

Core Standards for Assistant Practitioners



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Introduction

The following core standards for Assistant Practitioners are in response to healthcare employers' requests for standardisation of the role.

Skills for Health set up a task and finish group to develop the core standards. As part of this work MacKinnon Associates scoped current practice across the country, which confirmed that there was wide variation in the way responsibilities, training and progression of Assistant Practitioners had developed.

Based on information from the report, employers and commissioners, the group put draft core standards out to consultation, which drew nearly 300 responses.

The group's remit was to look at the role in England rather than other countries. It did not cover salaries or regulation. The role developed is at Level 4 of the Career Framework, ie just below the level of a registered practitioner. In some places, this role is referred to as an Associate Practitioner.

Although the role is based on work in England we believe that these core standards will be applicable across the UK. Some further testing work may be required to confirm this.

The core standards below should be achieved by all Assistant Practitioners and those working in similar roles but with different job titles if there is to be consistency of function and level of responsibility and, therefore, of transferability as well.

Definition

An Assistant Practitioner is a worker who competently delivers health and social care to and for people. They have a required level of knowledge and skill beyond that of the traditional healthcare assistant or support worker. The Assistant Practitioner would be able to deliver elements of health and social care and undertake clinical work in domains that have previously only been within the remit of registered professionals. The Assistant Practitioner may transcend professional boundaries. They are accountable to themselves, their employer, and, more importantly, the people they serve.

Transition

Some Assistant Practitioners will have been employed, trained and educated prior to these standards being in place. Where this is the case and all the standards cannot be evidenced it would be expected that Assistant



Practitioners should be meeting the career framework indicators identified in Standard 4 and have achieved the competences in Standard 5. If this is not the case then it is anticipated that employers would take steps to rectify this through in-service education and training. However, it is not expected that these Assistant Practitioners would have to achieve the initial training identified below where they are already in post and successfully undertaking their role. However, it is strongly recommend that the Assistant Practitioners undergo a formal assessment of the core competences, including underpinning knowledge through a portfolio assessed by an appropriate practitioner with an approved assessor qualification by the end of December 2011.

Standard 1

The role of the Assistant Practitioner should be recognised and valued in its own right.

- 1.1 Assistant Practitioners should be recognised by employers as valued workers who support the work of registered practitioners.
- 1.2 Assistant Practitioners may work under distant guidance and work as lone workers where appropriate.
- 1.3 Assistant Practitioners can be appropriately used in most service settings and across professional boundaries.
- 1.4 Assistant Practitioners should have job descriptions that reflect the scope and responsibility expected of them and the job description should be regularly reviewed.



Standard 2

Candidates who have the capability to undertake the job should be recruited to an appropriate post of employment and training programme.

- 2.1 There should be a formal selection process.
- 2.2 Employers must be involved in the recruitment and selection process.
- 2.3 Education and training organisations should accept a wide diversity of entry qualifications and/or equivalent experience.
- 2.4 Literacy, language and numeracy skills should be in line with the functional skills identified in the Skills for Health employability matrix for Career Framework Level 4 by the time their training is completed.
- 2.5 Trainee Assistant Practitioners should have relevant experiences that allow them to understand the challenges of the health and/or social care in the environment in which they are to work.

Standard 3

The education and training of Assistant Practitioners should support the development of a practice focused, competent individual.

- 3.1 The education of the Assistant Practitioner should be work based and employer led.
- 3.2 The education and training of Assistant Practitioners should be at level 5 of the Qualification and Credit Framework (QCF) which is equivalent to

Intermediate Level Higher Education such as Foundation Degrees or Higher National Diplomas.

- 3.3 The duration of the training of Assistant Practitioners should normally be 2 years in duration.
- 3.4 Programme providers should consider each applicant as an individual and where possible AP(E)L should be applied.
- 3.5 Whilst in training, the trainees should be recognised as learners and be supported to develop their newly acquired skills as part of the care team.

Standard 4

The Assistant Practitioner should be acting at the appropriate level on the career framework.

- 4.1 The job description of the Assistant Practitioner should equate to Level 4 of the Career Framework.
- 4.2 The following career framework indicators should be applied to Assistant Practitioners:
 - Manages their role under guidance
 - Makes suggestion for improvement to outcomes of their job
 - Demonstrates self-directed development and practice
 - Makes judgements requiring a comparison of options
 - Plans straight forward tasks and work guided by standard operating procedures and protocols.

And where appropriate:

- Undertakes the ongoing supervision of the routine work of others
- Takes some responsibility for the training of others and may deliver training.

Standard 5

The Assistant Practitioner should be competent in the following areas:

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| CfA 105 | Store and Retrieve Information |
| CfA 106 | Use IT to exchange information |
| CHS 36 | Provide basic life support |

GEN 12	Reflect on and evaluate your own values, priorities, interests and effectiveness
GEN 13	Synthesise new knowledge into the development of your own practice
GEN 22	Communicate effectively with individuals
GEN 23	Audit your own work practice
GEN 63	Act within the limits of your competence and authority
HSC D5	Comply with legal requirements for confidentiality
HSC 22	Support the health and safety of self and others
HSC 23	Develop your knowledge and practice
HSC 24	Ensure your actions support the care, protection and well-being of individuals
HSC 234	Ensure your actions support equality, diversity and responsibilities of others
HCS 241	Contribute to the effectiveness of teams

And where appropriate:

H&LD 5	Allocate and check work in your team
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Where Assistant Practitioners have a clinical role:

AG 2	Contribute to care planning and review
CHS 118	Form a professional judgement of an individual's health condition
ENTO WRV1	Make sure your actions contribute to a positive and safe working culture
GEN 4	Prepare individuals for clinical/therapeutic activities
GEN 5	Support individuals during and after clinical/therapeutic activities
GEN 6	Prepare the environment for clinical/therapeutic activities
GEN 7	Monitor and manage the environment and resources during and after clinical/therapeutic activities
GEN 8	Assist the practitioner to implement clinical/therapeutic activities
HSC 21	Communicate and complete records for individuals
IPC 2	Perform hand hygiene to prevent the spread of infection



Standard 6

The Assistant Practitioner should be enabled to develop within their role and progression routes should be available.

- 6.1 Continuing Professional Development should be available for Assistant Practitioners to develop within their role.
- 6.2 Employers should recognise transferable skills and competences.
- 6.3 Wherever possible, education providers and employers should work together to ensure smooth access onto practitioner level programmes.
- 6.4 Employers should ensure that available promotion opportunities, where appropriate, are open to Assistant Practitioners within their organisations.

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