Standards of proficiency

Paramedics
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I am pleased to present the Health and Care Professions Council’s standards of proficiency.

We first published the standards of proficiency when our Register opened in July 2003. We began to review them in October 2005 to look at how they were working and to check whether they continued to reflect current practice as experienced by registrants, employers, educators and others. The review was led by a professional liaison group (PLG), which included members of our Council, as well as representatives from professional bodies and service user groups. We also held a formal consultation on the draft proposed standards. The review process and consultation produced extremely valuable feedback and we are grateful to all those who gave their time to help us in shaping the standards that follow.

We made a small number of changes to the previous standards, mainly to reflect developments in education, to clarify our intentions and to correct any errors or omissions. We also revised the introduction to explain more clearly the purpose behind the standards, especially in relation to registrants who specialise or move away from clinical or frontline practice.

I am confident that the standards are both fit for purpose and reflect current thinking in relation to safe professional practice across the professions.

These standards are effective from 1 November 2007 and were amended in August 2012 to reflect our change of name to the Health and Care Professions Council.

Anna van der Gaag
Chair
This document sets out the **standards of proficiency**. These are the standards we have produced for the safe and effective practice of the professions we regulate. They are the minimum standards we consider necessary to protect members of the public.

You must meet these standards when you first become registered. After that, 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.

We also expect you to keep to our **standards of conduct, performance and ethics**, which are published in a separate document.

The standards of proficiency in this document include both generic elements, which apply to all our registrants, and profession-specific elements that are relevant to registrants belonging to one of the professions we currently regulate. The **generic standards are written in black**, and the **profession-specific standards are written in blue** to help you distinguish between them.

The generic standards explain the key obligations that we expect of you. Occasionally, we have pointed out specific elements of those key obligations. We have not attempted to create exhaustive lists of all the areas that each generic standard covers; we have simply highlighted specific elements where we consider this to be helpful.

### A note about our expectations of you

The standards of proficiency play a central role in how you can gain admission to, and remain on, the Register and thereby gain the right to use the protected title(s) of your profession.

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.
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.

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. 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 and experience.

Meeting the standards

It is important that our registrants 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. 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 and others to ensure that the wellbeing of service users is safeguarded at all times.
In particular, we recognise the valuable role played by professional bodies in representing and promoting the interests of their members. This often includes guidance and advice about good practice which can help you meet the standards laid out in this document.

**Service users**

We recognise that our registrants work in a range of different settings, which include clinical or frontline practice, education, research and roles in industry. We recognise that different professions sometimes use different terms to refer to those who use or who are affected by their practice and that the use of terminology can be an emotive issue.

We have tried to use a term in the generic standards which is as inclusive as possible. Throughout the generic standards we have used the term ‘service users’ to refer to anyone who uses or is affected by the services of registrants. Who your service users are will depend on how and where you work. For example, if you work in clinical or frontline practice, your service users might be your patients or your staff if you manage a team. The term also includes other people who might be affected by your practice, such as carers and relatives. In the profession-specific standards, we have retained the terminology which is relevant to each individual profession.

**These standards may change in the future**

We have produced this new version of our standards after speaking to our stakeholders about how the standards were working and how relevant they were to registrants’ practice.

We will continue to listen to our stakeholders and will keep our standards under continual review. So 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.
1a  Professional autonomy and accountability

Registrant paramedics must:

1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession
– understand the need to act in the best interests of service users at all times
– understand what is required of them by the Health and Care Professions Council
– understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity, values and autonomy of every service user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process and in maintaining health and wellbeing
– be aware of current UK legislation applicable to the work of their profession
– be able to practise in accordance with current legislation governing the use of prescription-only medicines by paramedics

1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

1a.3 understand the importance of and be able to maintain confidentiality

1a.4 understand the importance of and be able to obtain informed consent

1a.5 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

1a.6 be able to practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement
– be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
– be able to initiate resolution of problems and be able to exercise personal initiative
– know the limits of their practice and when to seek advice or refer to another professional
– recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions
– be able to use a range of integrated skills and self-awareness to manage clinical challenges effectively in unfamiliar circumstances or situations

1a.7 recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and resources and be able to practise accordingly

1a.8 understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise
– understand the need to practise safely and effectively within their scope of practice
– understand the need to maintain high standards of personal conduct
– understand the importance of maintaining their own health
– understand both the need to keep skills and knowledge up to date and the importance of career-long learning
– 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

1b Professional relationships
Registrant paramedics must:

