National Ambulance Service (NAS)

Workforce Support Policy

Education and Competency Assurance Framework

Document reference number	*NASWS008*	**Document developed by**	**Head of Education and Competency Assurance**
Revision number	6	**Document approved by**	**Director of the National Ambulance Service**
Approval date	16th August 2011	**Responsibility for implementation**	**Education and Competency Assurance Team**
Revision date	16th August 2020	**Responsibility for review and audit**	**Education and Competency Assurance Team**

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1.0   POLICY STATEMENT

1.1   It is the policy of the National Ambulance Service (NAS) to ensure that all employees are supported in satisfying statutory requirements, Pre Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) standards, Health and Safety legislation, Service policies and procedures and, wherever possible, personal aspirations.

1.2   Education and Competency Assurance needs for all staff can be identified with individuals in the first instance through discussion with their Line Supervisor and/or Line Manager (as appropriate to their grade) and through performance reviews.

1.3   Education for staff seeking registration as Emergency Medical Technicians, Paramedics and Advanced Paramedics is carried out in accordance with the standards determined and syllabus content accredited by PHECC.

1.4   The National Ambulance Service College (NASC) as part of the National Ambulance Service, is a PHECC accredited training institute, thereby enabling the National Ambulance Service to implement educational or competency assurance programmes at either National or Area level. Programmes delivered at NAS Area level will be undertaken and directed by the Education and Competency Assurance Team with support from Area Operations Teams.

1.5   Where appropriate, programmes may be delivered in partnership with relevant external organisations including third level educational providers and/or organisations with specialist competencies.

2.0   PURPOSE

2.1   To ensure effective delivery of appropriate clinical care to patients and clients

2.2   To provide for the workforce planning requirements of the National Ambulance Service

2.3   To meet statutory and legislative requirements

2.4   To support staff in achieving personal aspirations and development goals.

2.5   To provide support, advise and encourage the maximum utilisation of employees' potential towards the achievement of NAS objectives and operational standards.

2.6   To set out organisation and employee roles and responsibilities

3.0   SCOPE

3.1   This policy applies to all NAS Managers, Supervisors and Staff.

4.0   LEGISLATION/OTHER RELATED POLICIES

   A. Duties and Responsibilities (relevant job description)
   B. HSE Code of Standards and Behaviour
   C. Policy - NASCG001 - Clinical Effectiveness
   D. Policy - NASCG003 - Management of Clinical Adverse Events
   E. Policy - NASWS001 - Capability
   F. Policy - NASP002 - Control Quality Assurance System
   G. Training and Education Standards - PHECC
   H. PHECC Code of Conduct
   I. International Academy of Emergency Medical Dispatch   -
      Accreditation

5.0   GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

5.1   Training / Course   / Event   / Programme is used
      interchangeably to represent accredited and non-accredited
      programmes of learning activity.
5.2   Adult learner / staff   / student   / candidate are used
      interchangeably to represent all individuals attending a
      programme of learning.
5.3   Mandatory is used to represent any competency assurance
      activity that is provided by the NAS to meet legislative
      requirements.
5.4   Staff development is used to represent any training activity
      that is provided by the NAS as a requirement for achieving
      corporate objectives.
5.5   Continuing Professional Competence is used to represent
      individual learning needs identified through personal reflection as
      being an activity that will either develop existing skills or enhance
      current competence in accordance with their job role and
      professional qualification requirements.
5.6   NASC is the abbreviation for the National Ambulance Service
      College, a PHECC accredited training institute owned by and
      operated on behalf of the HSE
5.7   NQEMT means the National Qualification in Emergency Medical
      Technology at the level of competence of EMT, Paramedic or
      Advanced Paramedic, as the case may be.
5.8   Registered Practitioner means a person who holds the NQEMT
      at the level of competence of Emergency Medical Technician,
      Paramedic or Advanced Paramedic and whose name appears
      within the relevant division of the register.

6.0   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1   The National Ambulance Service Leadership Team has collective overall responsibility for the implementation and support of this policy.

6.2   All those persons referred to within the Scope of this policy are required to adhere to its terms and conditions.

6.3   The ultimate responsibility for maintaining competency lies with the individual. The National Ambulance Service, through the Education and Competency Assurance Team and any other providers of appropriate education will support the individual to achieve the level of competence appropriate to his or her needs.

6.4   The role of the Education and Competency Assurance Team is to support this responsibility through the provision of relevant educational services and specialist advice.

