
Standards of proficiency

Paramedics

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Foreword

We are pleased to present the Health and Care Professions Council's standards of proficiency for paramedics.

We first published standards of proficiency for paramedics in July 2003. We published revised standards in November 2007. We review the standards regularly to look at how they are working and to check whether they continue to reflect current practice in the professions we regulate.

These new revised standards are a result of our most recent review of the standards of proficiency. As a result of the first stage of the review, and the results of a public consultation, we have revised our generic standards which apply to all the professions we regulate. The revised standards are now based around 15 generic statements. This new structure means that we can retain the standards which are shared across all the professions we regulate, whilst allowing us more flexibility in describing the detailed standards which are specific to individual professions.

The profession-specific standards for paramedics included in this document were developed through the input of the relevant professional bodies and the views of all stakeholders during a further public consultation. The review process and consultation produced valuable feedback and we are grateful to all those who gave their time to help us in shaping the new standards.

We have made a small number of changes to the standards overall, mainly to reflect developments in education and practice, to clarify our intentions and to correct any errors or omissions. We have also made some minor changes to the introduction, in particular to explain the language we use in the standards.

We are confident that the standards are fit for purpose and reflect safe and effective professional practice for paramedics. These standards are effective from Monday 1 September 2014.

Introduction

This document sets out the standards of proficiency. These standards set out safe and effective practice in the professions we regulate. They are the threshold standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public. They set out what a student must know, understand and be able to do by the time they have completed their training, so that they are able to apply to register with us. Once on our Register you must meet those standards of proficiency which relate to the areas in which you work.

We also expect you to keep to our standards of conduct, performance and ethics and standards for continuing professional development. We publish these in separate documents, which you can find on our website.

The standards of proficiency in this document include both generic elements, which apply to all our registrants, and profession-specific elements which are relevant to registrants belonging to one of the professions we currently regulate. The generic standards are written in **bold**, and the profession-specific standards are written in plain text.

We have numbered the standards so that you can refer to them more easily. The standards are not hierarchical and are all equally important for practice.

A note about our expectations of you

You must meet all the standards of proficiency to register with us and meet the standards relevant to your scope of practice to stay registered with us.

It is important that you read and understand this document. If your practice is called into question we will consider these standards (and our standards of conduct, performance and ethics) in deciding what action, if any, we need to take.

The standards set out in this document complement information and guidance issued by other organisations, such as your professional body or your employer. We recognise the valuable role played by professional bodies in providing guidance and advice about good practice which can help you to meet the standards in this document.

Your scope of practice

Your scope of practice is the area or areas of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to yourself.

We recognise that a registrant's scope of practice will change over time and that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focused and specialised than that of newly registered colleagues. This might be because of specialisation in a certain area or with a particular client group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research. Every time you renew your registration, you will be asked to sign a declaration that you continue to meet the standards of proficiency that apply to your scope of practice.

Your particular scope of practice may mean that you are unable to continue to demonstrate that you meet all of the standards that apply for the whole of your profession.

As long as you make sure that you are practising safely and effectively within your given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where you are not proficient to do so, this will not be a problem. If you want to move outside of your scope of practice, you should be certain that you are capable of working lawfully, safely and effectively. This means that you need to exercise personal judgement by undertaking any necessary training or gaining experience, before moving into a new area of practice.

Meeting the standards

It is important that you meet our standards and are able to practise lawfully, safely and effectively. However, we do not dictate how you should meet our standards. There is normally more than one way in which each standard can be met and the way in which you meet our standards might change over time because of improvements in technology or changes in your practice.

We often receive questions from registrants who are concerned that something they have been asked to do, a policy, or the way in which they work might mean they cannot meet our standards. They are often worried that this might have an effect on their registration.

As an autonomous professional, you need to make informed, reasoned decisions about your practice to ensure that you meet the standards that apply to you. This includes seeking advice and support from education providers, employers, colleagues, professional bodies, unions and others to ensure that the wellbeing of service users is safeguarded at all times. So long as you do this and can justify your decisions if asked to, it is very unlikely that you will not meet our standards.

Language

We recognise that our registrants work in a range of different settings, which include direct practice, management, education, research and roles in industry. We also recognise that the use of terminology can be an emotive issue.

Our registrants work with very different people and use different terms to describe the groups that use, or are affected by, their services. Some of our registrants work with patients, others with clients and others with service users. The terms that you use will depend on how and where you work. We have used terms in these standards which we believe best reflect the groups that you work with.

In the standards of proficiency, we use phrases such as 'understand', 'know', and 'be able to'. This is so the standards remain applicable to current registrants in maintaining their fitness to practise, as well as prospective registrants who have not yet started practising and are applying for registration for the first time.

