

Education and Training Committee, 12 September 2013

Consultation on profession-specific standards of proficiency for paramedics

Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

We have started reviewing the profession specific standards of proficiency for the professions we currently regulate. The review of the profession specific standards follows from the Council's approval of new generic standards of proficiency in March 2011.

To ensure the process is manageable, we are reviewing the profession-specific standards in groups of several professions at a time. At the start of each review, we contact each of the professional bodies for the relevant professions and ask for their suggestions on any changes that they consider necessary. We carefully consider their suggestions and map each of them against the generic standards to decide whether they are necessary. Where aspects required further clarification, we discussed those areas in detail with the professional body representatives and sought further advice on specific standards from that profession's Education and Training Committee or Council member. We have also sought legal advice on each set of standards.

We are now ready to consult publicly on the draft standards for paramedics. A consultation paper and draft standards for paramedics is attached for the Committee's consideration, approval, and recommendation to Council.

Decision

The Committee is invited to discuss, agree and recommend to the Council that it approve the attached consultation document and draft standards of proficiency for paramedics (subject to minor editing changes and formal legal scrutiny).

Background information

Paper for Education and Training Committee, 8 March 2012, (enclosure 7 at www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/archive/index.asp?id=587)

Paper for Education and Training Committee, 17 November 2011 (enclosure 5 at www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/archive/index.asp?id=586)

Paper for Education and Training Committee, 9 June 2011 (enclosure 19 at: www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/archive/index.asp?id=588)

Paper agreed by Council on 31 March 2011 (enclosure 6 at: www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/committees/archive/index.asp?id=533)

Resource implications

The resource implications of this round of consultation are accounted for in the Policy and Standards Department planning for 2013/14. The resource implications of the

ongoing process of review and eventual publication of the revised standards of proficiency have been taken into account in the Policy and Standards workplan for 2013/14, and will continue to be taken into account in future years.

Financial implications

The financial implications include the costs associated with a series of public consultations on new draft standards and publication of new standards for 15 professions. These costs are accounted in department planning for 2013/14.

We anticipate further costs in 2014/15 for further consultations and publication of further revised standards.

Appendices

- Consultation paper on the profession-specific standards of proficiency for paramedics

Date of paper

2 September 2013

Consultation on changes to the profession-specific standards of proficiency for paramedics

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document seeks the views of stakeholders on proposed changes to the profession-specific standards of proficiency for paramedics.
- 1.2 We are conducting our review of the profession-specific standards on a rolling basis by reviewing the standards of proficiency for groups of professions at a time. More information about the review process is set out below.
- 1.3 The consultation will be of interest to members of the profession, as well as relevant education providers, employers, professional bodies, and those who use the services of this profession.
- 1.4 The consultation will run from **X Month 201X to X Month 201X**.

2. About the Health and Care Professions Council

- 2.1 We are a regulator and were set up to protect the public. To do this, we keep a register of professionals who meet our standards for their professional skills and behaviour. Individuals on our Register are called 'registrants'.
- 2.2 We currently regulate 16 professions: arts therapists, biomedical scientists, chiropodists/podiatrists, clinical scientists, dietitians, hearing aid dispensers, occupational therapists, operating department practitioners, orthoptists, paramedics, physiotherapists, practitioner psychologists, prosthetists/orthoptists, radiographers, social workers in England, and speech and language therapists.
- 2.3 Before 1 August 2012, we were known as the Health Professions Council (HPC).

3. About the standards of proficiency

- 3.1 The standards of proficiency are the standards that we consider necessary for the safe and effective practice of each of the professions we regulate. They describe what professionals must know, understand, and be able to do at the time they apply to join our Register. The standards play an important role in public protection. When a professional applies for or renews their registration, or if concerns are raised about their competence while they are registered with us, we use the standards of proficiency to check whether they have the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to practise their profession safely and effectively.
- 3.2 Article 5(2)(a) of the Health and Social Work Professions Order 2001 (the Order) says that we must: "...establish the standards of proficiency necessary to be admitted to the different parts of the Register being the standards [the Council] considers necessary for safe and effective practice under that part of the Register".

- 3.3 This means that we must publish standards for each of the professions which are the ‘necessary’ or ‘minimum’ that we consider to be required for safe and effective practice.
- 3.4 There are separate standards of proficiency for each of the professions we regulate. The standards of proficiency complement our other standards as well as policies developed by employers and guidance produced by professional bodies.

Structure of the standards

- 3.5 The standards of proficiency are divided into generic standards (which apply to all the professions) and standards specific to each of the professions regulated. The purpose of the generic standards is to recognise commonality across all the professions that we regulate. The purpose of the profession-specific standards is to set out additional standards for each profession relevant to the generic standard.
- 3.6 We consulted on changes to the generic standards of proficiency between July and October 2010.¹ The new generic standards have now been agreed by our Council and are not the subject of this consultation. Under the new structure, most of the standards of proficiency will be profession-specific, listed under the 15 new generic standards.

