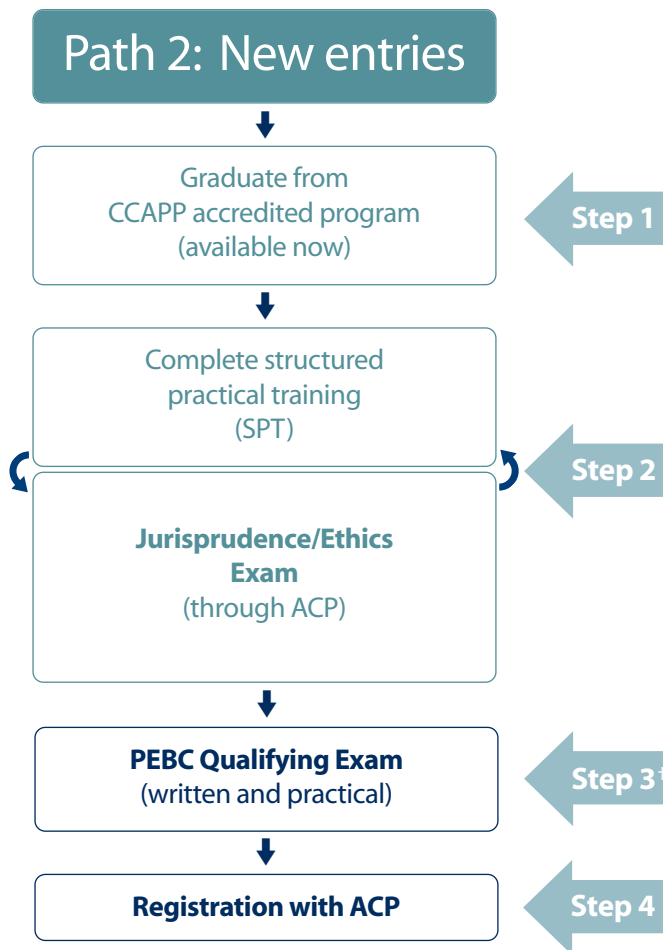
level is the provision of drug distribution. **This level may be completed as part of an individual's program practicum.**

Level II – minimum 320 hours*

- The learner is required to demonstrate competencies proficiently. Expectations regarding the demonstration of professionalism and management knowledge and skills, and quality assurance are increased.

Level III – minimum 160 hours*

- Level III is intended to confirm proficiency. Learners are expected to



² S3(1)(b) Pharmacists Profession Regulation

[†] Although PEBC does not require individuals to have successfully completed all three levels of SPT before sitting the Qualifying Exam, both PEBC and ACP strongly recommend this step.

work independently, acting as a pharmacy technician,

- Successful completion of Level III requires demonstration of proficiency of product release, specifically ensuring the accuracy and quality of the final product.

* *The hours listed are minimums. Successful completion of each level requires demonstration of the required competencies; additional time may be required to do so.*

Jurisprudence/Ethics Exam

The requirement to successfully complete a jurisprudence /ethics exam is consistent with the registration process for pharmacists and is designed to test relevant provincial legislation and ethics which is not included on the national PEBC Qualifying Exam.

STEP 3 PEBC Qualifying Exam

The PEBC Qualifying Exam consists of two parts – a written multiple choice question exam (MCQ) and a performance-based exam called an Objective Structured Performance Exam (OSPE). PEBC is expected to offer the exam nationally at key locations twice a year.

STEP 4 Register with ACP

Other requirements at entry to practice such as fluency, good character, professional liability insurance, and registration and annual permit fees will be established by ACP council to coordinate with the amendments to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation (see pages 14 and 15 for details).

All registration requirements are consistent with those for pharmacists and other regulated health professionals governed by the *Health Professions Act*.

Education FAQs



Who determines which post-secondary programs are accredited?

The Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs (CCAPP), which is the same organization that accredits pharmacy programs, is responsible for accrediting pharmacy technician programs in Canada. A committee with representatives from pharmacy technician, technician educator, and pharmacist groups developed the accreditation standards.

The accreditation process ensures that accredited programs contain the necessary content to teach the competencies (knowledge, skills and abilities) necessary for successful graduates to safely and effectively do the job of a regulated pharmacy technician.

Which post-secondary institutions are currently offering a CCAPP-accredited Pharmacy Technician program?

Please check the CCAPP website for the list of Accredited Pharmacy Technician Programs: www.ccapp-accredit.ca/documents.

Will regulated pharmacy technicians be required to complete continuing education?

Yes. Registrants on the pharmacy technician register must earn a minimum of 15 continuing education units (CEUs) per year (1 hour of learning is equivalent to 1 unit). These credits may be earned either from accredited pharmacy continuing education or non-accredited learning or a combination of the two.

