**College of Paramedics Higher Education Survey**

**Period of data collection:** March 13th to April 18th, 2012

**Collection method:** Invitations to participate were posted on the following web sites:

- College of Paramedics web site
- UK Ambulance Forum
- College of Paramedics Facebook pages

Participants accessed the survey via a *Survey Monkey* web link and contributed anonymously.

The majority (775) of responses came via the CoP website, which was available to full members (paramedics) only. However it was not possible to exclude responses from non-paramedics.

**Responses received:** 966 completed the survey

**Survey Questions**

1. Should the HPC’s SET 1.1: ‘Standards of Education and Training threshold entry level for entry routes to the register’ (the academic level for registration) for paramedics increase? If not, why not?

2. If yes, to what level?
   - Dip. H.E. or Fd.Sc (academic level 5)
   - B.Sc (academic level 6)
   - B.Sc (Hons) (academic level 6, includes a dissertation)
   - Other (please specify)

3. What academic level do you believe paramedic registration should be set at in the longer term (i.e. 3 to 5 years from now) to best underpin the development of the profession?
   - Dip. H.E. or Fd.Sc (academic level 5)
   - B.Sc (academic level 6)
   - B.Sc (Hons) (academic level 6, includes a dissertation)
   - Other (please specify)

4. How important an issue do you think this is?
   - Not at all important
   - Fairly important
   - Important
   - Very Important
5. What educational route to registration did you come through?

- IHCD
- Dip. H.E. or Fd.Sc (academic level 5)
- B.Sc (academic level 6)
- B.Sc (Hons) (academic level 6, includes a dissertation)

6. What is your current educational level? [multiple response options]

- IHCD
- Cert. H.E. (academic level 4)
- Dip. H.E. or Fd.Sc (academic level 5)
- B.Sc (academic level 6)
- B.Sc (Hons) (academic level 6)
- M.Sc
- Other (please specify)

7. Any further comments

Results: Summary

- Participants were overwhelmingly (86%) in favour of an increase in the academic level required for threshold entry to the paramedic register.

- The overwhelming majority (95%) of participants felt that the threshold entry level should increase to level 5 (Dip. HE or Fd.Sc) or level 6 (B.Sc or B.Sc Hons)

- When asked what academic level would best underpin the profession in the longer term (3-5 years), the majority (71%) felt that academic level 6 was preferable, with a further 26%, who preferred level 5.

- 73% of participants felt the issue was ‘important’ or ‘very important’.

Participant background

- The majority (57%) of participants had achieved registration via the IHCD pathway. Of the remaining participants, 34% had registered via a level 5 pathway and 16% via level 6.

- Question 6 asked about current education and allowed multiple answers. 29% listed their current academic educational level at level 6, 27% listed their current academic educational level at level 5.
Question 1

Should the HPC’s SET 1.1: ‘Standards of Education and Training threshold entry level for entry routes to the register’ (the academic level for registration) for paramedics increase?

- Yes: 85.9% (830)
- No: 14.1% (136)

Question 2

If yes, to what level?

- Diplomas of Higher Education/Foundation Degree (academic level 5): 22.6%
- B.Sc (academic level 6): 20.4%
- B.Sc (Hons) (academic level 6, includes a dissertation): 10.6%
- Other: 51.9%
Question 3

What academic level do you believe paramedic registration should be set at in the longer term (i.e. 3 to 8 years from now) to best underpin the development of the profession?

- Diploma of Higher Education/Foundation Degree (level 5): 26.8%
- Degree (level 6): 32.8%
- Honours degree (level 6 includes a dissertation): 37.7%
- Other: 3.1%

Question 4

4. How important an issue do you think this is?

- Not at all important: 5.2%
- Fairly important: 21.9%
- Important: 28.2%
- Very important: 45.1%
Question 5

What educational route to registration did you come through?

- HND: 57.2%
- Diploma of Higher Education or Foundation Degree: 33.7%
- B.Sc: 23%
- B.Sc Hons: 14.1%

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Question 6

What is your current educational level?