1b.1 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, service users and their relatives and carers
– understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
– understand the need to engage service users and carers in
planning and evaluating diagnostics, treatments and interventions to meet their needs and goals

- be able to make appropriate referrals
- understand the range and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other healthcare professionals
- recognise the principles and practices of other healthcare professionals and healthcare systems and how they interact with the role of a paramedic

1b.2 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team

1b.3 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, service users, their relatives and carers

- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5

- understand how communication skills affect the assessment of service users and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical ability and learning ability

- be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with service users and others

- be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status

- understand the need to provide service users (or people acting on their behalf) with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions

\[1\] 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), must provide evidence that they have reached the necessary standard. Please visit our website for more information.
– understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist service users whose first language is not English, wherever possible

– 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

– be able to identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and others and recognise the potential impact upon communication

1b.4 **understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the service user**

– recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of service users
The skills required for the application of practice

2a Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

Registrant paramedics must:

2a.1 be able to gather appropriate information

2a.2 be able to select and use appropriate assessment techniques

– be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment

– be able to conduct a thorough and detailed physical examination of the patient using observations, palpation, auscultation and other assessment skills to inform clinical reasoning and to guide the formulation of a diagnosis across all age ranges, including calling for specialist help where available

– be able to use observation to gather information about the functional abilities of patients

– understand the need to consider the assessment of both the health and social care needs of patients and carers

2a.3 be able to undertake or arrange investigations as appropriate

2a.4 be able to analyse and critically evaluate the information collected

2b Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

Registrant paramedics must:

2b.1 be able to use research, reasoning and problem-solving skills to determine appropriate actions

– recognise the value of research to the critical evaluation of practice

– be able to engage in evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically and participate in audit procedures
– be aware of a range of research methodologies
– be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
– be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform their own practice

2b.2 **be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements**
– be able to change their practice as needed to take account of new developments
– be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to their practice

2b.3 **be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales**
– understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors
– understand the need to demonstrate sensitivity to the factors which shape lifestyle that may impact on the individual’s health and affect the interaction between the patient and paramedic

2b.4 **be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully**
– understand the need to maintain the safety of both service users and those involved in their care
– ensure patients are positioned (and if necessary immobilised) for safe and effective interventions
– know the indications and contra-indications of using specific paramedic techniques, including their modifications
– be able to modify and adapt practice to emergency situations

2b.5 **be able to maintain records appropriately**
– be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need
to handle these records and all other information in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines

- understand the need to use only accepted terminology in making records

2c **Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant’s actions**

Registrant paramedics must:

2c.1 **be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly**

- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that helps to evaluate the responses of service users to their care
- be able to evaluate intervention plans using recognised outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the service user
- 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
- 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

2c.2 **be able to audit, reflect on and review practice**

- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
- be aware of the role of audit and review in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures
- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
– understand the value of reflection on practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
– recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review
3a **Knowledge, understanding and skills**

Registrant paramedics must:

3a.1 **know and understand the key concepts of the bodies of knowledge which are relevant to their profession-specific practice**

- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to their practice, together with knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- know human anatomy and physiology, sufficient to understand the nature and effects of injury or illness, and to conduct assessment and observation in order to establish patient management strategies
- understand the following aspects of biological science:
  - human anatomy and physiology, especially the dynamic relationships of human structure and function and the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, cardiorespiratory, digestive 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-hospital care

– the factors influencing individual variations in human function

– 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 principles and application of measurement techniques based on biomechanics or electrophysiology

– understand the following aspects of behavioural science:

– 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

– understand the following aspects of clinical science:

– pathological changes and related clinical features of conditions commonly encountered by paramedics

– the changes that result from paramedic practice, including physiological, pharmacological, behavioural and functional

– the theoretical basis of assessment and treatment and the scientific evaluation of 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, including pharmacodynamics
and pharmacokinetics

3a.2 know how professional principles are expressed and
translated into action through a number of different
approaches to practice, and how to select or modify
approaches to meet the needs of an individual, groups
or communities

know how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of
patients, their relatives and carers, when presented in emergency
and urgent situations

know the theory and principles of paramedic practice

3a.3 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe
practice environment

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

be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate
hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination
techniques in a safe manner in accordance with health and safety
legislation

be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and
use it correctly

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

understand and be able to apply appropriate moving and
handling techniques

understand the nature and purpose of sterile fields and the
paramedic’s role and responsibility for maintaining them
Notes