





COLLEGE OF  
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## Contents

	Foreword	Page 4
<b>Section A</b>	<b>Introduction and Background to the Paramedic Career Framework</b>	
<b>A1</b>	Introduction	Page 5
<b>A2</b>	Background	Page 5
<b>Section B</b>	<b>Paramedic Career Framework</b>	
<b>B1</b>	Paramedic Career Framework	Page 6
<b>B2</b>	Paramedic Career Pathways and Tiers	Page 6
<b>B3</b>	Paramedic Career Framework Diagram	Page 7
<b>B4</b>	Paramedic Clinical Career Education Standards	Page 8
<b>Section C</b>	<b>Education Level Descriptors</b>	
<b>C1</b>	The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) Level 6 The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) Level 9	Page 9
<b>C1.1</b>	FHEQ Level 6 BSc (Hons) / FQHEIS Level 9 (BSc non-honours)	Page 10
<b>C2</b>	The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) Level 7 The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) Level 11	Page 12
<b>C2.1</b>	FHEQ MSc Level 7 / FQHEIS MSc Level 11	Page 13
<b>C3</b>	The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) Level 8 The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS) Level 12	Page 15
<b>C3.1</b>	FHEQ PhD/ProfD Level 8 / FQHEIS PhD/ProfD Level 12	Page 16
	References	Page 17
<b>Appendix A</b>	Paramedic Career Framework Group	Page 19

## Foreword

The College of Paramedics first designed and introduced a career framework in the first edition in 2006 of the paramedic pre-registration curriculum<sup>1</sup>. This was reviewed and updated in the second edition in 2008 of the paramedic pre-registration curriculum<sup>2</sup>. During the second decade of the College's history this was completely redesigned into the present day circular diagram format.

The paramedic career framework (5th Ed Revised) has been extremely successful in providing paramedics, employers, other professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies clarity on the of roles and abilities of the modern-day paramedic. The paramedic career framework diagram visually represents career opportunities available to paramedics across the four pathways of practice. Since the earlier iteration in 2015 professional bodies have contacted the College of Paramedics and requested permission to utilise this format to portray their own profession's career development opportunities. We are happy to continue to do that with permissions and due recognition.

The paramedic career framework diagram continues to evolve with the ongoing changes within the paramedic profession, this 5th edition has also been revised to further address the educational and career development opportunities embracing the four pathways, be it as a student undertaking a pre-registration education programme to become a paramedic, or those who are now leading in various organisations, and those delivering clinical care in the out-of-hospital, primary, urgent, emergency, critical acute, secondary arenas.

The College of Paramedics as the professional body for UK paramedics is committed to: "leading the development of the paramedic profession"; this updated publication is another key element in delivering this commitment.



**Kirsty Lowery Richardson FCPa**  
**Head of Education The College of Paramedics**  
**January 2024**

# Section A

## Introduction and Background to the Paramedic Career Framework

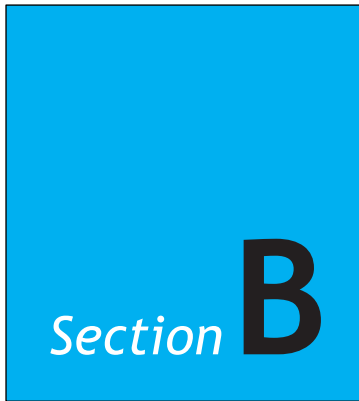
### A1 Introduction

Threshold for entry to the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) register changed to a Bachelors degree with honours in September 2021<sup>3</sup>. This was the result of more than a decade of lobbying by the College of Paramedics. The new threshold entry to the register commenced in September 2021, with two small / short extensions to assist the transition in Northern Ireland and Scotland.

### A2 Background

The purpose of the College of Paramedics education advisory group (EAG) is within the context of the education and training of paramedics, it has among its many responsibilities the obligation to review and publish key documents to ensure that they maintain currency in the developing paramedic environment, these include the: *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup>, *Paramedic Interactive Career Framework*<sup>11</sup>, and the *Post-Registration Paramedic Career Framework*<sup>12</sup>.