- Certificate of higher education (academic level 4): 26.7%
- B.Sc (academic level 5): 26.8%
- Post graduate (Post-grad cert/diploma): 28.5%
- B.A. or B.Sc Hons (academic level 6): 11.3%
- M.Sc: 8.5%
- Other: 8.6%
Written feedback

There were 262 responses to question 7’s invitation to make further comments. 

Text analysis of the most common themes were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Profession</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Care</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Important</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Written Feedback: Summary

- There was a common view that paramedic practice had changed radically and continues to do so and that traditional training systems were outdated.

- Many participants were concerned that academic pathways should not leave new registrants lacking in practical skills and basic caring attributes, such as the ability to communicate effectively, empathise etc.

- Some participants were worried about a ‘three tier’ problem, with paramedics registering at levels 4, 5 and 6.

- Some participants who had come through the IHCD route were worried about being “left behind” and felt that support should be made available to develop.
“I was surprised by the very low educational requirements to enter the service, when first applying. This worried me at the time, as even someone with the bare minimum can progress with little further or no input into their development to become top flight managers, I feel this is currently holding the service back from future development”

“Before aspiring to move the academic goal posts to BSc it is imperative that there is very real and tangible progression with creating a sustainable and equitable environment for education commissioning, student bursaries and funding arrangements”

“Paramedic practice needs to move to third level education if it is to be recognised as a fully integrated health and social care profession.”

“Care needs to be taken not to exclude mature students due to lack of funding or lack of qualifications where a candidate has good experience”

“Please ignore question 5 as I am not a registered Paramedic but a Director of HR. There is no clear evidence of the requirement to move beyond Diploma as a minimum educational level for registration and in any event it would be both impractical and unaffordable to move beyond Diploma as a minimum standard within 3-5 years given the current position”

“I think a three year course would be better. I would advocate that the 2nd year should be spent working at a Technician level and allow the student to develop the skills learnt in year 1. In its current 2 year format it seems quite ‘rushed’ and I’m not sure this allows the student time to develop and build up their basic skills before the more advanced Paramedic techniques are taught”.

“I think that some courses that currently do not have much practical placement time should move towards having more time ‘out on the road”

“Advanced Paramedics, Emergency Care Practitioners, Critical Care Practitioners, Paramedic Practitioners should be educated to M.Sc level”.

“It would be nice to see some consistency nationwide for education. Higher education would put paramedics in line with other healthcare professionals”

“We must not create a three tier system. We need to allow, commission and assure certificate paramedics are at Diploma or degree level before mandating Degree as minimum”

“I think it’s very important to have Paramedics who are willing to undertake (and understand the value of) research to improve best practise”.

“No problem in increasing academic level for registration, would like to see more information, distant learning opportunities to bring existing paramedics up to whatever standard is decided on”. 
“Academic qualifications do not prove that you are a good Paramedic, you can have all the knowledge about all the systems of the body and care but if you have no common sense or courtesy that comes with road experience, and patient contact your knowledge is useless”.

“It is vital if Paramedics are to shape their own future and be seen as a credible profession capable of informing treatment pathways, that they are able to speak in a language of evidence and have the critical thinking skills fostered through an academic route”.

“Academic level is not as important as interpersonal skills”

“There needs to be two routes. One academic and one vocational. This will allow the brilliant hands on vocational paramedics the ability to register as well as the more academic practitioners. Don’t make the same mistake as the nurses and end up with a lack of good basic care”

“There are some people who struggle with Uni level education. If they want to increase they should recognize multiple pathways. Raising the bar is good, but not to discriminate by doing so. I know some good individuals who are paramedics who openly say they would struggle studying at uni level. Another reason is that we are running short of paramedics for multiple reasons, this pathway would delay new paramedics coming through. Putting all these points aside, I do see a place for uni education in the developmental sense.”

“To be treated as professionals we should be trained as professionals, the same way as all health care professionals are taught through higher education institutes.”

“If paramedicine is to be a profession, it needs to train as such. I am very supportive of this [higher education transition] as a means of improving care, though it will be costly”

“Academic rigour and a sound knowledge of the basic and clinical sciences that underpin our professional practice will clearly be a good thing for the profession as a whole - but ambulance work is predominantly hands-on and a proper grounding in both technical and non-technical skills is required alongside theoretical knowledge and academic performance, especially as paramedics have to transition rapidly to independent practice”.