



NI Centre for  
**Pharmacy Learning  
& Development**

# Accredited Checking Pharmacy Technician (ACPT) Programme

N. Ireland

Accredited Checking Pharmacy Technician (ACPT) Programme

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# 1. Introduction

The aim of this programme is to accredit technicians to carry out the final accuracy check of dispensed items which have been clinically approved by a registered pharmacist for dispensing and annotated according to local Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). It does not encompass aseptic dispensing nor self-checking of own dispensing.

## 2. ACPT Programme

### 2.1 Aim

The programme is designed to:

- provide pharmacy technicians with the skills and knowledge to confirm the dispensing accuracy of any prescription previously screened/approved by a registered pharmacist
- develop the technician's professional awareness of pharmacy practice
- encourage the further development of effective communication skills
- develop a professional interaction between fellow pharmacy technicians, pharmacists, patients, colleagues and other health care professionals
- support appropriate skill-mix within pharmacy departments.

### 2.2 Candidate entry criteria

Pharmacy technicians in N. Ireland may apply to enrol on this programme if they meet the following criteria:

- candidate is a qualified pharmacy technician, with at least two years' post-qualification experience
- candidate must be registered with NICPLD
- candidate has a minimum of six months dispensing experience in their current dispensary within the twelve months prior to commencing this programme
- candidate must have demonstrated their ability to dispense accurately according to locally agreed SOPs
- candidate has identified an appropriate educational supervisor who supports their application.

### 2.3 Educational supervisor criteria

The individuals nominated as educational supervisors to pharmacy technicians undertaking the ACPT programme must fulfil the following criteria:

- be a pharmacist or a currently accredited ACPT who has experience of mentoring staff according to the specific requirements of their work-base
- have at least three years experience post-qualification as a pharmacist/accredited ACPT
- have experience of facilitating staff
- be able and committed to meeting regularly with the candidate to ensure maximum support is provided
- have attended the NICPLD ACPT workshop for educational supervisors.

### 2.4 Skills developed throughout the programme

This programme is designed to promote the development of the specific skills required of anyone completing a final accuracy check on a previously clinically screened prescription. Throughout the programme, candidates should demonstrate improving competence in the following areas:

- the ability to accurately check a dispensed item
- the ability to focus on the task of final accuracy checking
- the ability to work within local SOPs
- effective communication skills
- effective interpersonal skills
- effective time management skills
- effective team building skills.

Candidates and educational supervisors should collectively reflect on the development of these skills and identify areas for further development if required.

## 2.5 Responsibilities throughout the programme

During the course of the programme NICPLD, the Trust or the Community Pharmacy, the educational supervisor and the candidate all have defined responsibilities to ensure that a supportive learning environment is provided and to facilitate the completion of the accreditation.

### 2.5.1 Responsibility of NICPLD

The role of NICPLD is to facilitate training by experts in the field of final accuracy checking for pharmacy technicians. NICPLD's role is also to encourage and support educational supervisors and candidates throughout the accreditation process.

### 2.5.2 Responsibility of the Trust or Community Pharmacy

Pharmacists have overall responsibility for the pharmaceutical services provided to patients. It is the role of the lead pharmacist to ensure that anyone involved in the delivery of, or the implementation of, this programme has the required resources and support. The lead pharmacist is also required to support all candidates particularly with regard to ensuring equality and diversity before, during and after training.

The lead pharmacist must ensure that:

- this extension to the technician's role is covered by the vicarious liability of the employing organisation
- SOPs are in place and the candidate is familiar with, and works competently, within these
- support mechanisms are in place to support candidates, ie. adequate staff to ensure that the technician is not involved in the dispensing process and is able to check as required.

### 2.5.3 Responsibility of the educational supervisor

Each nominated educational supervisor must commit to:

- attending the NICPLD ACPT workshop for educational supervisors
- completing a learning contract with each candidate they are mentoring
- fulfilling the role as described in Appendix 2 (page 13)
- meeting regularly with the candidate to provide support, ensure development of underpinning skills and offer guidance
- preparing the candidate for the final appraisal at NICPLD by offering a practice OSCE at work-base
- liaising with NICPLD to ensure the completion of the programme within the twelve month time frame.

### 2.5.4 Responsibility of the candidate

Candidates are responsible for their own completion of the programme as outlined in Appendix 1 (page 12). They are responsible for their own professional actions and must consult the Medicines, Ethics and Practice Guide (current edition) and the PSNI Code of Ethics for guidance relating to professional conduct.

