



1. What does an Entry-level program prepare students to do compared to an Advanced-level program?

The Entry-Level program prepares students for practice as Entry-level pharmacy technicians in a variety of contemporary settings (e.g., community, hospital, home care, long-term care) and has students acquire knowledge, skills, behaviors, and abilities needed for such practice.

The Advanced-level program prepares students for practice as Advanced-level pharmacy technicians, in a broad range of advanced roles in a variety of contemporary settings (e.g., community, hospital, home care, long-term care) and has students acquire additional knowledge, skills, behaviors, and abilities beyond those of the Entry-level pharmacy technician, needed for such advanced practice.

2. What is the difference between an Entry-level program and an Advanced level program?

The hours and the number of externship rotations that are required. Most programs start with offering an entry level program and if they would like to the additional hours and key elements of the standard for the advanced program, they can do that later. There are no additional fees to add an advanced level program option. Graduates of the entry level program can supplement their entry level certificate with the additional coursework to then have an advanced level graduation certificate.

Here is the hour breakdown for each type of program:

- Entry-level: 400 hours total, \geq 8 weeks of 300 hours divided as:
 - + Didactic – 120 hours
 - + Simulation – 50 hours
 - + Experiential – 130 hours
 - + Plus an additional 100 hours allocated as program director and faculty see fit.
- Advanced-level: 600 hours, \geq 15 weeks (includes Entry-level program hours) o 460 hours divided as:
 - + Didactic – 160 hours (40 additional hours beyond Entry-level)
 - + Simulation – 100 hours (50 additional hours beyond Entry-level)
 - + Experiential – 200 hours (70 additional hours beyond Entry-level)
 - + Plus an additional 140 hours allocated as program director and faculty see fit.

3. When can I apply for accreditation?

The first day that you start classes for the program. You can download the application from the ASHP website and email it to asd@ashp.org, along with your completed academic and professional form and curriculum vitae. The Senior Director, Technician Program Accreditation and Residency Services will assign a lead surveyor for your program that will contact you to schedule your survey (it may be live or virtual, depending on the situation). The survey will be conducted after your class graduates.

4. How much does it cost for accreditation?

There is an initial accreditation fee and an annual fee. These fees are located on the ASHP website under Technician Accreditation and Starting a Program. The fees are dependent on the type of program that you have, how many sites are within the system, and when you apply during the year. The fees are prorated according to when you apply during the year. If you apply in January, you pay for the full year. If you apply in June, you pay for seven months of the year. The reason that you pay for accreditation at the time of application is that the accreditation, when granted, is retroactive to the date of application. Fees are not refundable if a program is not successful in achieving accreditation.

5. My state has mandated that my program must be accredited, but my program can be in candidate status until it is reviewed and gets accredited. When will my program be accredited and when am I be considered for candidate status?

Your program is considered in ASHP/ACPE candidate status the date we receive the application, preferably, you should apply the first day you have a student. The program is scheduled for a survey after your first student graduates. You will be reviewed for accreditation as close as possible to the date of graduation of your first student. A survey team usually consisting of a lead surveyor and a technician program educator will review your program and provide you with a draft report at the review. You will receive the actual report within 30 days of the survey, and you will have 75 days from when the survey was conducted to respond to any areas of non- or partial compliance. The survey team will review your response and provide a recommendation to the Pharmacy Technician Accreditation Commission (PTAC), (they meet in May and October each year) to accredit the program or not accredit the program. Most programs are recommended for accreditation. A program is reviewed every six years and can be recommended for various cycles for time in which the program director must respond back to areas that have not been responded to in the report. Durations of accreditation can be 6 months, 1 year, 3 years and full cycle of 6 years. No program goes any longer than 6 years without responding back to a report. The voted actions from the PTAC then go to both the ASHP and ACPE Board of Directors meetings (they meet in June and January, respectively), for their vote. Once they have met, programs are contacted to provide their accreditation status. For programs reviewed at the May PTAC meeting and voted upon at the June ASHP and ACPE Board meetings, a program must be surveyed between July 16-February 15th, for review at the October PTAC and ASHP/ACPE January Board meeting, a program must be reviewed between February 16th and July 15th. As mentioned previously, regardless of when a program is reviewed, the accreditation is retroactive to the date of application when successful with the accreditation process.

6. Do I have to write the whole program myself?

We are not prescriptive as to how you put together your didactic, simulation (although it must be hands-on), and externship components, if they cover the key elements of the standards. You can write the full program or utilize proprietary products that are available on the market for the didactic portion of the program, as well as some aspects of simulation lesson planning, and evaluations for various elements of the program. Utilizing any product-homegrown or proprietary is not a guarantee for accreditation, all programs must meet the standards.

7. Do you have tools to help me understand the accreditation standards?

Yes! Many are located on the www.ashp.org and then go to Technician Accreditation on the website. You will find a wealth of assistance when you navigate to the box that says, "Accreditation Standards, Regulations, and Other Tools." From written standards and regulations to the Model Curriculum for Pharmacy Technician Education and Training, to the Tech Tablet Newsletter, and not to mention-a variety of webinars on many of the areas that program directors have frequently asked the Accreditation Services Office guidance in developing their programs. There is even a guidance document that mirrors the technician education and training standard to assist program directors to understand when surveyors are looking for on surveys. More and more helpful tools are added on a frequent basis.

