



Consultation Paper

Professional Practice Programs

Why are we consulting?

The Australasian College of Paramedicine (the College) is inviting feedback on its Professional Practice Programs consultation paper. As the peak professional body for paramedics in Australasia, the College provides a respected voice in determining how changes in health service provision, legislation and clinical practice are shaped and implemented to enhance the quality of patient care.

With its reach across jurisdictions, practice contexts and employment relationships, the College is uniquely and ideally situated to deliver professional practice programs that ensure consistently high clinical standards across the paramedic profession to support better patient care.

Feedback collected through the consultation process will be used to support the College in establishing professional practice programs for paramedics across Australasia. This work sits alongside the work being carried out to establish a Paramedicine: Clinical Practice Framework for Australasia.

Providing feedback

The College has opened this consultation to gather wider feedback on Professional Practice to support the professional development and standards of paramedic practice. This consultation paper focuses on the first five years of practice, while also supporting specialisations and higher levels of clinical practice. The College will review all feedback received and progress necessary recommendations.

Data gathered through the consultation will be stored in accordance with the [College's Privacy Policy](#).

You can provide your comments by completing this [short survey](#).

Submissions close at 5pm AEST, Sunday 23 April.

Publication of submissions

The College reserves the right to publish submissions to inform members and stakeholders, and to encourage discussion.

Published submissions will include the names of the individuals and/or the organisations that made the submission unless confidentiality is requested. Please advise us if you do not want your submission published.

The College will not publish submissions that contain offensive or defamatory comments, or which are deemed outside the scope of the subject of the consultation.

To request that your submission not be published, please email policy@paramedics.org

Overview/Background

The practice of paramedicine continues to evolve, accelerated by the introduction of registration in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, the COVID-19 pandemic and health system pressures.

The pandemic has seen considerable growth in the size of the paramedic workforce, with many jurisdictional ambulance services (JAS) greatly increasing their graduate paramedic intake. While JAS are well versed at inducting and training graduate paramedics to fulfil their roles – the large intake during 2021 and 2022 added to by another round of increased graduate paramedic recruitment this year – is challenging their ability to support graduate paramedics entering the profession. It is often the case that there are paramedics with less than two years' experience in the profession required to induct and support new graduate paramedics during their first six months of independent practice. Additionally, the lack of standardisation across Australasia creates risk of inconsistency in graduate capabilities, impacting the profession as a whole.

The expanded paramedic workforce, while beneficial to the delivery of the health care our community's need, has seen an overall reduction in the average clinical age and experience of the paramedic workforce. This changes the risk profile of the delivery of emergency response for our ambulance services. While future recruitment is likely to be lower than the past few years, it is unlikely that we will return to the historical much lower recruitment levels, and there will be a larger workforce to maintain into the future.

We also have a growing private provider contingent with matching growing workforce needs, which brings new career pathways and first-time roles to the profession.

Overall, there will be continued strong growth in the workforce highlighting the importance of how graduate paramedics are inducted into the profession and support through their first few years of practice.

Current undergraduate paramedicine degrees are designed to be accompanied with an internship program during the first year of employment. With a larger and clinically younger workforce to manage, the importance of the internship and the first 36 months of clinical practice is now incredibly important. Note: It has been noted by the College that some internships and induction periods are now very short (weeks not months or years) and may not fully prepare graduate paramedics to be successful in the profession.

After the internship period, ongoing learning and professional development is mostly in the hands of individual paramedics who devise a self-determined continued professional development (CPD) program. Reliance on self-driven further education can lead to a varied standard in clinical capability throughout a paramedic's career. While the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and the Kaunihera Manapou | NZ Paramedic Council set ongoing CPD requirements for registration, this does not ensure quality or capability improvement; it is a minimum standard which the profession can and should strive to go above and beyond.

The new roles opening up for paramedics in primary and urgent care will require a workforce underpinned by robust clinical knowledge and reasoning, who delivery high quality and valuable care to the community. Low clinical quality will detrimentally impact the future for paramedicine, with the profession's prized "most trusted" profession title under threat from potential poor clinical outcomes for patients as paramedics undertake new models of care.

The College has always had a focus on the development of paramedics and improving clinical practice, and wants to ensure the process of internship and induction to the profession, as well as raising clinical standards isn't left to chance and meets regionally consistent standards to produce high quality clinicians.

The College sees a distinct opportunity for paramedicine to introduce a robust professional development structure applicable across all of Australia and New Zealand regardless of employer, that

better integrates graduate paramedics into the workforce while also ensuring standards for clinical capability are consistently high. The focus of this will be on the foundational first year of practice, however it is intended to extend through the first three to five years of practice.

The draft Clinical Practice Framework consultation paper identified three stages for the paramedic levels:

- Foundation (first 12 months) – Learning to deliver holistic, person-centred care
- Intermediate (12-36 months) – Confidently able to deliver holistic, person-centred care
- Advanced (4 years on) – Lead and guide others to deliver holistic, person-centred care

The goal of a professional development program is to support graduate paramedics to successfully enter the profession (Foundation) and achieve a higher clinical standard earlier (Intermediate / Advanced) than was previously possible through a supported program of learning (experiential, knowledge and skills).

While the College understands that this issue is widespread and it can be addressed within ambulance services, other employers, or via educational institutions, with a 50-year history of driving clinical improvement and professional development for paramedics, the College is well-placed to have a direct role in assisting the profession address these challenges.