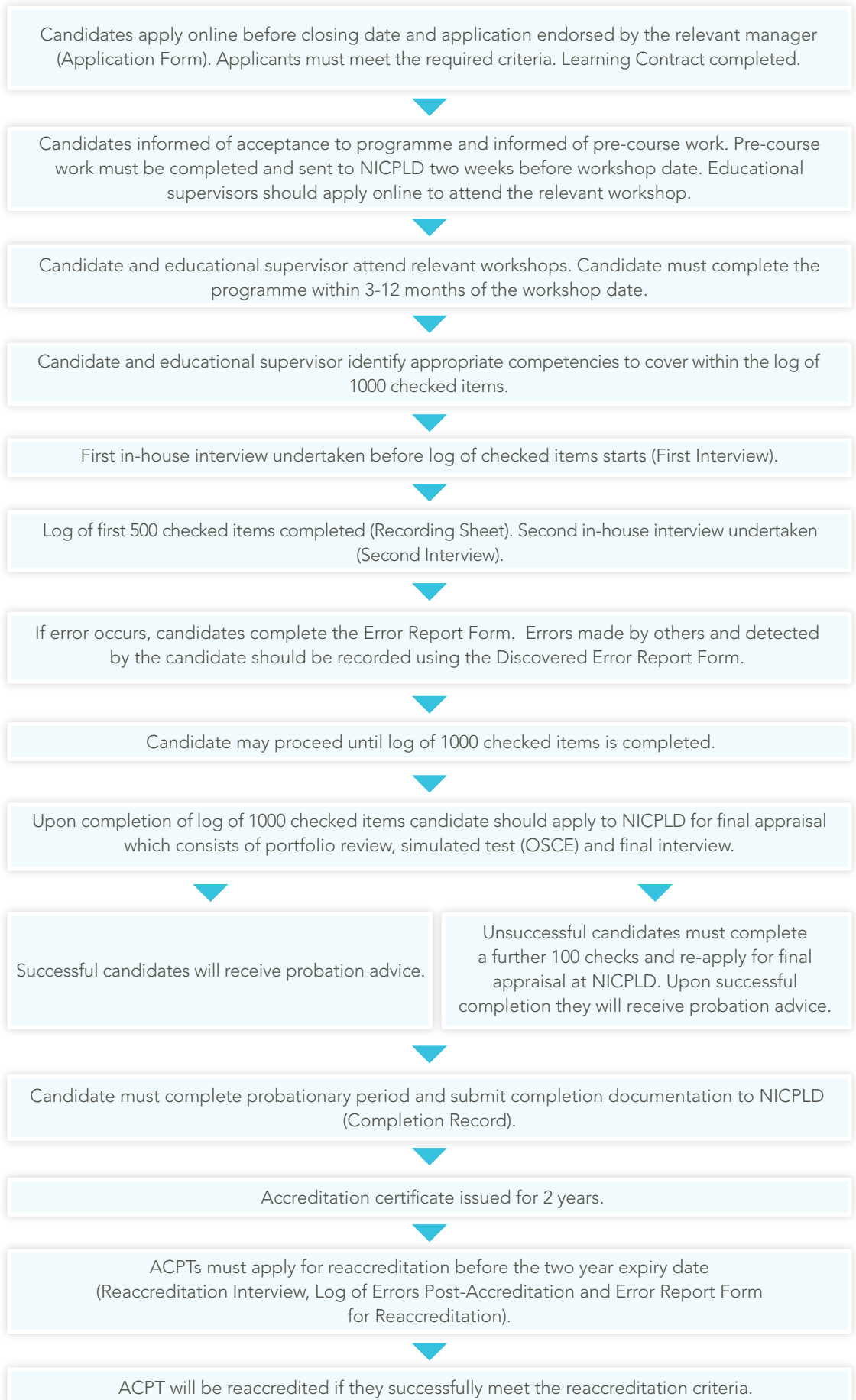
## 2.6 Programme overview and format

To aid the development of the underpinning skills, the programme consists of a number of elements:

- Pre-course work
- Induction workshops
- Work-based activities
- Final appraisal
- Probation
- Completion and certification
- Reaccreditation

Each of these elements are included within the programme overview overleaf.

## Programme overview



### 2.6.1 Pre-course work

Pharmacy technicians wishing to register for this ACPT programme must complete the Application Form online and once they have received confirmation of a place, commence the pre-course work before the workshop date.

