

Position Statement: Recognising conjoint appointments for paramedics to work across clinical and academic settings

Key statement

The Australasian College of Paramedicine (the College) supports health service employers' and tertiary institutions' conjoint recognition of the clinical work, and academic teaching and merit paramedics provide, contribute, and achieve by way of extending conjoint appointments to eligible paramedics across Australasia. This recognition is important to the advancement of paramedicine, continued excellence in paramedicine research, teaching and learning, attraction and retention of a sustainable paramedic workforce, increased translation of research into clinical practice, and improved person-centred care.

The introduction of conjoint appointments for paramedics across Australasian health service workplaces and universities would mark a new era of recognition for the profession. Importantly, this acknowledgement of paramedics' clinical contributions and academic achievements to healthcare would strongly benefit person-centred care. To achieve this, the College is calling for new, innovative and flexible employment models that enable conjoint appointments for suitably qualified paramedics across ambulance services, non-ambulance service employers of paramedics, and the university sector.

Background and rationale

The College fosters innovative thinking and leadership in the field of paramedicine. We support workforce flexibility and recognition, career growth and enhanced professional opportunities. This builds excellence in teaching, research and education, and improved health outcomes for every person, in every community, across Australasia.

Paramedics, like other health professions, are employed in clinical and academic workplaces. Paramedics provide high-quality emergency care in out-of-hospital settings, and are increasingly, employed across urgent and primary healthcare for their breadth of knowledge and capabilities. Additionally, paramedics have worked in academic environments in teaching and researching roles for decades. Like other health professionals, paramedics should be recognised by health service employers and tertiary institutions for their collaborative work between clinical and academic settings by way of conjoint titles.

Conjoint appointments, well-established in other areas of healthcare, recognise the individual for their outstanding work in both clinical and academic settings. Such roles are awarded a conjoint title by the employer and tertiary institution and include: Clinical appointment; Adjunct appointment; Honorary appointment; and Visiting Academic appointment.

As well, conjoint appointments can enhance the quality of teaching by ensuring that the paramedic can bring examples of contemporary practice back to the tertiary institute to inform teaching, and reciprocally, an academic conjoint appointment can bring research findings and outcomes to a health service that will improve practice and person-centred care. As the profession continues to grow and evolve, paramedics are seeking the workplace flexibility to work across clinical and academic roles, and conjoint appointments would support and acknowledge this.

The College supports health service employers and universities across Australasia to recognise the high value that conjoint title holders contribute to the profession as a whole, the wider healthcare workforce, and the delivery of improved person-centred care.

The facts

- Paramedicine has been a registered profession in Australia through the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) since 2018, and in Aotearoa New Zealand through the Kaunihera Manapou | Paramedicine Council since 2021.
- The first paramedicine entry-to-practice university degree commenced in Australia in 1998 at Charles Sturt University (Over the course of this time paramedicine has generally sat within medicine or nursing faculties.)
- Several PhD qualified paramedics are currently employed within jurisdictional ambulances.
- As at 31 May 2023 almost 70 Australian paramedics who have completed or who are completing a PhD are listed in an international PhD registry.
- In 2022 the University of Tasmania established the first School of Paramedicine in Australasia.
- Across other health professions, i.e. medicine and nursing, conjoint titles have long existed for the advancement of healthcare practice and patient outcomes, with health service employer flexibility.

Challenge

To accommodate paramedics in both clinical and academic settings, conjoint appointments will eliminate barriers for paramedics to work in both the clinical and academic spaces providing employer flexibility, employment opportunities and innovative new models – as seen with other health professions.

The demanding and restrictive nature of clinical work is preventing paramedics from pursuing a clinical/academic conjoint appointment, and the College is calling on employers and universities to collaborate to design new and innovative models that support conjoint appointments.

Recommendation

The College supports health service employers and tertiary institutions to establish conjoint titles for paramedicine, and enable the flexibility and support required for the conjoint title holder to be successful in both settings at the highest level.

Establishing a conjoint title: tertiary institute

1. Tertiary institutes establish a conjoint titles academic acknowledgement requirements, a process and accountability relationship for paramedicine in-line with existing institution academic promotions acknowledgements.
2. Tertiary institutes establish workplace flexibility for paramedics, such as fractional appointments, to enable the paramedic to achieve conjoint title accountability.
3. Promote the establishment of conjoint titles for paramedics to further encourage collaboration between clinical and academic spaces for the benefit of advancing the profession and improving person-centred care.
4. Conjoint title holders are eligible to apply for a title at a higher level via the institute's academic promotions process.

Establishing a conjoint title: health service employer

1. Health service employer establish a conjoint titles process and accountability relationship for paramedicine.
2. Health service employer establish workplace flexibility for paramedics, such as fractional appointments and flexible rostering, to enable the paramedic to achieve conjoint title.
3. Promote the establishment of conjoint titles for paramedics to further encourage collaboration between clinical and academic spaces for the benefit of advancing the profession and improving person-centred care.
4. Conjoint title holders are eligible to apply for a title at a higher level via the university's academic promotions process.
5. Conjoint title holders will be expected to contribute to the tertiary institution in the areas of teaching, research and leadership.

Accountability: paramedic conjoint title holder

1. Adhere/uphold to an accountability relationship between health service employer and tertiary institution.

References

1. Meadley BN, Andrews T, Delardes BJ, Shannon BP. The Evolution of Clinician-Academics in Paramedicine: Completing the Picture of Professionalism. *Prehospital and Disaster Medicine*. 2022;37(5):574-6.
2. Williams B, Meadley B. Paramedic pathways and the clinician-academic conundrum. *Lens: Medicine and Health*. 2022 13/12/2022.