

Pharmacist Job Description

A free job description template for the Pharmacy industry

Company Name: _____

Location: _____

Employment Type: _____

Reports To: _____

Date: _____

DISCLAIMER

This pharmacist job description template is designed to reflect Australian workplace standards and pharmacy industry practices at the time of publication. Confirm the applicable modern award for your business and ensure compliance with all relevant employment and health-practitioner regulations.

1. Position overview

A pharmacist is a registered health professional who dispenses prescription and over-the-counter medicines, checks for drug interactions and dosing errors, counsels patients on safe medication use, and increasingly delivers clinical services such as vaccinations and health screening. In a community or retail pharmacy, the pharmacist also supervises dispensary technicians and pharmacy assistants and takes responsibility for regulatory compliance.

In Australia, pharmacists are covered by the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 (MA000012), which sets a dedicated pharmacist classification stream — from registered pharmacist through experienced pharmacist, pharmacist in charge and pharmacist manager. Every pharmacist must hold current general registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia via AHPRA.

This template provides a foundation for creating clear, compliant job descriptions that attract qualified candidates while setting appropriate expectations for the role. Once hired, manage dispensary and retail coverage efficiently with pharmacy rostering software.

2. Key responsibilities

Dispensing medicines

Accurately dispensing prescription and over-the-counter medicines, verifying prescriptions, checking dosages and maintaining dispensing records in line with legislation.

Medication safety

Screening for drug interactions, contraindications and dosing errors, and intervening or contacting prescribers where a clinical concern is identified.

Patient counselling

Advising patients on the safe and effective use of medicines, side effects, storage and interactions, and answering health and wellbeing queries.

Clinical services

Delivering pharmacy-based services such as vaccinations, health screening, medication reviews and dose administration aids where qualified and authorised.

Supervision and compliance

Supervising dispensary technicians and pharmacy assistants, ensuring correct handling of Schedule 8 and controlled drugs, and meeting AHPRA and state pharmacy regulations.

Stock and quality control

Overseeing medicine ordering, expiry checks, cold-chain storage and recalls, and maintaining dispensary standards and accurate inventory.

3. Skills and attributes

- Accuracy: Meticulous attention to detail when dispensing, checking dosages and screening prescriptions for interactions and errors.
- Communication: Clear, empathetic counselling of patients and confident liaison with GPs, prescribers and other health professionals.
- Regulatory knowledge: Strong grasp of poisons scheduling, controlled-drug handling and AHPRA professional and legal obligations.
- Clinical judgement: Sound decision-making on medication suitability, dosing and referral, especially for complex or vulnerable patients.
- Leadership: Ability to supervise dispensary and retail staff, delegate effectively and maintain a calm, professional dispensary.
- Patient focus: Genuine care for patient wellbeing, discretion with sensitive information and a customer-service mindset.

4. Qualifications and requirements

Pharmacist positions require university qualifications and current registration. Some requirements are mandatory, while others are preferred or desirable depending on the pharmacy and the clinical services offered.

- Pharmacy degree (required) — An approved Bachelor or Master of Pharmacy degree
- AHPRA registration (required) — Current general registration as a pharmacist with the Pharmacy Board of Australia (AHPRA)
- Working rights (required) — Eligibility to work in Australia
- Vaccination accreditation — Immunisation training is desirable where the pharmacy offers a vaccination service
- First aid certificate — Current first aid and CPR certification is desirable
- Previous community pharmacy experience — Experience in a community or retail pharmacy is advantageous but not essential for new graduates

5. Working conditions

- Shift work including evenings, weekends and public holidays for extended-trading pharmacies
- Standing for extended periods in the dispensary throughout the day
- Fast-paced environment balancing dispensary workload and patient counselling
- Responsibility for controlled drugs and confidential patient information
- Compliance with AHPRA, poisons and workplace health and safety requirements
- Occasional sole-pharmacist responsibility during quieter shifts

6. Award information

Pharmacy industry award 2020

Most pharmacist positions in community and retail pharmacies are covered by the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 (MA000012). This modern award sets minimum pay rates, penalty rates, allowances and conditions for pharmacy employees. View current Pharmacy Award pay rates.

The award has a dedicated pharmacist classification stream — pharmacist, experienced pharmacist, pharmacist in charge and pharmacist manager. A base-level pharmacist is paid around \$41.74 per hour for full-time and part-time work, and about \$52.18 per hour as a casual (including the 25% loading), for FY2026/27, rising with experience and responsibility. Use award interpretation software to calculate pay accurately.

Registration and penalty rates

Every pharmacist must hold current general registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia via AHPRA, and this should be verified before they start and tracked for renewal. HR software helps you record registration and expiry dates.

Under MA000012, penalties apply on top of the ordinary rate: evening (Mon–Fri 7pm–9pm) and Saturday (8am–6pm) at 125%, Sunday (7am–9pm) at 150% and public holidays at 225% for full-time and part-time staff, with casual rates higher again. Overtime is generally paid at 150% for the first two hours then 200%. Check whether an enterprise agreement applies in place of the award.

7. Frequently asked questions

About the role

Q: What does a pharmacist do?

