AFRICA · SOUTH AFRICA · FOREIGN-QUALIFIED PHARMACIST ROUTE

ZA How to register as a pharmacist in South Africa

To practise as a pharmacist in South Africa you must be registered with the South African Pharmacy Council under the Pharmacy Act 53 of 1974. Foreign-qualified pharmacists have their degree evaluated, pass a professional exam and then complete practical training or community service. Licence or registration: **Registration as a pharmacist with the SAPC**. Regulator: **South African Pharmacy Council (SAPC)**. Every fact was checked against official sources on **20 November 2026**.

WORK RIGHTS COME FIRST SAPC states that foreign-qualified applicants must be permanent residents or have permission to work in South Africa. Non-South Africans also need a Department of Health (FWMP) letter of support to book the exams, and a Home Affairs work permit before community service. Plan immigration and registration together.

Who decides what	
SAQA	Evaluates your foreign qualification and issues the certificate that SAPC requires.
South African Pharmacy Council	Evaluates your curriculum, approves you for the exams, runs them and registers interns and pharmacists.
National Department of Health (FWMP)	Issues the letter of support for non-South Africans who need a work permit or want to write the exams.
Department of Home Affairs	Decides visas and work permits. Applications from Pakistan go through the mission's visa centre. Separate from registration.
Employer or public health facility	Decides hiring and offers internship or community service posts. Registration is not a job offer.

Who can apply

- A pharmacy qualification, Bachelor of Pharmacy or equivalent, that permits registration as a pharmacist in the country where you trained.
- Proof of registration as a pharmacist there, or proof that your qualification allows registration.
- SAPC states you must be a permanent resident of South Africa or have permission to work there.
- Non-South Africans who need a work permit must have a Department of Health FWMP letter of support.
- IELTS General Training, overall band 6, unless you are a South African citizen schooled in South Africa.
- Police clearance from your home country, and from SAPS if you have lived in South Africa for more than 2 years.

The steps, with approximate time and cost

1 Have your degree evaluated by SAQA
All foreign qualifications must first be evaluated by the South African Qualifications Authority. SAPC needs the original SAQA certificate and a SAQA consent form.
Time: 3–6 months (est.) · Cost: set by SAQA

2 Get a Department of Health letter
Non-South Africans who need a work permit need a letter of support from the National Department of Health Foreign Workforce Management Programme. It is also needed to book the exams.
Time: 1–3 months (est.)

3 Apply to SAPC for evaluation
Submit the full application and fee. The Pre-registration Committee meets in March, June, August and November. Missing documents after 6 months void the application.
Time: 3–6 months (est.) · Cost: R21,964

4 Pass the Professional Examination
Three open-book multiple-choice papers on the SAPC online platform, held in May and September or October. You need at least 50% in each paper.
Time: twice a year · Cost: R4,677 per paper

5 Internship or community service
Council may register you as a pharmacist intern for practical training, or as a pharmacist to perform community service at a public health facility.
Time: 12 months + · Cost: R737 a year (intern)

6 Register as a pharmacist
Once all requirements are met you are registered as a pharmacist. An annual fee is due each year by 1 February.
Time: after completion · Cost: R2,687 a year

Typical total: About 2–4 years (est.)

Language requirements

- Original IELTS General Training certificate with an overall band score of 6.
- Only South African citizens who completed secondary school in South Africa are exempt.
- SAPC refers IELTS questions to the British Council.

Read this before you plan

- Registration ≠ visa ≠ job. SAPC registration gives no right to enter or stay. Home Affairs decides visas, and employers decide hiring.
- SAPC itself asks for proof of permission to reside and work, and a Home Affairs work permit before community service, so plan the immigration route alongside.
- Practising pharmacy without SAPC registration is unlawful in South Africa. Nothing in this process is guaranteed.

Exams, costs and documents

Checked 20 November 2026

Exam pattern and mode: online, test centre or onsite

SAPC Professional Examination

ONLINE

- 3 open-book papers, at least 50% in each
- Pharmacy practice and law: 120 MCQs, 4 hours
- Pharmaceutics and chemistry: 90 MCQs, 3 hours
- Pharmacology and toxicology: 90 MCQs, 3 hours
- 40% sub-minimum per section in the two combined papers
- 4 attempts in 4 years; remediation before the 3rd

On the SAPC online platform. The 2026 form offers home/remote, work/remote or SAPC offices, Pretoria. Sitting from Pakistan is not stated.

Pre-registration examination

ONLINE

- Required during the internship
- Calculations section: 2 hours
- General section: 2.5 hours
- Held in March, August and October
- Fee from the 3rd attempt: R2,800

Taken during the internship in South Africa. SAPC's 2026 notice says it is conducted remotely. It only applies once you are registered as an intern.

Official fees	Amount
Evaluation of foreign qualification Non-South African citizen, VAT incl. (South African citizen: R11,171)	**R21,964**
Professional exam, per paper Three papers in total. The 2026 brochure shows R4,514; the fee notice and exam form show R4,677	**R4,677**
Review of exam results, per paper Optional, if you want a paper re-checked	**R1,215**
Pre-registration exam, 3rd+ attempt Interns, from the third attempt. Late booking fee R1,383	**R2,800**
Annual fee, pharmacist intern Payable each year while registered as an intern	**R737**
Annual fee, pharmacist Payable on or before 1 February each year	**R2,687**

South African rand (R), VAT included, 2026 fees (Board Notices 860 of 2025 and 943 of 2026). SAQA, IELTS and visa fees are extra.