6.5   Individual Line Supervisors and Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that this policy is applied within their sphere of responsibility. Any queries on the application or interpretation of this policy should be discussed with an Education and Competency Assurance Officer prior to any action being taken.

7.0   PROCEDURE

7.1   CLINICAL EDUCATION AND COMPETENCY ASSURANCE

Clinical education provided by the National Ambulance Service may be delivered as follows:

Assistant Tutors

7.1.1 The support of Clinical Standards and the provision of in-service, experiential and modular training are carried out by Assistant Tutors.

7.1.2 Student Paramedics undertaking stages of the Paramedic Programme may be assigned to an Assistant Tutor who will act as mentor and guide them through the completion of relevant workbooks.

7.1.3 Where performance falls short of the required standard Assistant Tutors may provide the necessary support and remediation so as to aid individuals to maintain acceptable standards of competence.

7.1.4 The Education and Competency Assurance Team is responsible for the standards of performance of Assistant Tutors and consistency of assessment and training.

Emergency Medical Technicians

7.1.5 The initial training for Emergency Medical Technicians covers both clinical skills and driving skills. Clinical skills training is undertaken at an appropriate venue. PHECC accredited driving skills training may be carried out at the National Ambulance Service College or at an appropriate alternative venue at the discretion of the NASC or NASLT,.

7.1.6 Supplementary to the training required by the PHECC, the NAS also requires Emergency Medical Technicians to attend an appropriate venue for induction training.

7.1.7 Emergency Medical Technicians may be provided with an appropriate training course, which is in line with and/or accredited to the PHECC standards. Such a course may include driver training, people moving and handling and customer care.

7.1.8 The Student Emergency Medical Technician may be assigned to an Assistant Instructor/Tutor or other person who may act as mentor and provide guidance for the completion of the training programme and any associated documentation such as workbooks, logbooks etc.

Paramedics

7.1.9 The initial education of Paramedics, where supported by the HSE, covers both clinical skills and driving skills. Clinical skills' education is undertaken at the NASC in partnership with its third level partner and is accredited by the PHECC to the current education and training standards. Driving skills training may be carried out either by the NAS at an appropriate venue or, at the discretion of the NAS, at the NASC.

7.1.10 The NAS may provide the non academic elements of Paramedic training consisting of experiential and hospital placements. Such sites will be in accordance with the PHECC accreditation processes.

7.1.11 All NAS Paramedics are required to comply with PHECC regulations for the maintenance of registration through continuing professional competence, compliance with Clinical Practice Guidelines and the fitness to practice process.

7.1.12 Attend competency assurance and staff development programmes, as determined by the corporate objectives of the NAS and the operational objectives of teams and individuals.

Failure to Complete

7.1.13   Candidates on Paramedic programmes are required to demonstrate ability to progress through all modules of the Paramedic programme. Satisfactory progression through the in-house and NQEMT assessments is outlined in the Student Handbook.

7.1.14   Where candidates have not been able to complete any programme within the time specified, the following action may be taken. The candidate:

☐ May be offered an extension to the original time-scale ☐ May be considered for additional support
☐ May be subject to the appropriate management procedures ☐ May be notified to the PHECC

Advanced Paramedic

7.1.15   Advanced Paramedic education covers both theoretical and clinical elements. Clinical skills training is undertaken at various hospitals and other clinical sites under the direction of a third level Institution in partnership with the NASC.

7.1.16   All NAS Advanced Paramedics are required to comply with PHECC regulations for the maintenance of registration through continuing professional competence, compliance with Clinical Practice Guidelines and the fitness to practice process.

7.1.17   Attend competency assurance programmes, as determined by the corporate objectives of the NAS and the operational objectives of teams and individuals.

Failure to Complete

7.1.18   All NAS Advanced Paramedic students will progress through their training in accordance with the PHECC standards. Failure to progress through the training programme will be dealt with under the terms of the Advisory Memo (June 2011): Guidelines for Managers on Advanced Paramedic Student Exam Resits.

7.1.19   Where candidates have not been able to complete any programme within the specified time the following action may be taken. The candidate:

☐ May be offered an extension to the original time-scale ☐ May be considered for additional support
☐ May be subject to the appropriate management procedures ☐ May be notified to the PHECC

Competency Assurance

7.1.20   Competency Assurance may be assessed both individually and organisationally. Tools for such assessment may include the following:

A. Individual Appraisals
B. Training Programme Results
C. Clinical Audit Processes
D. Adverse Clinical Event reports
E. Development of Clinical Care Programmes and needs arising from Reconfiguration of Acute Services

7.1.21   Where a shortfall is identified in a level of competence, remedial training may be carried out. The training may be undertaken by an Assistant Tutor, Tutor or, through other appropriate channels.