A pharmacist dispenses prescription and over-the-counter medicines, screens for drug interactions and dosing errors, and counsels patients on the safe use of their medication. In a community or retail pharmacy they also deliver clinical services such as vaccinations and medication reviews, supervise dispensary and retail staff, and take responsibility for handling controlled drugs and meeting AHPRA and state pharmacy regulations.

Q: What award covers pharmacists in Australia?

Most pharmacists in community and retail pharmacies are covered by the Pharmacy Industry Award 2020 (MA000012), which sets minimum pay, penalty rates and conditions. Hospital and public-sector pharmacists are often covered by health-sector awards instead. Some larger pharmacy groups run on an enterprise agreement. Always confirm which instrument applies to your business.

Q: What classification level should I use for a pharmacist?

The Pharmacy Industry Award has a dedicated pharmacist stream: pharmacist, experienced pharmacist, pharmacist in charge and pharmacist manager. A base-level pharmacist is paid around \$41.74 per hour for full-time and part-time work (about \$52.18 casual) for FY2026/27, increasing with experience and responsibility. See our Pharmacy Award pay rates guide for current rates at each level.

Q: Do I need to include pay rates in a job description?

It's not legally required, but including indicative pay rates can attract more applicants and set clear expectations. You can reference the applicable award rate or use phrases like 'Award rates plus penalties' or 'Competitive hourly rate based on experience.' Check the current Pharmacy Award rates for guidance.

Qualifications

Q: What qualifications does a pharmacist need in Australia?

A pharmacist must hold an approved Bachelor or Master of Pharmacy degree, complete a supervised intern year and pass the registration exams, and hold current general registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia via AHPRA. Additional accreditation (such as immunisation training) is required to deliver specific clinical services like vaccinations.

Q: Is AHPRA registration mandatory for pharmacists?

Yes. Every practising pharmacist must hold current general registration with the Pharmacy Board of Australia through AHPRA. Verify a candidate's registration before they start and track the renewal date. Use HR software to store registration details and receive expiry reminders so no one is rostered with a lapsed registration.

Q: What qualifications should I require vs prefer for a pharmacist?

Mandatory requirements are an approved pharmacy degree, current AHPRA registration and working rights in Australia. Preferred qualifications include immunisation accreditation, first aid and CPR, and previous community pharmacy experience. New graduates can be excellent hires, so avoid over-specifying experience unless the role genuinely requires it.

Q: Can I hire a newly registered pharmacist?

Yes. Many pharmacies hire pharmacists straight after they complete their intern year and gain general registration. Focus on registration status, communication skills and clinical judgement, and provide structured induction. Pair a new pharmacist with an experienced colleague for the first weeks where possible.

Employment

Q: Should I hire casual or permanent pharmacists?

This depends on your workload. Casual pharmacists offer flexibility for peak trading and leave cover but attract a 25% casual loading under the Pharmacy Award. Permanent part-time or full-time pharmacists provide continuity of care and stronger retention. Many pharmacies use a mix — permanent pharmacists for core hours and casuals for weekends and relief.

Q: What penalty rates apply to pharmacists?

Under the Pharmacy Award (MA000012), for full-time and part-time staff: evening (Mon–Fri 7pm–9pm) and Saturday (8am–6pm) are paid at 125%, Sunday (7am–9pm) at 150% and public holidays at 225% of the ordinary rate. Casual rates are higher again because the loading is added to the penalty. Overtime is generally 150% for the first two hours then 200%. Use award interpretation software to calculate rates accurately.

Q: How do the Pharmacy Award time bands affect pharmacist pay?

The Pharmacy Award sets penalties by time of day as well as day of week, with narrower morning and late-evening bands attracting higher rates. Because a pharmacist's shift may span several bands, manual calculation is error-prone. Recording exact start and finish times with time and attendance and applying award interpretation keeps pay accurate.

Q: What should I include in a pharmacist employment contract?

Key elements include: position title and classification level, employment type, hourly rate, applicable award, AHPRA registration requirement, reporting structure, main duties and any clinical-service accreditations. For casuals, include the 25% casual loading. Use our digital employment contracts to simplify this process.

Rostering

Q: How do I ensure pharmacist coverage across trading hours?

Every hour the dispensary is open needs a registered pharmacist on site. Build reusable roster templates for weekday, weekend and public-holiday trading, and use rostering software to flag any gap in pharmacist coverage before the roster is published. This avoids the compliance risk of trading without a pharmacist.

Q: How far in advance should I provide rosters to pharmacists?

Award and agreement rules vary, so confirm the notice period that applies to your business. As a general practice, providing rosters at least 7 days in advance gives pharmacists visibility of their shifts. Using rostering software helps ensure compliance and reduces last-minute changes.

Q: How do I track AHPRA registration for rostering?

Use HR software to store each pharmacist's AHPRA registration and renewal date and receive expiry reminders. Linking this to your rostering means you can avoid scheduling a pharmacist whose registration has lapsed, protecting both patients and your compliance.

Q: What breaks are pharmacists entitled to?

Break entitlements are set by the applicable award or agreement and generally include a meal break for longer shifts. Because a sole pharmacist may need cover to take a break, plan overlap or relief into the roster. Use time and attendance tools to record breaks accurately and support compliance.