

Australasian Competency Standards for Paramedics



PARAMEDICS

A U S T R A L A S I A

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Preface

Paramedics Australasia (PA) is the peak professional body representing paramedics in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. The organisation has an important role in setting standards of practice for the profession, and this role includes the development of paramedic competencies that inform the design of paramedic education programs. These competency standards represent the first consensus document that describes essential paramedic attributes. These have been developed to support course accreditation and regulatory frameworks to enable paramedics to provide safe and effective health care for the communities they serve.

These standards were the result of a comprehensive review of contemporary standards adopted by international paramedic professional associations as well as those developed by medical, nursing and allied health disciplines and in countries with similar practice settings to those found in Australia and New Zealand. The review included an assessment of competency standards developed by paramedics in jurisdictions with similar practice and operational systems, including the [National Occupational Competency Profile \(NOCP\)](#) developed by the Paramedic Association of Canada and the [Benchmark statement: Health care programme \(Paramedic\)](#) for paramedics in the UK.

The review of extant standards and the development of this first version of paramedic competency standards for paramedics in Australia and New Zealand was undertaken by an expert panel of educators and clinicians.

The development of competencies for the paramedic profession will facilitate:

1. The design of paramedic curricula;
2. Course accreditation;
3. Benchmarking of competencies against international standards;
4. Determination of “scope of practice” or development of legislation that governs paramedic roles, responsibilities and practice;
5. National and international mobility for paramedics by enabling the comparison of competencies across different jurisdictions
;
6. Determination of reciprocity. Nurses, Respiratory Therapists, Military Medics and allied health professionals may use the competencies to map prior learning against paramedic competencies to determine credit for prior learning;
7. Registration of paramedics by linking registration to evidence of achievement of competencies;
8. Design of continuing education programs by the professional college;
9. Evaluation of conduct and competency by the registration body. The competencies establish the base for clinical knowledge, skills and professional behaviours. Any practitioner who acts by commission or omission outside the establish competency profile may be subject to conduct and competency hearings and discipline processes.

The competencies comprising the Australasian Competency Standards for Paramedics are organised within the domains of Professional Practice, Clinical Practice, and Professional Knowledge:

1. Professional practice

1.a Professional autonomy and accountability

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

1.a.1 Practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of their profession

- Practice in accordance with the paramedic profession's codes of ethics and conduct;
- Understand the need to act in the best interests of patients at all times;
- Be aware of current legislation applicable to the work of the profession, inclusive of duty of care, confidentiality, and privacy;
- Practise in accordance with current legislation governing the use of therapeutic agents.

1.a.2 Practise in a non-discriminatory manner

- Maintain awareness that individual attitudes, values, beliefs and biases may affect clinical judgements and the quality of care'
- Recognise the need to acknowledge patient needs as they relate to dignity, cultural and religious requirements;
- Understand the application of anti-discrimination and equal opportunity laws as they relate to an individual's/ group's race, culture, religion, age, gender, sexual preference, physical or mental state;
- Acknowledge the right of the individual to self determine their care;
- Demonstrate respect for the individual regardless of their race, gender, culture and beliefs.

1.a.3 Understand the principle and application of the concept of confidentiality

1.a.4 Understand the principle of consent as it applies in the community emergency health setting

1.a.5 Provide health care in accordance with local standards of practice

1.a.6 Provide care that is consistent with principles of beneficence and non-maleficence.

1.a.7 Exercise a professional duty of care

1.a.8 Practise as an autonomous professional, exercising their own professional judgement

- Analyse, identify and resolve problems independently using personal initiative;
- Understand their limits of practice and seek advice or refer patients to other professionals when appropriate;
- Recognise that they are personally responsible for and must be able to justify their decisions;

- Use a range of skills and self-awareness to manage unusual or unexpected challenges;
- Understands and practices within their scope of practice as determined by registration conditions;
- Prioritise care according to acuity;
- Anticipate and respond to changing situations in the operational environment.

1.a.9 Recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and resources to provide equitable and effective health care for the community

1.a.10 Maintain fitness to practise

- Understand the need to practise safely and effectively;
- Understand the need to maintain high standards of personal conduct;
- Understand the importance of maintaining one's own physical and psychological health;
- Accept personal responsibility for continuous professional development to maintain currency of knowledge and clinical skills.

1.b Professional relationships

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

1.b.1 Work effectively in interprofessional practice

- Understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team;
- Identify health professional partnerships and health care models that may improve and maintain health in community settings;
- Involve patients, family and carers in the clinical decision making process;
- Make appropriate referrals to other health professionals and agencies;
- Understand the range and limitations of operational relationships between paramedics and other healthcare professionals and emergency service personnel;
- Recognise the principles and practices of other healthcare professionals and healthcare systems and how they interact with the role of a paramedic to improve health outcomes;
- Understanding the role of the paramedic and Paramedic Services in the provision of health care within the broader health care system;
- Work effectively with emergency management agencies, acknowledging the differing responsibilities regarding situations such as scene management and preservation of evidence;
- Support the concept of the paramedic being an integral component of the health care team.