More recently sub-groups of the EAG have undertaken the review of all of the above documents and this revised, updated and renamed document is the outcome of the work conducted and undertaken by the Paramedic Career Framework Group, from the *Paramedic Post-Registration Career Framework*<sup>12</sup> and renamed it as the *Paramedic Career Framework*<sup>13</sup> this is because the paramedic profession has now achieved degree entry all graduate status, including those who enter the Register after completing an HCPC Approved Apprenticeship degree programme. The modifications are in line with changes to the other sub-groups reviews, and with recent implementation to the HCPC<sup>14</sup> threshold entry level to the Register for paramedics.



## Paramedic Career Framework

### B1 Paramedic Career Framework

The fifth edition (revised) of the *Paramedic Career Framework*<sup>13</sup> has been prepared to provide paramedics who are considering their career opportunities, it is also to advise service users and all employers of paramedics. In addition, this document provides the professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) insight into the ongoing development of paramedics across the UK.

The document also provides direction regarding the educational requirements for the clinical practice pathway and describes the appropriate higher education descriptor levels for UK Degree Awarding Bodies<sup>15, 16</sup> throughout England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (see Section C). The document demonstrates a structured process to assist and guide individuals and employers who are considering developing career pathways. It is explicitly linked to both the College's *Paramedic Post Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup>, and the *Paramedic Interactive Career Framework*<sup>11</sup> which provides further guidance. The following text provides description of the career pathways and tiers, all of which are applicable to paramedics continuing, personal and professional career development.

### B2 Paramedic Career Pathways and Tiers

The four pathways within the *Paramedic Career Framework*<sup>13</sup> replicate those available to paramedics as career choices. Each pathway has four tiers that represent the level of development and expertise in each pathway, these include.

#### Clinical Practice

Tier I – *Paramedic*, Tier II – *Specialist/Enhanced Paramedic*, Tier III - *Advanced Paramedic*, and Tier IV - *Consultant Paramedic*.

#### Leadership and Management

Tier I – *Team Leader* (Clinical and Operational), Tier II - *Manager*, Tier III – *Senior Manager*, and Tier IV - *Director*.

#### Education

Tier I – *Lecturer*, Tier II – *Senior Lecturer*, Tier III – *Principal Lecturer / Associate Professor*,

and Tier IV - *Professor*.