7.1.22   Where patient safety may be compromised, the individual may be referred for support to an Education and Competency Assurance Officer.

7.2   CONTROL TRAINING

EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers

7.2.1 EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers will be provided by NASC with appropriate training in line with and/or accredited to the PHECC Standards. Such training may include Cardiac First Responder training, customer care, map reading, systems and applications, communications, logistics and resource planning, telephony skills and procedural knowledge.

7.2.2 The initial training for EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers covers both system skills and communications skills. System skills and communications skills training are undertaken at an appropriate venues identified by NASC. Such venues may include active Control Centres.

7.2.3 EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers may be required to attend an appropriate venue for additional training relating to MIMMS, Driving skills, Moving and Handling and other training programmes designed to familiarise newly appointed EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers with equipment and procedures which are specific to the NAS.

7.2.4 Student EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers may be assigned to a mentor and provided with guidance for the completion all necessary documentation including workbooks and logbooks.

Continuous Dispatch Education - AMPDS

7.2.5 It is a requirement of all EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers to maintain and undertake CDE. They must achieve a total of 24 hours CDE, within the two years, prior to re-certification.

7.2.6 All EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers have a personal responsibility to ensure that they have sufficient hours accumulated, prior to re-certification, failure to do so may result in loss of certification.

Application process

7.2.7 All EMS Dispatchers and Call Takers must make the necessary arrangements through the Education and Competency Assurance Team for undertaking any CDE activity.

7.3   NON-OPERATIONAL TRAINING

Induction

7.3.1 All new employees, or those transferred from one location/job role to another, will receive induction and a localised induction programme. These will be supported by checklists and will include certain legal requirements, information on terms and conditions and location information.

7.3.2 Mentors   - All new employees will be provided with an induction mentor. Over time, this relationship may develop into a coaching mentor where appropriate, or mentors may change as appropriate. The mentor's responsibilities are to provide support, advice and guidance to the individual during his/her learning cycle.

Education and Competency Assurance Plans

7.3.3 Competency assurance and development needs for non-operational staff will be identified against both the corporate objectives of the NAS and the operational objectives of teams and individuals.

7.3.4 Line Supervisors and Line Managers are responsible for ensuring that agreed activities to satisfy staff competency assurance and development needs are arranged, as appropriate, with the Education and Competency Assurance Team, subject to the operational and financial constraints placed upon the NAS.

On the Job Training

7.3.5 It is recognised that the majority of training occurs within the normal working environment -where staff receive occupational training, coaching, detailed procedural guidance and day to day advice.

7.3.6 In addition to the mentoring process all supervisory/management staff must receive training in order to conduct this function in a professional and effective manner.

7.3.7 Internal Training Courses - A programme of internally run training courses will be produced if required by the Education and Competency Assurance Team following the compilation of identified training needs resulting from the annual review process.

7.3.8 Any Education and Competency Assurance Plan will be circulated to Line Supervisors and Line Managers and may also include training connected to corporate initiatives such as new procedures or practices or legislative requirements.

7.3.9 Line Supervisors and Line Managers are responsible for releasing the relevant employees for attendance on the courses.

7.3.10 All course bookings will be made and confirmed between the Education and Competency Assurance Team and Line Managers

7.3.11 Notification of a cancellation or postponement must be given as early as possible

7.3.12 All employees who attend internal training courses will be asked to complete a course evaluation.

7.3.13 Projects/Secondments - From time to time the NAS may arrange for employees to work on projects or to spend a short time working in different areas, for the development of the employee as appropriate.

7.3.14 A suitable plan of work will be agreed in advance with the relevant Line Supervisor or Line Manager concerned who will also be requested to participate in the review process.

Methodology for training delivery

7.3.15   Appropriate methodologies for the delivery of training will be utilised in line with the principles of best educational practice.

7.3.16   The training delivery is underpinned by a set of principles about teaching and learning in relation to the characteristics of the adult learner.

7.3.17   Adult learners already possess considerable life experience and in many cases, have also accumulated significant professional experience.

7.3.18   Adult learners already possess a view on what they want to learn and how they want to learn. The learning must be meaningful and professionally relevant if motivation is to be maintained.