Order of the standards

- 3.7 The standards of proficiency are not strictly hierarchical in order, and are all equally important in practice. When we were considering an appropriate order for the generic standards, we felt that there are certain standards—such as the requirement to ‘practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice’—that set the highest-level requirements for all registrants, and that should logically be placed at the beginning of the list. In considering the order of the profession-specific standards of proficiency, we have continued this approach by listing standards that are about more general principles first under the relevant generic standards, followed by standards that address more specific competencies.

Language used in the standards

- 3.8 As mentioned above, the standards of proficiency are the minimum standards for safe and effective practice. This means that they have to be relevant and applicable to prospective registrants applying to come on to the Register for the first time, as well as existing registrants and their practice.
- 3.9 The language used in the standards plays an important role in ensuring that they meet the above requirements. We intentionally use verbs such as ‘understand’, ‘know’ and ‘be able to’ rather than ‘must’.

¹ You can find more information about the consultation on our website here: www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations/closed/index.asp?id=110

- 3.10 For example: *be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession*. By using 'be able to' we can ensure that:
- the standard is applicable to prospective registrants - i.e. those who have not yet started practising and are applying to be registered for the first time; and
 - the standard is relevant and applicable to existing registrants. It could also be used in a fitness to practise case where a registrant's conduct or competence was called in to question.
- 3.11 If we changed the wording of this standard, for example, to 'registrants must practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession' it could no longer be met by prospective registrants who have not yet practised in their profession.
- 3.12 We write the standards in a way that means they are relevant to all registrants in a profession, regardless of their area of practice. We also use language that can take into account changes in the law, technology or working practices which might take place over time.
- 3.13 We have received some feedback to suggest that the language and terminology used in the profession-specific standards for some professions needs to be amended to better reflect the practice of those professions. We hope that the new draft standards will address these concerns.

4. How we use the standards of proficiency

Approval of education programmes

- 4.1 The primary role of the standards of proficiency is in articulating the skills, knowledge and abilities necessary to become registered for the first time.
- 4.2 We conduct approval visits to education providers to ensure that the programmes meet the standards. Our standards of education and training cover areas such as admissions, assessment and practice placements, and we approve programmes using these standards. A programme which meets the standards of education and training will also allow a student who successfully completes that programme to meet the standards of proficiency.

Registration and renewal

- 4.3 The standards of proficiency play a central role in how someone becomes and remains registered with us.
- 4.4 Most applicants complete their study within the UK and apply for registration through our UK approved programme route. We assess all approved programmes to ensure that students who successfully complete them meet the standards of proficiency and are therefore eligible for registration.
- 4.5 International applications are also assessed against the standards of proficiency. Each application is assessed by assessors from the relevant

profession to determine whether the applicant's education, training and experience mean that they meet the standards.

- 4.6 Every time a registrant renews their registration, we ask them to sign a declaration to confirm that they continue to meet the standards of proficiency which apply to them.

Fitness to practise

- 4.7 If a registrant's competence is called into question we may look at the standards of proficiency in deciding whether we need to take any action. This does not mean that we will take action if a registrant does not meet all of the standards, but we may use the standards to decide whether they are practising safely and effectively within their scope of practice.

Scope of practice

- 4.8 As outlined above, when registrants renew their registration they must sign a declaration to state that they meet the standards which apply to them.
- 4.9 Once someone becomes registered, we recognise that their scope of practice may change. We define scope of practice as the area or areas of a registrant's profession in which they 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 them.
- 4.10 A registrant's scope of practice may change over time and we recognise that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focussed and specialised than that of newly registered colleagues. This might be because of specialisation in a particular area of practice or with a particular group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research.
- 4.11 A registrant's particular scope of practice may mean that they are unable to continue to demonstrate that they meet all of the standards of proficiency that apply for the whole of their profession. As long as they make sure that they are practising safely and effectively within their given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where they are not proficient to do so, this will not be a problem.

5. Reviewing the profession-specific standards of proficiency

The review process

- 5.1 We have invited the professional body for the paramedic profession, the College of Paramedics, to review the standards of proficiency for their profession and tell us whether they considered any changes were necessary. We have carefully considered their comments and other feedback we have received on the standards and produced a proposed set of draft standards for their profession.

- 5.2 We are now publicly consulting on the draft standards to seek the view of all our stakeholders. After consultation, we use the responses we receive to decide if any further amendments are needed.
- 5.3 Once the final set of standards is approved, they will be published. We will work with education providers to gradually phase-in the new standards after they are published.