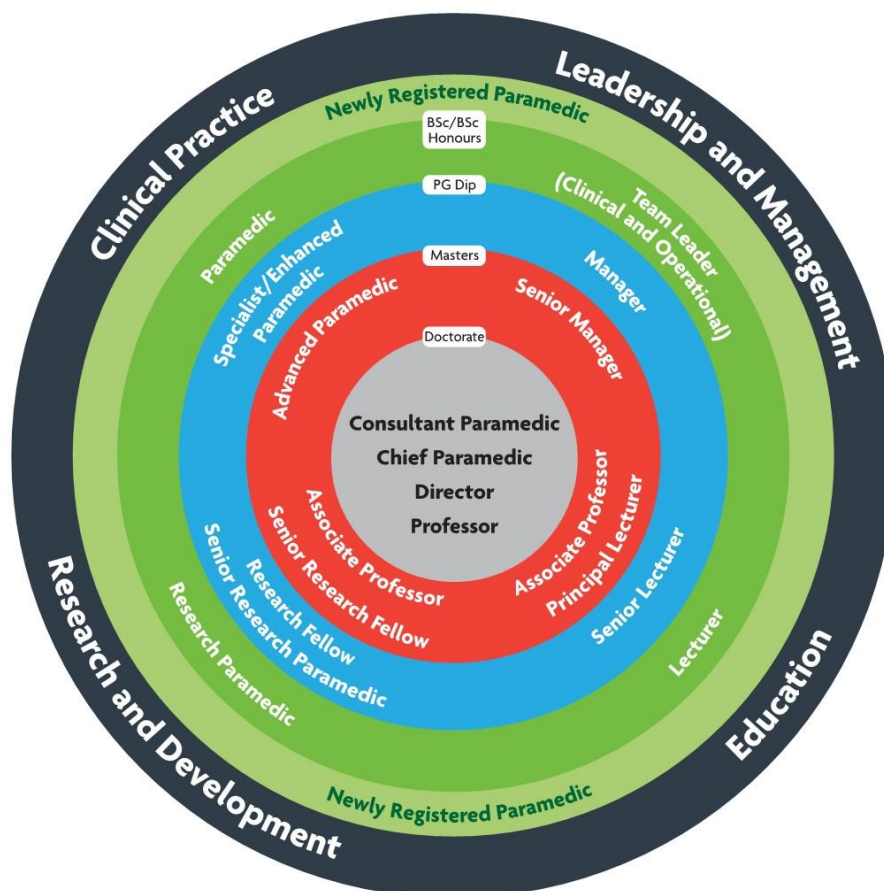
## Research and Development

Tier I – *Research Paramedic*, Tier II – *Research Fellow/Senior Research Paramedic* Tier III – *Senior Research Fellow/Associate Professor*, and Tier IV – *Professor/Consultant Paramedic - Research*.

**Research and Development:** The ascribed title may depend on whether these are ambulance service appointments, academic appointments, or clinical academic roles in any setting.

The College of Paramedics makes known that the education levels alluded to in the career framework diagram (Figure 1), refer only to the 'Clinical' career pathway, and are representative of, and align with, the College of Paramedics *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup>, and *Paramedic Interactive Career Framework*<sup>11</sup>. Those paramedics who seek to develop along either of the other three career pathways are advised that the educational requirement(s) will and do vary across different institutions and organisations; for example, a university may advertise a Senior Lecturer position and require applicants to have a PhD or professional doctorate/ProfD.

## B3 Paramedic Career Framework Diagram



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Figure 1: Paramedic Career Framework Diagram © College of Paramedics 2022

#### B4 Paramedic Clinical Career Education Standards

Paramedic Title	Academic Level	Assessment Standard	Period of Study to Achieve Competency	Experience/ Competency required to be eligible to apply for the next level of the Career Framework
<b>Paramedic</b>	BSc (Hons) FHEQ – Level 6 BSc FQHEIS – Level 9	College of Paramedics Paramedic Curriculum Guidance (2023 <sup>17</sup> ) QAA Subject Benchmark Statement – Paramedics (2019 <sup>18</sup> ) HCPC Standards of Proficiency - Paramedics (2022 <sup>19</sup> ) HCPC Standards of Education & Training (2017 <sup>20</sup> ) HCPC Standards of conduct, performance and ethics (2016 <sup>21</sup> )	Minimum 3 Years	Post registration paramedics should undertake a period of consolidation and obtain a Practice Educator qualification. Develop and obtain a portfolio of expertise and competence.
<b>Specialist/ Enhanced Paramedic</b>	PGDip FHEQ – Level 7 FQHEIS – Level 9	Enhanced Practice - Primary /Emergency/ Critical Care CPD Portfolio of Evidence College of Paramedics Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance (2022 <sup>10</sup> )	2 Years	Undertake a recognised and appropriate education programme, whilst developing and obtaining a portfolio of expertise and competence.
<b>Advanced Paramedic</b>	MSc FHEQ – Level 7 FQHEIS – Level 11	Advanced Practice – Primary/Emergency/ Critical Care CPD Portfolio of Evidence College of Paramedics Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance (2022 <sup>10</sup> ) Credentialing Examination	3 Years	Undertake a recognised and appropriate education programme, whilst developing and obtaining a portfolio of expertise and competence.
<b>Consultant Paramedic</b>	PhD/ProfD FHEQ – Level 8 FQHEIS – Level 12	CPD Portfolio of Evidence College of Paramedics Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance (2022 <sup>10</sup> )	6 Years	Undertake a recognised and appropriate education programme





## Education Level Descriptors

### **C1 The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) BSc (Hons) Level 6 - The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education in Scotland (FQHEIS) BSc Level 9**

The following section provides guidance on the educational level descriptors that are associated with the level of education of at graduation and apply to register as a Paramedic with the UK regulatory body.