Continuing competence program requirements will be developed by the ACP Competence Committee and pharmacy technician representatives.

Resources

Note: The inclusion of a resource on this list does not imply any endorsement by ACP.

Associations, Organizations and Licensing Boards

- Alberta College of Pharmacists – pharmacists.ab.ca
- American Association of Pharmacy Technicians – www.pharmacytechnician.com
- Canadian Association of Pharmacy Technicians – www.capt.ca
- Canadian Council for Accreditation of Pharmacy Programs – www.ccapp-accredit.ca/index.php
- Canadian Pharmacy Technician Educators Association – www.cptea.ca
- National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities – www.napra.org
- Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada – www.pebc.ca
- Pharmacy Technician Educators Council – www.rxptec.org
- Pharmacy Technician Society of Alberta – www.pharmacytechnicians.ab.ca

Useful Links

- Moving Forward - Pharmacy Human Resources for the Future – www.pharmacyhr.ca/index.html
- Canadian Healthcare Network (formerly Pharmacy Gateway) – www.canadianhealthcarenetwork.ca

Documents

- Agreement on Internal Trade www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ait-aci.nsf/eng/home
- Educational Outcomes for Pharmacy Technician Programs in Canada [www.cptea.ca/private_pgs/Educational OutcomesMar2007.pdf](http://www.cptea.ca/private_pgs/Educational%20OutcomesMar2007.pdf)
- Professional Competencies for Canadian Pharmacy Technicians at Entry-to-Practice www.napra.org/Content_Files/Files/Professional_Competencies_for_Canadian_Pharmacy_Technicians_2007.pdf
- Standards for Accreditation of Pharmacy Technician Programs www.ccapp-accredit.ca/standards

Registering with ACP



Creation of new registers

Upon approval of the regulation, ACP will create a **provisional register** for those working toward registration, a **pharmacy technician register** for those who have met the registration requirements, and a **courtesy register** for individuals registered as pharmacy technicians in good standing in another jurisdiction and who require registration in Alberta on a temporary basis for locum work or accredited CE provision.

Registration on the provisional register will be open to:

- graduates of CCAPP-accredited pharmacy technician programs, or
- candidates on the ACP voluntary register, or
- candidates enrolled in bridging programs, or
- candidates who successfully completed the PEBC Evaluating Exam (or PTCB-AB or OCP exam), or
- candidates who have 2000 hours worked in the last 3 years.

Individuals currently on ACP's voluntary register will be eligible to move immediately to the provisional register, but must apply to do so. The application process will be introduced once the legislation is proclaimed.

Registration requirements for pharmacy technicians

In addition to completing the steps to regulation already described, pharmacy technicians will be required to provide the following:

Proof of English fluency

For Path 1: Candidates who have not graduated from a high school, university, community college, private vocational college or equivalent in Canada or the United States, must provide evidence of fluency by submitting the results of a NAPRA-recognized English language fluency test completed within the past two years.

For Path 2: Candidates educated outside of North America must provide proof of English language fluency using any one of the tests approved by ACP council. (See <https://pharmacists.ab.ca/nCollege/resource.aspx?id=6744> for details.)

Demonstration of good character

For the purposes of demonstrating good character and reputation, applicants must provide:

- a statutory declaration indicating
 - whether they are undergoing investigation or discipline or have been previously disciplined by a professional college, and
 - whether they have pleaded guilty or been found guilty of a criminal offence for which they have not been pardoned
- a criminal records check current within six months of application.

Proof of citizenship

Applicants must provide evidence in the form of a Canadian birth certificate or passport or a valid Canadian employment visa that they are a Canadian citizen or are entitled to work in Canada.

Liability insurance

Registrants on the pharmacy technician register must maintain a minimum of \$1 million of personal malpractice insurance (claims made or occurrence). The policy must be in the technician's name.

We anticipate that liability insurance for technicians will be available from a variety of vendors. For example, PTSA is finalizing details for one option and will have program specifics soon.

Demonstrated product release proficiency

Individuals with the practice experience required for Path 1 have been exempted from the structured practical training portion that is included in Path 2, but ACP council felt it was important that

there be a demonstrated proficiency in completing the final check for product release. Therefore, council has directed that individuals applying for registration must demonstrate this proficiency by completing 100 final checks with 100% accuracy, with a minimum of 20 checks a day within three months. Individuals who have successfully completed the Alberta Health Services checking verification may instead submit that as proof of proficiency.

Path 2 candidates will demonstrate this proficiency in their structured practical training.