The pre-course work includes:

- completing a dispensing accuracy log of 200 items. This log must be 100% accurate with no errors to demonstrate the candidate's ability to dispense accurately before attempting the role of the final accuracy checker. The log must be undertaken at the candidate's current work-base. This dispensing accuracy assessment must have been completed within the preceding two years to be considered current and the individual must demonstrate that they have maintained this level of competence in any interim period
- completing the Learning Contract
- reviewing the SOPs to ensure an up-to-date knowledge of all dispensing requirements
- providing an up-to-date curriculum vitae (CV)
- providing an up-to-date job description of their current role.

The dispensing log must be forwarded to NICPLD on completion. The remaining pre-course documentation must be signed by the educational supervisor where appropriate and brought to the induction workshop.

### 2.6.2 Induction workshops

#### 2.6.2.1. Candidate workshop

Candidates are required to attend a two-day workshop at NICPLD and on completion of this workshop should be able to:

- state the law and guidance relating to the dispensing of medicines and medicinal products
- discuss the legal and ethical implications of pharmacy technician final accuracy checking
- describe the consequences of dispensing/checking errors
- demonstrate the communication skills required in the process of final accuracy checking
- explain the necessity of referral to colleagues in the final accuracy check
- perform the final accuracy check of dispensed items which must have been clinically screened/ approved by a registered pharmacist and annotated according to local procedure
- demonstrate the ability to recognise their own limitations in the checking process and make appropriate referrals
- work within the parameters of the scheme and ensure that they do NOT check items that they have dispensed
- work within SOPs and describe the importance of adhering to them.

#### 2.6.2.2 Workshop for educational supervisors

Educational supervisors are required to attend a half-day workshop at NICPLD and on completion of this workshop should be able to:

- define the principles of the ACPT programme
- describe the legal and ethical framework of ACPT checking
- discuss the need for locally agreed dispensing procedures (SOPs)
- define the process of work- based assessments, accreditation assessment and reaccreditation process
- be familiar with the practice activity documentation
- define the term "clinical screen/approval"
- discuss the development, review and audit of SOPs for the use of all ACPT paperwork
- understand and be familiar with all paperwork associated with the programme.

### 2.6.3 Work-based activities

The work-based activities associated with this programme consist of in-house interviews and the accuracy checking log. During the course of the programme, candidates are required to have completed at least two in-house interviews with their educational supervisor and complete the 1000 item accuracy checking log.

#### 2.6.3.1 The in-house interviews

The first in-house interview will take place prior to commencing the 1000 item log (documented using First Interview Form). The second interview will take place when the candidate has completed 500 accuracy checks (documented using Second Interview Form). The purpose of these interviews is to ensure that the candidate continues to make progress with the development of the necessary skills to become an accurate checking technician.

#### 2.6.3.2 Accuracy checking log

Candidates must undertake the collection of a minimum of 1000 accurately checked items all of which must be second accuracy checked by a pharmacist or a currently accredited ACPT before release. The candidate should play no part in the dispensing or labelling of any items that they check.

The log of items should be documented using the form, Recording Sheet. The log should include a range of checks which the candidate will be expected to undertake as an accredited checker. The range of checks should be discussed and agreed by the educational supervisor and the candidate prior to commencing the log and should be documented during the in-house interviews. Each item dispensed counts as a single check; therefore, if multiple packs are dispensed the checker would count each item and document the total number of items checked.

#### *Errors detected by the candidate:*

During the course of the checking log, the candidate will detect errors made by colleagues. All candidates are required to write reflections of at least ten errors which they have discovered during the course of their 1000 item log and document these using the Discovered Error Report Form. These reflections should be stored in the candidate's portfolio.

#### *Errors made by the candidate:*

During the course of undertaking the collection of 1000 accurately checked items, the following scope for error will apply in relation to errors made by the candidate:

- First attempt – if candidate makes one serious error or up to three less serious errors, they should reflect on the nature of the error using the Error Report Form and collect an additional 250 items
- Second error – if an additional error is made, either serious or less serious in nature, the candidate should reflect on the nature of the error using the Error Report Form and restart their log of 1000 items.

All completed Error Report Forms should be stored in the candidate's portfolio. Any candidate who makes an error on their second full attempt (following a complete restart) must inform their educational supervisor and NICPLD.