Education and the award of degrees are different across the UK. Universities in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland award a degree in accordance with the FHEQ, with a BSc (Hons) requiring a minimum of three years full time education. However, in Scotland Universities award degrees in accordance with the FQHEIS, with a BSc (Hons) requiring a minimum of four years full time education. Hence, for parity across all nations of the UK the student paramedic in Scotland undertakes and completes a BSc over three years. This agreement was reached with the HCPC to meet standard 1 of the HCPC SETs<sup>20</sup> under equivalency. The following table demonstrates the levels within the UK Qualifications Frameworks.

**Table 1: UK Degrees**

Level in UK Qualifications Frameworks		
Type of Degree	England, Wales, and Northern Ireland	Scotland
Doctoral degree (or doctorate) <b>PhD/ProfD</b>	8	12
Masters Degree <b>MSc</b>	7	11
Bachelors degree with honours <b>BSc (Hons)</b>	6	10
Ordinary bachelors degree <b>BSc</b>		9

The following pages in C1.1 provide the respective qualification frameworks descriptors.

**C1.1 FHEQ BSc (Hons) Level 6 / FQHEIS BSc Level 9**

<b>Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 6 on the FHEQ: bachelor's degree with honours</b>	<b>Descriptor for a higher education qualification at SCQF level 9 on the FQHEIS: bachelor's (non-honours) degree in Scotland</b>
<p>The descriptor provided for this level of the FHEQ is for any bachelor's degree with honours which should meet the descriptor in full.</p> <p><b>Bachelor's degrees with honours are awarded to students who have demonstrated:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A systematic understanding of key aspects of their field of study, including acquisition of coherent and detailed knowledge, at least some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of defined aspects of a discipline.</li> <li>• An ability to deploy accurately established techniques of analysis and enquiry within a discipline.</li> <li>• Conceptual understanding that enables the student: - to devise and sustain arguments, and/or to solve problems, using ideas and techniques, some of which are at the forefront of a discipline - to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline.</li> <li>• An appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge.</li> <li>• The ability to manage their own learning, and to make use of scholarly reviews and primary sources (for example, refereed research articles and/or original materials appropriate to the discipline).</li> </ul>	<p>The bachelor's (non-honours) degree in Scotland is typically achieved after the equivalent of three years of full-time higher education. In the main and depending on the subjects or professional area(s) studied, it is awarded as a Bachelor of Science (BSc).</p> <p><b>Bachelor's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A broad and comparative knowledge of the general scope of the subject, its different areas and applications, and its interactions with related subjects. A detailed knowledge of a defined subject or a more limited coverage of a specialist area balanced by a wider range of study. In each case, specialised study will be informed by current developments in the subject.</li> <li>• A critical understanding of the essential theories, principles and concepts of the subject(s) and of the ways in which these are developed through the main methods of enquiry in the subject. An awareness of the provisional nature of knowledge.</li> <li>• Familiarity and competence in the use of routine materials, practices and skills and of a few that are more specialised, advanced and complex.</li> <li>• Well developed skills for the gathering, evaluation, analysis and presentation of information, ideas, concepts and quantitative and/or qualitative data, drawing on a wide range of current sources. This will include the use of ICT as appropriate to the subject(s).</li> </ul>

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- Apply the methods and techniques that they have learned to review, consolidate, extend and apply their knowledge and understanding, and to initiate and carry out projects.
- Critically evaluate arguments, assumptions, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to make judgements, and to frame appropriate questions to achieve a solution - or identify a range of solutions - to a problem.
- Communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences.

**And holders will have:**

- The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision-making in complex and unpredictable contexts
  - the learning ability needed to undertake appropriate further training of a professional or equivalent nature.

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- Use their knowledge, understanding and skills, in both identifying and analysing problems and issues and in formulating, evaluating and applying evidence-based solutions and arguments;
- Communicate the results of their studies and other work accurately and reliably in a range of different contexts using the main specialist concepts, constructs and techniques of the subject(s);
- Identify and address their own learning needs, including being able to draw on a range of current research, development and professional materials;
- Apply their subject and transferable skills to contexts where criteria for decisions and the scope of the task may be well defined but where personal responsibility, initiative and decision-making is also required

## **C2 The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland PGDip/MSc (FHEQ) Level 7 - The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education in Scotland PGDip/MSc (FQHEIS) Level 9**

The following section provides guidance on the educational level descriptors that are associated with the level of education of paramedics who wish to develop clinically to practice at Specialist, and later at Advanced level of practice.