1.b.2 Collaborate effectively in interprofessional practice

- Understand the role of other health professionals in preventing disease, maintaining health and curing illness;
- Collaborate with other health professionals to obtain specialist advice and to identify appropriate referral pathways;
- Communicate with other health professions to evaluate the efficacy and appropriateness of clinical decisions involving referral decisions.

1.b.3 Communicate effectively in interprofessional practice using effective and appropriate skills to provide information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, their relatives and carers

- Be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System or TOEFL equivalent;
- Use appropriate strategies to communicate with individuals whose first language is not English, including interpreter services and translation aids;
- Understand how communication skills affect the interaction with carers and others with an interest in the patient, the assessment of patients, and effective interactions with other health professionals;
- Be aware of the characteristics and consequences of communication and how this can be affected by age, ethnicity, culture, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status;
- Understand how communications skills affect the practitioner – patient relationship and patient outcomes;
- Identify anxiety and stress in patients, carers and others and recognise the potential impact of stressors on communication.

1.b.4 Function as an advocate for patients, advocate groups and their rights relating to health care

1.b.5 Participate in the mentoring, teaching and development of others

- Support developing practitioners and students in meeting their learning objectives;
- Share knowledge and experience to support learning;
- Promote the development of the profession in an interdisciplinary environment;
- Participate in and contribute to continuing professional development programs;
- Participate in health promotion/ injury prevention and public safety initiatives.

1.c Evidence based practice

Paramedics must:

- Recognise the value of research in the critical evaluation of practice;
- Understand the strengths and limitations of research methodologies in order to appraise the strength of the evidence;
- Evaluate research and other evidence to inform paramedic practice;
- Participate in research;
- 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;
- Initiate review of practice guidelines that appear to be inconsistent with current evidence;
- Collaborate to review and develop policy, procedures or clinical guidelines;
- Promote the reporting of high-risk activities without fear of retribution or decertification.

2. Clinical practice

2.a Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

2.a.1 Gather appropriate information as it relates to the assessment of a patient's health status

- Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the patient, which includes assessment of the psychological, social and cultural determinants of health.

2.a.2 Select and use appropriate assessment techniques

- Undertake a focussed clinical examination that is consistent with the chief complaint and medical history'
- Record the findings of the clinical examination using appropriate techniques and equipment;
- Involve the patient, family and carers in clinical decisions where appropriate while maintaining patient confidentiality.

2.a.3 Undertake or arrange investigations in accordance with practice guidelines

2.a.4 Analyse and critically evaluate clinical findings to formulate an appropriate care plan

2.b Formulation and deliver plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

2.b.1 Use knowledge, reasoning and problem-solving skills to determine appropriate judgements and actions

- Prioritise the care provided to optimise safety and health outcomes for the patient.
- Be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving.
- Implement effective decision-making

2.b.2 Contribute effectively to multidisciplinary teamwork

2.b.3 Formulate specific and appropriate management plans

- 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;
- Develop patient care plans which reflect the individual patient's needs.

2.b.4 Provide safe, effective and appropriate care

- Maintain the safety of members of the community, patients and those involved in their care.
- Implement safe and effective strategies to access, retrieve and transport patients from the scene of an incident or health emergency;
- Maintain the necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes for safe and effective practice;
- Use evidence based guidelines to provide safe and effective care.

2.b.5 Operate effectively and independently in settings with limited resources

2.b.6 Generate health care records

- Use appropriate medical terminology to document care;
- Use information technology to create, transmit and maintain accurate care records.

2.c Critical evaluation of paramedic practice

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

2.c.1 Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the care plan and modify it accordingly

- Analyse qualitative and quantitative information to evaluate patient responses to the care plan;
- Evaluate responses to interventions designed to improve health or relieve suffering and modify care plans accordingly;
- Report findings from the evaluation of clinical practice.

2.c.2 Audit, reflect on and review practice [reflection on action]

- Understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance;
- Identify adverse events and clinical errors and reports these events in order to inform strategies that may prevent or mitigate future events;
- Participate in quality assurance programmes.

2.c.3 Identify and report unprofessional and unsafe practice and behaviour

3. Professional knowledge

3.a Knowledge, understanding and skills

Paramedics must demonstrate the ability to:

3.a.1 Understand and apply key concepts and knowledge underpinning paramedic practice

- Understand physical, behavioural and clinical science concepts and theories to enable effective care;
- Understand determinants of health and factors which constrain an individual's access to health care;
- Recognise the role of primary health care in the community and identify the role of the paramedic in the provision of community-based health care;
- Understand policy, procedures and guidelines relating to the paramedic's role in responding to major incidents and disasters;
- Recognise the contribution of other professions to interprofessional practice;
- Understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to assessment, diagnosis and intervention designed to improve health.

3.a.2 Understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- Apply relevant health and safety legislation and related policies and procedures, and be able to act in accordance with these;
- Identify and manage risks to safely;
- Select and use appropriate personal protective equipment based on assessment of risk;
- Establish safe environments for practice;
- Understand and apply safe and effective manual handling techniques;

3.a.3 Use information and communication technology

- Locate and identify resources to support continuing professional development;
- Use technology to communicate patient information and to locate information needed to support effective clinical decisions;
- Interpret and analyse information obtained from diagnostic equipment to inform clinical judgements and treatment decisions;
- Use technology to undertake administrative functions including reporting and communication of business data.