Normal practice is that no candidate will be allowed more than two attempts in total at completing the collection of 1000 accurately checked items without re-attending the induction workshop.

The NICPLD classification of errors is as follows:

| Defined error      | Serious error  | Less serious error  |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Incorrect label    | wrong drug name<br>wrong drug form<br>wrong drug strength<br>incorrect patient name<br>incorrect label quantity<br>wrong directions<br>missing or inappropriate use of BNF additional warnings | incorrect cost code<br>incorrect expiry date<br>incorrect batch number<br>incorrect spelling<br>missing additional warnings<br>incorrect ward/address |
| Incorrect contents | wrong drug<br>wrong drug form<br>wrong drug strength<br>incorrect quantity   |   |
| Other              | expired contents<br>missing or incorrect PIL<br>missing item sundry<br>missing medication<br>missing identification of clinical screen   | incorrect container/closure<br>missing signature<br>missing 'owing' information sheet<br>missing 5ml spoon  |

NB: If the classification of an error is unclear, please contact NICPLD. Please note that on clarification with NICPLD, a less serious error may be up-graded to a serious error but a serious error will not be down-graded.

#### 2.6.4 Final appraisal

On completion of the pre-course work, two in-house interviews and 1000 item log, candidates may apply to NICPLD for their final appraisal which includes:

- Portfolio review
- Simulated test (OSCE)
- Final interview.

##### 2.6.4.1 Portfolio review

The NICPLD assessment panel will review of all the evidence that the candidate has completed during the ACPT programme. As well as the two in-house interviews and the 1000 item accuracy log the portfolio must include all completed pre-course work, a reflection of any errors which have been missed (Error Report Form) and at least ten reflections of errors discovered by the candidate during the 1000 item log of accuracy checks (Discovered Error Report Form ).

The NICPLD panel will check the portfolio for accuracy and completeness. They will also ensure consistency of information confirming the range of competencies identified in the first in-house interview corresponds with the range of competencies listed at the second in-house interview which should all correspond with the range covered within the 1000 item log within the candidate's portfolio.



#### 2.6.4.2 Simulated test (OSCE)

The simulated final accuracy checking of dispensed items against test prescriptions will test the professional skills developed by the candidate during the course of the programme. Candidates will be expected to check twenty items within a one hour time frame. Each error must be noted on the template provided by NICPLD. Candidates will be permitted to refer to the BNF as their only reference source. Candidates must not make any errors during the simulated test.

Candidates will be informed of the outcome of their performance at the simulated test by email. Unsuccessful candidates must undertake a further log of 100 accuracy checked items before applying for a re-sit at NICPLD. Candidates will be allowed a maximum of two attempts at the simulated test within the one year time frame.

#### 2.6.4.3 Final interview

The final interview is designed to assess the candidate's ability to accept responsibility as an ACPT. Before the final interview the candidate's portfolio will be assessed to ensure it meets the assessment criteria and during the course of the interview the candidate will be given feedback on their portfolio.

Candidates who successfully complete all three aspects of the final appraisal will be permitted to commence their probation period.

#### 2.6.4.4 Appeals

NICPLD will treat all candidates fairly, equally and with respect in relation to any assessment. If a candidate is dissatisfied with the outcome of their final appraisal they must, within 5 working days, contact NICPLD and give notice of their dissatisfaction and of their intent to forward an appeal. The formal appeal procedure must then be followed:

1. All appeals against the conduct, adequacy or outcome of an assessment must be forwarded, in writing, to NICPLD within 10 working days after the candidate has given notice of their intent.
2. On receipt of notification of an appeal, NICPLD will set a date for the appeal to be heard by an appeals panel. The appeals panel will consist of:
  - A representative of NICPLD
  - A pharmacy manager not otherwise involved in the appeal
  - A pharmacy technician not involved in the appeal

The candidate will be offered the opportunity to be accompanied by another person not involved in their accreditation to help them present their case.

3. The appeals panel will meet within 30 working days of receipt of the written notification of the appeal.
4. The appeals panel will reach a decision and all involved parties will receive verbal notification of the outcome on the day of the appeal and written notification within 5 working days. This decision will be final.

### 2.6.5 Probation

Following successful completion of the final appraisal, candidates will be required to undertake a probation period. This should be for a period of two weeks or ten working days depending on the number of hours usually worked by the candidate.