8. Do I have to have a "school-like" classroom and lab"?

It depends on your environment. If you are training in a hospital/health-system environment, you should have an area where students can have a quiet place to learn their didactic materials, whether it be a classroom, or they are sent to another quiet area if the materials are online. If the classes are live, you will need a classroom. For externship, you will need a simulated set up for the type of pharmacy practice that the students will be doing when they are working in the pharmacy. If they are doing sterile products and automated drug cabinet filling, they will need to learn the hands-on elements of all aspects of hospital pharmacy, if they are going to be in the ambulatory pharmacy they will need to learn ambulatory/retail pharmacy principles. Students need to have hands-on simulation practice for the environments that they will be having externship rotations prior to the externship experience. So, you can either have a fully equipped lab, perform the lab in satellites that are not operating when they are doing their hands-on activities, or even for some exercises, have the students perform the functions in the simulation mode prior to the externship mode. There should be no medications going to patients when the student is training in simulation mode.

9. Can I pay a student while they are training?

Yes, if they are doing all the aspects of the program, and they are being evaluated against all the key elements and standards of the program.

10. Who needs to be on the advisory committee?

You can have the pharmacists that are acting as preceptors for the program, technicians in the same capacity, graduates of the program, current students, someone from the community that can provide input for the community's needs, someone from the Board of Pharmacy, as well as College of Pharmacy representatives, to name a few. You must have a wide representation of pharmacists and technicians that can provide input into your program.

11. Do I need to do all the didactic and simulation activities before the externship?

Not necessarily. You can divide the program into blocks and have externship experiences after each block.

12. I see there is a required math and English assessment for getting into the program, how do I do that?

There are so many ways to do that. It could be via a standardized test, or for the English component, you could review their application or have them write something when you bring them in for an interview. For the math, you could put together some math questions for them to complete. You are responsible for setting up the thresholds for acceptance for both the English and math assessments.

13. Do I have to charge tuition?

No, you can charge if you would like or not charge. You can have something in the contract that they need to pay back the equivalent of what the program would cost if they left the program before a certain amount of time of employment. It is up to you. But this must all be in writing and the student needs to see this prior to signing up for the program and sign off on it once they decide to come into the program. "Coming into the program" would be the same as becoming an employee for anything related to the program.

14. Why should I consider developing an ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program?

There is currently a pharmacy technician shortage and according to the United States Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics Pharmacy Technician employment is projected to increase by 5.6% between 2022 and 2032. This will further increase the competition for qualified technician candidates for employment. Creating your own pool of qualified pharmacy technicians for employment is a novel approach to filling open positions and retaining highly skilled talent.

15. What is the best way to sell an ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program to my superior and who else should I have in the room?

ASHP has created a tool kit to use in creating a business plan for presentation to your superior. Understanding your organization's turnover rate for pharmacy technicians is an important statistic to know. Your Human Resources Department can serve as an important ally in identifying that and assisting with creating a sense of urgency.

16. What are some of the essential items needed to begin the planning process for an ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program?

Doing a competitive analysis that compares you to the competition is a useful tool to determine the economic feasibility of your program. This is best accomplished by an internal SWOT and an external PESTEL Analyses. The SWOT Analysis is a technique used to identify your internal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats while the PESTEL Analysis examines the Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental, and Legal external environment.

Another important item is the creation of a strategic plan. The strategic plan focuses on how you will achieve the specific initiatives required to develop your program. It helps you answer several questions:

- What is your mission, vision, and values?
- What are your goals and how will you achieve them?
- Who will be responsible for achieving the goals and what are the timelines?

For more information on how to write a strategic plan visit the ASHP website.

17. Do I need a dedicated space for an ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program?

An ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program requires three educational components that are run consecutively, they include:

- **Didactic Based Learning** – this can be accomplished by a traditional, structured, classroom setting where the teacher imparts information to students a physical classroom or in a virtual/hybrid setting. The virtual/hybrid setting utilizes proprietary learning technology to facilitate self-paced learning by the student. In this case the student learns remotely, and competency is assessed by the tool.
- **Simulation Based Learning** – this can be accomplished by facilitated in person or virtual sessions whereby students receive hands-on learning in a safe, patient free environment. This allows trainees to put what they have learned into practice by applying critical thinking skills in a low-risk environment.
- **Experiential Based Learning** - sometimes referred to as an externship, this type of learning is accomplished by providing students a short-term professional learning experience in a live pharmacy setting. It affords students a hands-on experience with preceptor oversight.

For more information visit the ASHP website and access the Accreditation Standards.

18. What are some of the other advantages of a Health-system based ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program?

- Health-systems, by virtue of their size, have a wide range of practice settings, spanning both inpatient and outpatient locations. This wide range of practice settings is the perfect place for pharmacy technicians to learn all aspects of pharmacy practice.
- Health-systems are often the largest employers in their community with strong marketing capabilities. Capitalizing on these characteristics can help recruit prospective pharmacy technician candidates.
- Emerging service lines in Health-systems often require additional pharmacy services. Creating an ASHP/ACPE Accredited Pharmacy Technician and Education Training Program will help you build strategic capabilities for these emerging service lines.