Updating the profession-specific standards

- 5.4 In the new structure of the standards of proficiency, most of the standards will be profession-specific. To set out the new draft standards for each profession in the new structure, we mapped all the current standards of proficiency for each profession under the relevant new generic standards. This consultation is not about changes to the approved generic standards, only the profession-specific standards for paramedics.
- 5.5 The changes to the standards proposed in each set of draft standards are to:
- reflect current practice or changes in the scope of practice of each profession;
 - update the language where needed to ensure it is relevant to the practice of each profession and to reflect changes in current use of terminology;
 - reflect the standard content of pre-registration education programmes;
 - clarify the intention of existing standards; and
 - correct omissions or to avoid duplication.
- 5.6 The review of the profession-specific standards is an opportunity to make sure the standards of proficiency are relevant to each profession. No relevant or useful standards will be lost, but the language used may change to ensure the standards are appropriate and applicable to individual professions. Where it is appropriate to do so, we also aim to maintain as much consistency as possible in the standards between different professions. Our current standards of proficiency are available to download for comparison from this page of our website:
www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/standardsofproficiency/
- 5.7 We are inviting our stakeholders to consider whether the changes we have suggested to the profession-specific standards of proficiency for each profession are appropriate. In addition to the changes we have suggested there may be other areas we have not considered that need to be reflected in the standards.

6. Your response

Consultation questions

- 6.1 We would welcome your response to our consultation and have listed some questions to help you. The questions are not designed to be exhaustive and we would welcome your comments on any related issue. Please provide reasons alongside your answers where possible.
- 6.2 The questions are listed below for your reference:
1. Do you think the standards are at a threshold level necessary for safe and effective practice?
 2. Do you think any additional standards are necessary?
 3. Do you think there are any standards which should be reworded?
 4. Do you have any comments about the language used in the standards?
 5. Do you have any other comments on the standards?

How to respond to the consultation

- 6.3 You can respond to this consultation in the following ways.

- By completing our easy-to-use online survey:
[insert url]
- By emailing us at: consultation@hcpc-uk.org
- By writing to us at the following address:

Consultation on changes to the profession-specific standards of proficiency for paramedics
Policy and Standards Department
Health and Care Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

- 6.4 We do not normally accept responses by telephone or in person. We normally ask that consultation responses are made in writing to ensure that we can accurately record what the respondent would like to say. However, if you are unable to respond in writing please contact us on +44 (0)20 7840 9815 to discuss any reasonable adjustments which would help you to respond.
- 6.5 Please complete the online survey or send us your response by **X Month 201X**. We look forward to receiving your comments.

Please contact us to request a copy of this document in an alternative format, or in Welsh.

- 6.6 Once the consultation period is completed, we will analyse the responses we have received. We will then publish a document which details the comments received and explains the decisions we have taken as a result. This will be available on our website.
- 6.7 If you would prefer your response not to be made public, please indicate this when you respond.

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Appendix: Draft standards of proficiency for paramedics

Notes for interpretation

The generic standards of proficiency are not the subject of this consultation.

The current standards of proficiency for paramedics are available to download and view for comparison at:
www.hcpc-uk.org/aboutregistration/standards/standardsofproficiency/

New generic standard	Suggested profession specific standards
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 circumstances or situations
	1.4 be able to work safely in challenging 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 time
	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 prescription-only 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 de-briefing 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 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 6.52
	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

² 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), must provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.

	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 and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other healthcare professionals
	9.5	recognise the principles and practices of other healthcare professionals and healthcare 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 their 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 establish patient management strategies
	13.8 understand the following aspects of biological science: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 • how the application of paramedic practice may cause physiological and behavioural change • human growth and development across the lifespan • the main sequential stages of normal development, including cognitive, emotional and social measures of maturation through the human lifespan • normal and altered anatomy and physiology throughout the human lifespan • relevant physiological parameters and how to interpret changes from the norm • disease and trauma processes and how to apply this knowledge to the planning of the patient's pre and/or out-of-hospital care • the factors influencing individual variations in human ability and health function • the role of nutrition in health and illness across the life spectrum • microbiology: the main classes of pathogenic microorganisms, the spread of infection and universal precautions

	<p>13.9 understand the following aspects of physical science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 principles and application of measurement techniques based on biomechanics or electrophysiology • the pathophysiological changes to normal homeostatic function and its implications <p>13.10 understand the following aspects of sociological, health and behavioural science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • psychological and social factors that influence an individual in health and illness • 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 • how aspects of psychology and sociology are fundamental to the role of the paramedic in developing and maintaining effective relationships <p>13.11 understand the following aspects of clinical science:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pathological changes and related clinical features of conditions encountered in pre and/or out-of-hospital practice • physiological, pharmacological, structural, behavioural, and functional changes in patient presentation and the effect of interventions • the theoretical basis of assessment, clinical decision making, and treatment and the scientific evaluation of their effectiveness • 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 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	14.1 know the theories and science that underpin the theory and principles of paramedic practice

and skills to inform 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 and out-of-hospital care, including their limitations and modifications
	14.6	be able to modify and adapt practise to emergency and urgent situations
	14.7	know how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of patients, their relatives and carers, when presented in emergency and urgent situations
	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