These standards may change in the future

We have produced these standards after speaking to our stakeholders and holding a formal public consultation.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and will keep our standards under continual review. Therefore, we may make further changes in the future to take into account changes in practice.

We will always publicise any changes to the standards that we make by, for instance, publishing notices on our website and informing professional bodies.

Standards of proficiency

Registrant paramedics must:

1 be able to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice

- 1.1 know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional
- 1.2 recognise the need to manage their own workload and resources effectively and be able to practise accordingly
- 1.3 be able to use a range of integrated skills and self-awareness to manage clinical challenges independently and effectively in unfamiliar and unpredictable circumstances or situations
- 1.4 be able to work safely in challenging and unpredictable environments, including being able to take appropriate action to assess and manage risk

2 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

- 2.1 understand the need to act in the best interests of service users at all times
- 2.2 understand what is required of them by the Health and Care Professions Council
- 2.3 understand the need to respect and uphold the rights, dignity, values, and autonomy of service users including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process and in maintaining health and wellbeing
- 2.4 recognise that relationships with service users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility
- 2.5 know about current legislation applicable to the work of their profession
- 2.6 be able to practise in accordance with current legislation governing the use of medicines by paramedics
- 2.7 understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent
- 2.8 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

3 be able to maintain fitness to practise

- 3.1 understand the need to maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct
- 3.2 understand the importance of maintaining their own health
- 3.3 understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career-long learning
- 3.4 be able to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness by adopting strategies for physical and psychological self-care, critical self-awareness, and by being able to maintain a safe working environment
- 3.5 recognise the need to engage in critical incident debriefing, reflection and review to ensure that lessons are addressed for future patient safety and management

4 be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement

- 4.1 be able to assess a professional situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
- 4.2 be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately
- 4.3 be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative
- 4.4 recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions
- 4.5 be able to use a range of integrated skills and self-awareness to manage clinical challenges effectively in unfamiliar and unpredictable circumstances or situations
- 4.6 be able to make and receive appropriate referrals
- 4.7 understand the importance of participation in training, supervision and mentoring

- 4.8 be able to make a decision about the most appropriate care pathway for a patient and refer patients appropriately

5 be aware of the impact of culture, equality and diversity on practice

- 5.1 understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups and individuals
- 5.2 understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape lifestyle that may affect the individual's health and the interaction between the service user and paramedic

6 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

7 understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality

- 7.1 be aware of the limits of the concept of confidentiality
- 7.2 understand the principles of information governance and be aware of the safe and effective use of health and social care information
- 7.3 be able to recognise and respond appropriately to situations where it is necessary to share information to safeguard service users or the wider public

8 be able to communicate effectively

- 8.1 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate verbal and non-verbal skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to service users, colleagues and others
- 8.2 be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5¹

¹ The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) tests competence in the English language. Applicants who have qualified outside of the UK, whose first language is not English and who are not nationals of a country within the European Economic Area (EEA) or Switzerland, must provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.

- 8.3 understand how communication skills affect assessment of, and engagement with, service users and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, capacity, learning ability and physical ability
- 8.4 be able to identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and others and recognise the potential impact upon communication
- 8.5 be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others
- 8.6 be aware of the characteristics and consequences of verbal and non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by factors such as age, culture, ethnicity, gender, socio-economic status and spiritual or religious beliefs
- 8.7 understand the need to provide service users or people acting on their behalf with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
- 8.8 understand the need to assist the communication needs of service users such as through the use of an appropriate interpreter, wherever possible
- 8.9 recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users

9 be able to work appropriately with others

- 9.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with service users, other professionals, support staff and others
- 9.2 understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
- 9.3 understand the need to engage service users and carers in planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals

- 9.4 understand the range, scope and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other health and care professionals
- 9.5 recognise the principles and practices of other health and care professionals and health and care systems and how they interact with the role of a paramedic
- 9.6 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

10 be able to maintain records appropriately

- 10.1 be able to keep accurate, comprehensive and comprehensible records in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- 10.2 recognise the need to manage records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines

11 be able to reflect on and review practice

- 11.1 understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- 11.2 recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review

12 be able to assure the quality of their practice

- 12.1 be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures
- 12.2 be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care
- 12.3 be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- 12.4 be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- 12.5 be aware of, and be able to participate in, quality assurance programmes, where appropriate

- 12.6 be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the service user
- 12.7 recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes

13 understand the key concepts of the knowledge base relevant to their profession