Documents usually required

- Application form, proof of fee payment and certified copy of ID or passport
- Original SAQA evaluation certificate and SAQA consent form
- Certified copy of your pharmacy degree
- Original IELTS General Training certificate, overall band 6
- Certified proof of registration as a pharmacist in your country of training
- Proof of internship (if completed) and post-registration work experience
- Department of Health FWMP letter of support, if you need a work permit
- Police clearance from your home country (and SAPS if 2+ years in SA)
- Sent directly by the issuers: good standing letter, university letter, syllabus

Expected time

- The Pre-registration Committee meets in March, June, August and November. Complete applications are due by 31 January, 30 April, 30 June and 30 September.
- Professional exams run in May and September or October. Book at least one month ahead. SAPC aims to release results within 2 months.
- Non-South Africans have 4 attempts per paper within 4 years of approval. Outstanding documents must arrive within 6 months of applying.

Typical total: About 2–4 years (est.)

After the exams: internship or service

- After you pass, Council decides whether to register you as a pharmacist intern for practical training or as a pharmacist to perform community service.
- SAPC states that internship lasts at least 12 months and includes a pre-registration examination.
- For community service you must show the public health facility where you will serve and a work permit from Home Affairs.
- SAPC describes community service as one year of paid service in the public sector.

Visas, pay and next steps

Checked 20 November 2026

Immigration route (separate from registration)	What official sources say	Status
Critical Skills Work Visa	Listed by the visa centre for Pakistan: fee PKR 18,800 plus a USD 50 service fee, normal processing 8 weeks, with a points-based system notice. Whether pharmacist is on the current Critical Skills List could not be confirmed on a Home Affairs page.	Confirm
General Work Visa	Also listed for Pakistan: fee PKR 18,800 plus a USD 50 service fee, normal processing 8 weeks. Check the official checklist for the job offer and other documents required.	Open
Visitor visa, section 11(2)	A one-off, non-renewable permission for short-term or urgent work, requested in writing by the employer. It is not a route to long-term work as a pharmacist.	Open

If you are applying from Pakistan

- Visas are applied for through the South African visa application centre for Pakistan; official passports go to the South African High Commission.
- Visa centre fees: PKR 18,800 for a work visa, plus a USD 50 service fee paid online when booking.
- Submit certified copies only, except police clearances, which must be originals.
- Documents in another language need a sworn English translation.
- SAPC needs your good standing letter, university letter and syllabus sent directly by the issuing bodies, not by you.

Pay and funding

- No official pharmacist salary figure was verified for this guide.
- SAPC describes community service as remunerated, but the amount was not verified on an official page.

Avoid these common mistakes

- Applying to SAPC before the SAQA evaluation and the Department of Health letter are in hand.
- Letting the 6-month document window lapse. The application becomes invalid and fees are forfeited.
- Sending a copy, or the Academic test, instead of the original IELTS General Training certificate.
- Treating the exam as the last step. An internship or community service year follows.
- Assuming SAPC registration brings a visa, a work permit or a job.

How ASGHCA supports you

- International Career Mapping: consult, assess, roadmap, prepare
- Documentation and registration guidance
- English test preparation: IELTS, PTE and OET
- 1-on-1 mentorship, CV and interview support
- Webinars, CPD sessions and a lifetime community

ASGHCA offers education and guidance. Regulated immigration advice is referred to authorised professionals.

Official sources, all checked 20 November 2026: SAPC (sapc.za.org, pharmcouncil.co.za): foreign-qualified overview, process, forms and exam pages; 2026 Foreign Graduate Registration Guidelines brochure; 2026 Professional Examination study guide and application form; 2026 pre-registration exam notice · Board Notice 860 of 2025 (GG 53799) and Board Notice 943 of 2026 (GG 54876), gov.za · SAQA (saqa.org.za) · National Department of Health FWMP · South African visa application centre for Pakistan (vfsglobal.com/one-pager/southafrica/pakistan).

www.asghca.com
Book a free career-mapping consultation · LEARN | GROW | GO GLOBAL
Dr. Afifa Saghir (RPh), Founder & CEO · Registered Pharmacist in Pakistan and Australia

inquiry@asghca.com
WhatsApp +92 335 0051800 · +61 491 787 335 · UK +44 7587 013834
Instagram & TikTok @asghcaofficial · facebook.com/asghca

Important: general information prepared from official sources, not legal or immigration advice. Fees, rules and dates change; always confirm with the competent authority before paying or applying. Durations marked (est.) are ASGHCA planning estimates, not official figures. ASGHCA provides education and career guidance and is not a regulator, law firm or licensed immigration adviser. ASGHCA does not guarantee exam success, registration, employment, sponsorship, visas or residence. For visa matters consult the official mission or an authorised adviser.