During this probation period, candidates should:

- comply with the required double checks at the start of probation, and then should decrease everyday so that at the midpoint of the probation period approximately 50% of the double checks should be completed by a pharmacist or a valid ACPT. On nearing completion of the two weeks, the candidate should be observed randomly whilst final accuracy checking but should ask every time if the pharmacist or ACPT wants to double check the item they have completed an accuracy check on.
- ensure that all final accuracy checks during the probation period are 100% accurate and contain no errors.
- re-start their probation period if an error is detected by a pharmacist or ACPT so that they complete a full two weeks or ten days of final accuracy checking with no errors.

All candidates are required to liaise with NICPLD if there is a problem and probation is delayed as this will affect their completion date.

#### 2.6.5.1 Completion and certification

Following successful completion of the probation period candidates should forward their record of completion to NICPLD (Completion Record). An accreditation certificate will be issued to all those who have successfully completed all aspects of the programme. This certificate is valid for a period of two years and it is the responsibility of all ACPTs to maintain their accreditation.

### 2.6.6 Reaccreditation

It is the responsibility of all ACPTs to ensure currency of their accreditation as practising outside of a current certificate will result in the individual being in breach of their job description and professional responsibilities.

All ACPTs seeking to be reaccredited must:

- maintain an on-going log of any errors made and document these (Log of Errors Post-Accreditation)
- reflect on any errors made (Error Report Form for Reaccreditation). These reflections should be reviewed periodically by the educational supervisor to ensure they are within acceptable error reporting limits.
- provide documentation to confirm the opportunity to work as an ACPT on a regular basis, defined as at least eight hours per month (Reaccreditation Interview)
- provide evidence of an appraisal which has reviewed their role over the last two years and includes a summary of performance by a senior manager (Reaccreditation Interview).

### 2.6.7 Competence range post-accreditation

Once accredited, ACPTs are able to expand their areas of checking competence. This will require them to submit a log of 100 items relating to the new checking practice area. They are also required to submit a supporting statement from their educational supervisor to confirm that the competencies listed on their certificate are current, no longer covered or have been further extended.

### 2.6.8 Periods of absence/lapsed accreditation

If a pharmacy technician is unable to work as an ACPT for a minimum of eight hours per month, it is recommended that before re-commencing the checking role they undertake a review of the SOPs and refamiliarise themselves with the role.

If the pharmacy technician is absent from this role for a longer period of time, it is recommended that they undertake the minimum quantity of accuracy checks which are double checked by a pharmacist or a valid ACPT as described in the table below. All accuracy checks must be endorsed by the educational supervisor. A record of return to the role should also be recorded using the Reaccreditation Interview Form. Please note that all logs should be completed without error.

| Period of absence | Required quantity of double checks |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|
| < 6 months        | log of 100 items                   |
| 6 – 12 months     | log of 200 items                   |
| 13 – 24 months    | log of 500 items                   |
| ≥ 24 months       | must restart the accreditation     |

ACPTs and their educational supervisors should conform to this guidance relating to periods of absence. If any pharmacy technician is absent from the ACPT role for more than two years they must re-start the process. If an ACPT has let their certificate of accreditation expire they must also undertake the minimum quantity of accuracy checks which are double checked as described above.