- 13.1 understand the structure and function of the human body, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction, relevant to the paramedic profession
- 13.2 be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- 13.3 recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- 13.4 understand the structure and function of health and social care services in the UK
- 13.5 understand the concept of leadership and its application to practice
- 13.6 understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- 13.7 understand human anatomy and physiology, sufficient to recognise the nature and effects of injury or illness, and to conduct assessment and observation in order to form a differential diagnosis and establish patient management strategies
- 13.8 understand the following aspects of biological science:
 - disease and trauma processes and how to apply this knowledge to develop appropriate treatment plans for the patient's pre-hospital or out-of-hospital care
 - how the application of paramedic practice may cause physiological and behavioural change
 - human anatomy and physiology, especially the dynamic relationships of human structure and function and the

musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, endocrine, urinary, reproductive, integumentary and nervous systems

- human growth and development across the lifespan
- normal and altered anatomy and physiology throughout the human lifespan
- relevant physiological parameters and how to interpret changes from the norm
- the factors influencing individual variations in human ability and health function
- the main classes of pathogenic microorganisms, the spread of infection and the use of universal precautions
- the main sequential stages of normal development, including cognitive, emotional and social measures of maturation through the human lifespan
- the role of nutrition in promoting health and preventing illness across the life spectrum

13.9 understand the following aspects of physical science:

- principles and theories of physics, biomechanics, electronics and ergonomics that can be applied to paramedic practice
- the means by which the physical sciences can inform the understanding and analysis of information used to determine a diagnosis
- the pathophysiological changes to normal homeostatic function and its implications
- the principles and application of measurement techniques based on biomechanics and electrophysiology

13.10 understand the following aspects of sociological, health and behavioural science:

- how aspects of psychology and sociology are fundamental to the role of the paramedic in developing and maintaining effective relationships

- how psychology and sociology can inform an understanding of physical and mental health, illness and health care in the context of paramedic practice and the incorporation of this knowledge into paramedic practice
- psychological and social factors that influence an individual in health and illness

13.11 understand the following aspects of clinical science:

- pathological changes and related clinical features of conditions encountered in pre-hospital and out-of-hospital practice
- physiological, pharmacological, structural, behavioural and functional changes in patient presentation
- principles of evaluation and research methodologies which enable the integration of theoretical perspectives and research evidence into the design and implementation of effective paramedic practice
- the theoretical basis of assessment, clinical decision making and appropriate treatment plans, along with the scientific evaluation of their effectiveness
- the theories supporting problem solving and clinical reasoning
- understand relevant pharmacology and the administration of therapeutic medications, including pharmacodynamics and pharmacokinetics

14 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills to inform practice

- 14.1 know the theories and science that underpin the theory and principles of paramedic practice
- 14.2 be able to change practice as needed to take account of new developments or changing contexts
- 14.3 be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and effectively

- 14.4 know how to position or immobilise patients correctly for safe and effective interventions
- 14.5 know the indications and contra-indications of using specific paramedic techniques in pre-hospital and out-of-hospital care, including their limitations and modifications
- 14.6 be able to modify and adapt practice to meet the clinical needs of patients within the emergency and urgent care environment
- 14.7 know how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of patients, their relatives and carers, when presented in the emergency and urgent care environment
- 14.8 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales
- 14.9 be able to gather appropriate information
- 14.10 be able to select and use appropriate assessment techniques
- 14.11 be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
- 14.12 be able to conduct a thorough and detailed physical examination of the patient using appropriate skills to inform clinical reasoning and guide the formulation of a differential diagnosis across all age ranges
- 14.13 be able to use observation to gather information about the functional abilities of patients
- 14.14 understand the need to consider the assessment of both the health and psycho-social care needs of patients and carers
- 14.15 be able to undertake or arrange investigations as appropriate
- 14.16 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected
- 14.17 be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
- 14.18 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills to determine appropriate actions

- 14.19 recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice
- 14.20 be aware of a range of research methodologies
- 14.21 be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice
- 14.22 be able to use information and communication technologies appropriate to their practice

15 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- 15.1 understand the need to maintain the safety of both service users and those involved in their care
- 15.2 be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting and be able to act in accordance with these
- 15.3 be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner and in accordance with health and safety legislation
- 15.4 be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly
- 15.5 be able to establish safe environments for practice, which minimise risks to service users, those treating them and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control
- 15.6 understand and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques
- 15.7 understand the nature and purpose of sterile fields and the paramedic's role and responsibility for maintaining them
- 15.8 be aware of the role of the paramedic in responding to hazardous or major incidents

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Paper from
responsible sources
FSC® C105395

© Health and Care Professions Council 2014

Publication code: 20070509iPOLPUB (reprinted with amends in August 2014)

This publication is produced using trees from sustainable forests and recycled fibre.