The *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup> tier II explains that there are various areas of clinical expertise for those who aspire to develop as a Specialist/Enhanced Paramedic, with each area requiring the attainment of differing skills and clinical competence, and may cover primary, urgent, emergency, critical care, or other health subject curricula. To be eligible to apply for these positions will require the undertaking and attainment of a recognised programme of education at FHEQ level 7 / FQHEIS level 11 post graduate diploma (PGDip), whilst developing and obtaining their respective portfolio of expertise and competence.

Tier III of the *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup> also explains the various areas of clinical expertise for those who aspire to continue develop clinically and become an Advanced Paramedic, again with each area requiring the attainment of differing skills and clinical competence. Similarly, they may be in the same areas of expertise, such as, primary, urgent, emergency, critical care, or other health subject curricula. To be eligible to apply for these positions, paramedics will require the undertaking and attainment of a recognised programme of education at FHEQ level 7 / FQHEIS level 11 MSc master's degree, whilst developing and obtaining their respective portfolio of expertise and competence.

From the FHEQ level 7 and FQHEIS level 11 onwards the educational descriptors are similar but awarded by the appropriate UK frameworks. Throughout all levels these define the outcomes of increasingly more demanding learning (and typical qualifications), in ascending order, as described throughout section C.

The following pages in C2.1 provide the respective qualification frameworks descriptors.

## C2.1 FHEQ MSc Level 7 / FQHEIS MSc Level 11

### Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 7 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS: master's degree

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any master's degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other qualifications at level 7/ SCQF level 11 on the FQHEIS, including postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas.

#### Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- A systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice
- A comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or
- advanced scholarship
- Originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline
- Conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline
  - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

#### Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- Deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level
- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level.

#### And holders will have:

The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

- the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
- decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations
- the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

### **C3 The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland PhD/ProfD (FHEQ) Level 8 - The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education in Scotland PhD/ProfD (FQHEIS) Level 12**

The following section provides guidance on the educational level descriptors that are associated with the level of education of paramedics who wish to develop to the level of a Consultant Paramedic.

The *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup> tier IV explains that there are various areas of expertise for those who aspire to develop as a Consultant Paramedic requires the attainment of differing skills and clinical competence, that have been developed over the individuals career, including expert practice; strategic and enabling leadership; learning, developing, and improving across the system; and research and innovation. Their area of expertise may cover primary, urgent, emergency, critical care, or other health subject curricula. The position of Consultant Paramedic as demonstrated in both the *Paramedic Post-Graduate Career Guidance*<sup>10</sup> and the *Interactive Career Framework*<sup>11</sup> includes the ability to place patient centred care at the forefront of their role, and also have a strong leadership and managerial presence within their area of practice.

To achieve the status of Consultant Paramedic will require the completion of a PhD/Professional Doctorate at FHEQ level 8 / FQHEIS level 12.

The following page C.3.1 provides the respective qualification frameworks descriptors.

**C3.1 FHEQ PhD/ProfD Level 8 / FQHEIS PhD/ProfD Level 12****Descriptor for a higher education qualification at level 8 on the FHEQ and SCQF level 12 on the FQHEIS: doctoral degree**

The descriptor provided for this level of the frameworks is for any doctoral degree which should meet the descriptor in full. This qualification descriptor should also be used as a reference point for other level 8/level 12 qualifications.

**Doctoral degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:**

- The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication
- A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice
- The general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems
- A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

**Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:**

- Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences
- Continue to undertake pure and/or applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas or approaches.

**And holders will have:**

- The qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring the exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations, in professional or equivalent environments.



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## Appendix - A

### Paramedic Career Framework Development Group

The Board of Trustees of the College of Paramedics wishes to thank the members of the Paramedic Career Framework Development Group for their contribution to the development, editing and final production of the College of Paramedics *Paramedic Career Framework* 5<sup>th</sup> edition REVISED.

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