Registration fees

ACP will create and manage the register for pharmacy technicians. In addition to

managing the registration process, ACP will also:

- manage the continuing competence process for technicians,
- manage the complaints resolution processes for technicians,
- organize the election of pharmacy technician members to ACP council,
- maintain and make available the jurisprudence exam for technician candidates,
- make college publications available to technicians, and
- liaise with government and other stakeholders concerned with practice and patient safety issues on behalf of pharmacy technicians.

ACP council has established the following 2011 fee schedule for pharmacy technicians:

Fee Name	Amount	Formula used	Rationale	When it applies
Technician registration fee	\$250	Same as pharmacist registration fee	Same work involved in registering regulated technician as a pharmacist; therefore, should be equal. Voluntary technicians are currently paying \$234 for registration.	First time registration with ACP. Those who have already paid to join the voluntary register will not be charged this fee when they are moved to the provisional register.
Provisional Register permit fee	\$80	\$78 (current voluntary technician permit fee) + 2% cost of living allowance (COLA)	This equates to current voluntary register fee.	When registering as a provisional technician until all conditions have been met to register as a regulated technician.
Regulated technician practice permit fee 2011	\$450	\$735 (pharmacist permit fee) + 2% COLA x 60%	Calculated as 60% of the pharmacist permit fee.	When registering on the pharmacy technician register.
Pro-rated regulated technician practice permit fee 2011	\$248	\$450 annual fee x 50% + 10% for admin costs	This calculation is consistent with what is used for the pharmacist pro-rated fee.	When a provisional technician or locum technician is changing status to a regulated technician and is a first-time registrant as a regulated technician is joining ACP between July 1, 2011 and Dec 31, 2011.
Non-compliance fee	\$77	\$75 (current non-compliance fee for pharmacists) + 2% COLA	There is the same amount of work and costs involved for non-compliant technicians as for pharmacists.	Dec 1, 2011- Dec 31, 2011 for technicians who do not meet the payment or submission requirements prior to the end of the renewal period.
Reinstatement fee	\$250	\$245 (current pharmacist reinstatement fee) + 2% COLA	There is the same amount of work and costs involved for reinstating a technician as there is for a pharmacist.	If a cancelled (cancelled for non-renewal, discipline or other reasons) or suspended technician is reinstating to a regulated technician.
Jurisprudence Exam fee (re-challenge or reinstatement)	\$139	\$136 (current pharmacist exam fee) + 2% COLA	The exam will cost ACP the same whether it is a pharmacist or technician writing.	If a provisional registrant fails the first attempt of the exam, the fee will be charged for all subsequent attempts. If a reinstating regulated technician has been away from practice for 2 years or more, they must pay to write the exam.
Courtesy register/ locum permit	\$248	\$450 x 50% + 10% admin	Based on same formula used for pharmacist locum fee.	When registering as a courtesy pharmacy technician to practice temporarily in Alberta (locum) or to provide CE.



Amend the Pharmacists Profession Regulation

ACP and technicians have worked together with government to draft the amendments necessary to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation for technician regulation. A consultation on the amendments will be conducted by Alberta Health and Wellness this summer. Once the amendments are approved, an effective date for the Regulation will be set and technician regulation in Alberta can begin.

Amend the Standards of Practice

ACP, again with technician input, has drafted amended Standards of Practice to accommodate regulated technicians. ACP will conduct a consultation on these amendments this summer.

Amend ACP by-laws

ACP will be circulating a discussion document as a precursor to amending its

by-laws to accommodate the election of voting pharmacy technician members to the council.

Read, listen, ponder, and participate

ACP is looking forward to the consultations and to receiving your feedback. Only through the input and participation of all parties can we ensure we've explored all the possibilities and ended up with the best process for creating this new profession.

How do you participate in the consultations?

Alberta Health and Wellness is conducting the consultation on the amendments to the Pharmacists Profession Regulation. They will be using all channels available to them to solicit your feedback.

For the consultations on the Standards of Practice and ACP's by-laws, ACP will

circulate information via our website (pharmacists.ab.ca), The Link (our e-newsletter), emails to registrants, and *acpnews* (our quarterly newsletter). We will also work with PTSA (www.pharmacytechnicians.ab.ca) to distribute information to technicians.

If you have questions or would like to comment on any of the information in this newsletter, please email us at acpinfo@pharmacists.ab.ca.

Stay tuned

Technician regulation is an evolving process. To keep up to date, look to the *Pharmacy Technician Information* link in the Bulletin Board section of the ACP website and The Link, ACP's e-newsletter, delivered every two weeks. (Note that archived editions of The Link are available on the ACP website under *News & Events/ACP newsletters*.)

alberta college of
pharmacists



Suite 1200, 10303 Jasper Ave NW
Edmonton, AB T5J 3N6
Telephone: 780-990-0321
Toll free: 1-877-227-3838
Fax: 780-990-0328
pharmacists.ab.ca