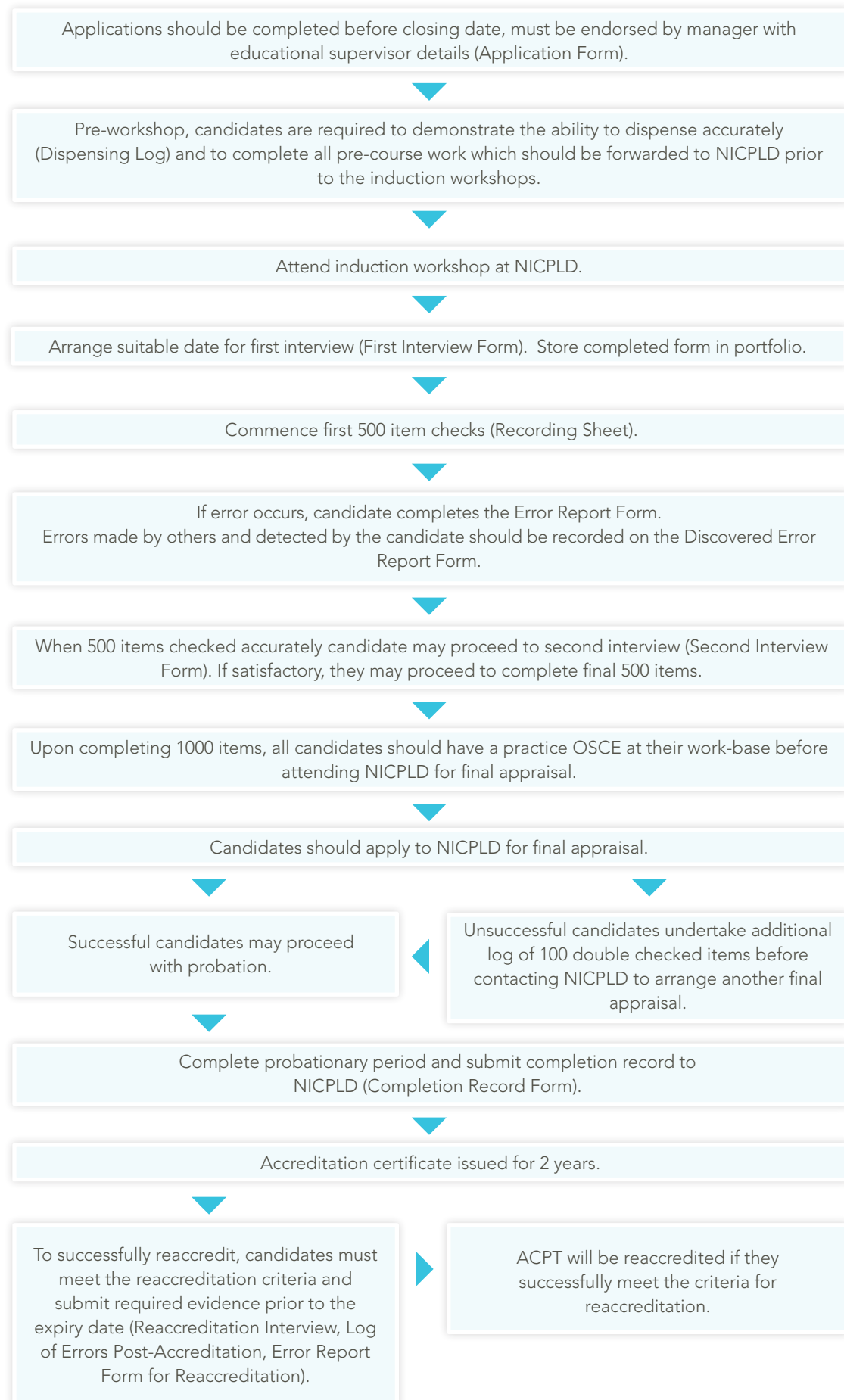
### 2.6.9 Change of work-base for an ACPT

Accreditations awarded by programmes that meet the standards of the Nationally Recognised ACPT Framework represent transferable skills across organisations.