Discussion: Professional Practice Programs

The goal of the College's Professional Practice Programs is to provide a structured and recognised experiential program to support paramedics through the first five years of practice, enhancing the clinical capability of all paramedics and supporting specialist practice. This structured approach will define the learning, teaching and assessment required for each stage of the program.

Graduate paramedics to Postgrad Year 4 (PGY 1 to 4)

The College sees great professional value in supporting the integration and development of paramedics as they enter the workforce, whether with a JAS or private provider, through a structured experiential development program.

1. Paramedic Professional Year (PGY 1)

The first 12 months (PGY1) is a vital learning period which will set paramedics up for a successful clinical career. Currently, known variations in internship length and quality, pose a distinct reputational challenge for paramedicine across the wider health system. For the health system to understand, trust and utilise paramedics for their unique capabilities, a clear and consistent professional program, starting with graduates, is essential.

The Paramedic Professional Year will support newly registered paramedics to successfully transition to the workforce. Graduates will be offered a thorough grounding in professional paramedic practice through the integration of relevant skills, knowledge and attributes. Successful completion of all requirements will allow program participants to graduate with a Certificate of Professional Paramedic Practice.

The program will benefit:

- **Profession/patient care:** promoting consistently high standards across Australasia
- **Employers:** assisting services and private providers to support graduate paramedics' full integration into the profession,
- **Graduates:** consolidating learning and supporting transition to practice. (For non-practising graduates, the program will provide a framework and evidence of active continuous learning and development to assure future employers of underpinning knowledge and sound preparation for practice.)

2. Fellowship Program (PGY 2-3)

Following the internship period, it is ideal for paramedicine to continue to support and enhance clinical practice for longer than the initial 12 months of practice, with a structured experiential development program sitting alongside paramedic practice for a period of 36 months.

The Fellowship Program (incorporating a Diploma of Professional Paramedic Practice) will support the progressive development of knowledge, skills and attributes necessary for excellence in generalist paramedic practice, leading to eligibility to undertake assessment for Fellowship.

The program will benefit:

- **Patient care:** driving a consistently high standard of care for the benefit of the community
- **Profession:** providing visibility and assurance of paramedic capabilities within the health system
- **Employers:** developing a workforce who are actively engaged with enhancing their professional knowledge and skills base as practising paramedics
- **Paramedics:** offering a practical, well-regarded qualification in professional paramedic practice and pathway to College Fellowship, along with structured CPD.

3. Specialist Fellowship Program (PGY4+)

The College is proposing creating a specialist level ACP Fellowship to provide clarity to employers about the quality and capability of paramedics functioning in specialist roles.

Many professions use a fellowship or certification model to provide industry and employers with the confidence that the staff they are employing or engaging meet appropriate standards to practise.

Paramedicine has established specialities such as extended, intensive and critical care. However, the recent announcement of urgent care clinics in Australia, and the general progression of extended care paramedics and community paramedicine across Australasia, will see paramedics increasingly utilised in different settings where contextualised paramedicine clinical governance and oversight are less robust or tailored to the needs of individual clinicians. Providing a mechanism to deliver surety about the capability of paramedics working as specialists in these new models of care would enhance the standing of paramedicine and help safeguard against possible negative outcomes.

Professional Practice Programs model

Timing	Program	Eligibility	Requirements	Qualification*
PGY1	Paramedic Professional Year	Open to all registered paramedics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports first 12 months' practice • Employment with paramedic service • Meet competency standards of Certificate at 12 months 	Certificate of Professional Paramedic Practice
PGY 2 & 3	ACP Fellowship Program	College members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awarded not before 24 months of full time (equivalent) practice post Certificate completion • Meet competency standards of Diploma at 24 months • Pass Fellowship assessment 	Diploma of Professional Paramedic Practice ACP Fellowship

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake ongoing defined Fellow CPD program to maintain fellowship 	
PGY 5 (indicative)	ACP Specialist Fellowship Program	College members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports first 12 months of practice in specialisation Must be practising in area of specialisation Meet competency standards of Advanced Diploma at 12 months Pass Fellowship (specialist) assessment Undertake ongoing defined Fellow (specialist) CPD program to maintain Fellowship (every 3 years) 	Advanced Diploma of Specialist Paramedic Practice** ACP Fellowship (specialist)

***Qualifications:** The College will develop industry-specific qualifications at certificate, diploma, and advanced diploma levels to provide the education framework for the professional practice programs. Specific fellowship assessments will also be created.

****Advanced Diploma of Specialist Paramedic Practice:** Initially this qualification is envisaged as providing support and enhanced learning for a paramedic with a new role in specialist practice. In the future this qualification may also support development of practice prior to specialist employment while also supporting the initial period in specialist practice.

Recognition of prior learning and experience

Entry to ACP Fellowship Program: Paramedics with 12-36 months of equivalent full-time clinical experience will be able to enter the ACP Fellowship Program without needing to complete the Paramedic Professional Year program.

ACP Fellowship: For experienced paramedics at PGY4+ a Recognition of Prior Learning / Current Competencies[^] (RPLCC) program will be created to allow those paramedics to achieve Fellowship designation.

ACP Specialist Fellowship: An RPLCC program will be created alongside the Professional Practice Programs to allow experienced paramedic specialists to achieve ACP Specialist Fellowship designation.

Have your say: complete the online survey [here](#)

The College has opened a consultation process inviting feedback from stakeholders to help further refine its Professional Practice Programs.

Please read the consultation paper before completing this survey. It is estimated that the [online survey](#) will take 15 minutes to complete. Responses will only be recorded once you complete the survey and press 'submit'. *Indicates compulsory questions.