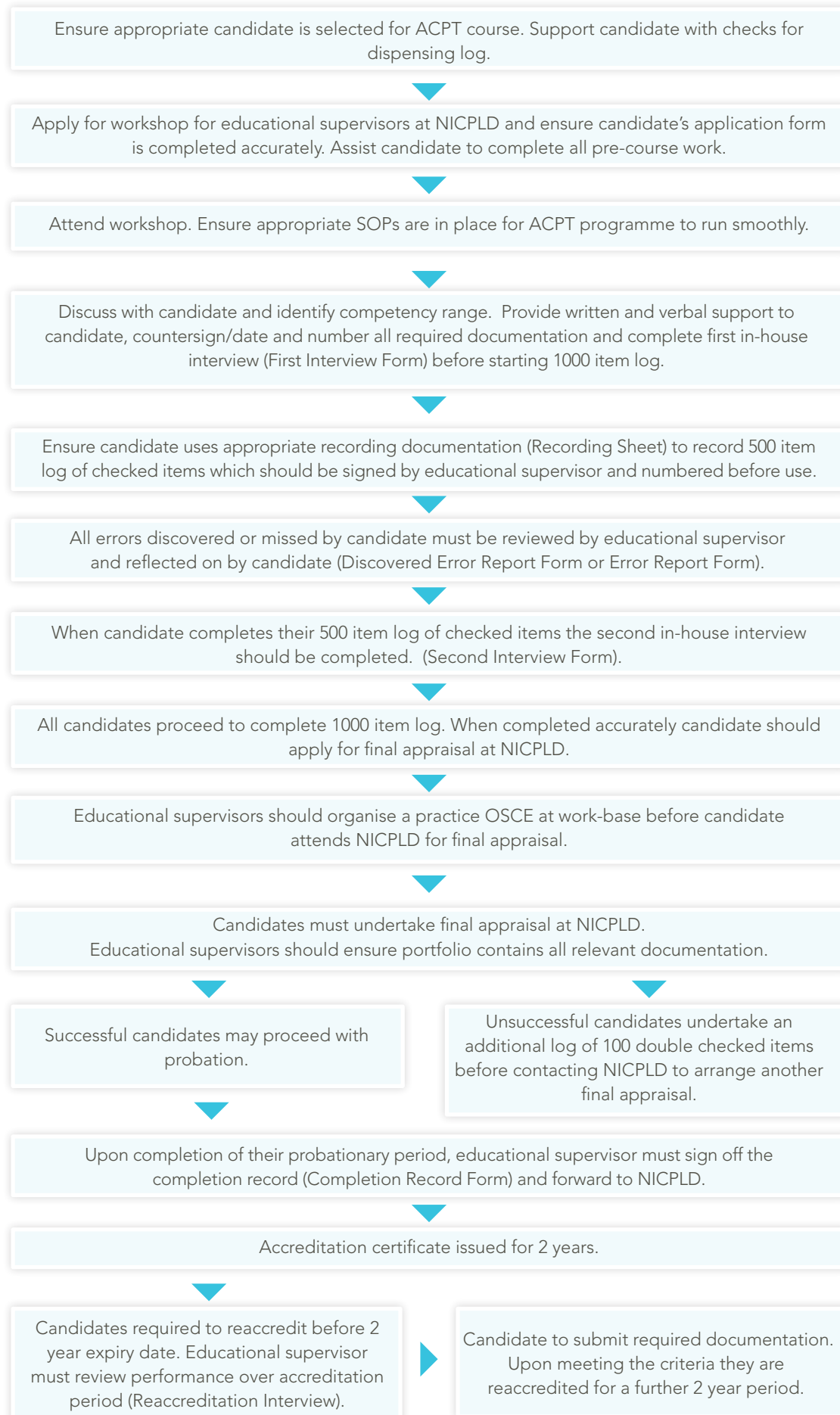
Prior to a pharmacy technician moving from one work-base to another, it is the responsibility of the technician to ensure their certificate is valid and lists their current areas of competence.

When an ACPT moves to another work-base they should be allowed a period of time to become familiar with the SOPs and to demonstrate competence should collate a log of approximately 200 items within the same ranges listed on their accreditation certificate.

## Appendix 1 Candidate responsibilities



## Appendix 2 Responsibilities of educational supervisor



## Appendix 3 Paperwork for ACPT programme and reaccreditation

The following paperwork should be **stored within the candidate's portfolio** in preparation for the portfolio review process within the final appraisal.

| Name of form                          | When to use   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| Learning Contract                     | Completed prior to programme commencing.  |
| Dispensing Log                        | Used prior to commencing the programme to collect log of 200 accurately dispensed items.                  |
| Recording Sheet                       | To record log of 1000 checked items.  |
| Discovered Error Report Form          | To reflect on an error made by others discovered during 1000 item log.                                    |
| Error Report Form                     | To reflect on an error made by others and NOT detected by candidate during 1000 item log.                 |
| First Interview                       | Used to structure and record first interview with candidate prior to commencing 1000 item log.            |
| Second Interview                      | Used to structure and record second interview with candidate when 500 items have been accurately checked. |
| Third Interview                       | Used to structure and record final interview with candidate by Regional Panel.                            |
| Portfolio Review                      | Feedback to candidate from Regional Panel regarding their portfolio.                                      |
| Probation Advice                      | Sent to candidate on successful completion of all aspects of the final appraisal.                         |
| Log of Errors Post-Accreditation      | To record a log of errors made post-accreditation.  |
| Error Report Form for Reaccreditation | To record a reflection of an error made post-accreditation.   |

The following paperwork should be **forwarded to NICPLD** at the relevant time point.

| Name of form              | When to use   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Application Form          | Completed following online registration for the programme and forwarded to NICPLD.  |
| Completion Record         | When all aspects of the programme successfully completed, forward to NICPLD to accredit.                                    |
| Reaccreditation Interview | Following reaccreditation interview with educational supervisor, forward to NICPLD to complete the reaccreditation process. |