7.3.19   Previous experience should be valued and utilised for problem solving and as a measure for evaluating continuing professional and personal development. The Recognition of Prior Learning Policy of the NASC will be applied for PHECC accredited programmes.

External Training

7.3.20   Individuals may apply to attend a course, and seek financial support from the NAS. The Diploma and Course Refund Form (Appendix II) must be completed and recommended, in advance before support is considered.

7.3.21   Advice on external courses, their availability, appropriateness and comparative cost is available from the Education and Competency Assurance Team

7.3.22   Employees attending external training courses may be required to complete a course evaluation on return to work.

7.3.23   Financial support for professional qualification courses leading to recognised professional qualifications, including Third Level Qualifications, may be considered subject to prevailing financial constraints and where it can be established that this is of benefit both to the individual and to the NAS.

7.3.24   Access to study leave for professional qualification courses leading to recognised professional qualifications, including Third Level Qualifications, may be considered subject to prevailing financial constraints and where it can be established that this is of benefit both to the individual and to the NAS.

7.3.25   Further details of the arrangements concerning such courses of non prescribed study are outlined in the Employee Handbook or through your Line Supervisor or Line Manager.

Eligibility for training

7.3.26   Staff do not have to apply for places on mandatory or staff development courses although they should ensure that places are allocated to them within the appropriate time-scale.

7.3.27   In relation to application for the Advanced Paramedic programme, a Selection Process operated by the Education and Competency Assurance Team will apply, see Appendix III.

7.3.28   Staff wishing to apply for other courses   / continuing professional competency activity should apply on the Diploma and Course Refund Form to an Education and Competency Assurance Officer in the first instance.

Continuing Professional Competence

7.3.29   Continuing professional competence has an important contribution to make to the NAS's agenda for lifelong learning. As a relatively new concept, the NAS recognises that this policy must support a new approach to learning.

7.3.30   CPC is defined as:

a process of lifelong learning for all individuals and teams which meets the needs of patients and delivers the health outcomes and healthcare priorities of the Health Service and which enables professionals to expand and fulfil their potential.

7.3.31   CPC programmes need to meet local and NAS needs as well as the personal and professional development needs of individuals and all members of the NAS are encouraged in these endeavours.

7.3.32   The NAS acknowledges that CPC is not just about the individual attending courses. Work based learning involves a wide range of activities including:

  A. The process of reflection arising from incidents and the lessons that can be learned and shared.
  B. Making better use of information and audit and developing service improvements based on these.

7.3.33   The provision of CPC is viewed by the NAS as a partnership between the member of staff and the NAS but an important part of the process is that the NAS should encourage staff to develop their own approach to CPC so that they can to continue to fulfil the requirements of any appropriate regulatory body.

7.4 TRAINING RECORDS

7.4.1 The ECAT maintains a training record for all staff. This record summarises training requirements, internal training completed and external courses attended. The records are updated at appropriate stages e.g. on completion of induction training or on receipt of additional training.

7.4.2 Tutors should therefore ensure that all relevant information is forwarded to the Education and Competency Assurance Team at the earliest opportunity following completion of the training including course evaluations.

7.4.3 Where employees leave the NAS, they may request a copy of their training record.

8.0 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

8.1 This Policy will be circulated electronically to all Managers, Supervisors and Staff

8.2 This Policy will be available electronically in each location for ease of retrieval and reference

8.3 Each Operational Support and Resilience Manager will ensure that the Manager/Supervisor responsible for updating Policies and Procedures will return the Confirmation Form to NAS Headquarters to confirm document circulation to all staff.

9.0 REVISION AND AUDIT

9.1 This policy will be reviewed on an ongoing basis or when necessary following changes in standards, legislation or governance arrangements

9.2 Revisions, amendments or alterations to the policy can only be implemented following consideration and approval by the Director, National Ambulance Service following consultation with key stakeholders.

9.3 The application of this policy may be subject to audit to establish compliance and any procedural deficits

10.0 REFERENCES

10.1 PHECC Education and Training Standards 2011

11.0 APPENDICES

Appendix I - Policy - Acknowledgement Form
Appendix II - Application Form for Diploma/Course Fee Refund
Appendix III - Advanced Paramedic - Selection Process

Health Service Executive
National Ambulance Service
**Application Form for
Course fee Refund/Payment**

Applicant Name (Print): _____

Course Title: _____

Institution: _____

Course Start–Finish Date: _____

Reason for Completing Course:
How will this course contribute to your performance and/or development:

Before completing this Application Form, it is strongly recommended that the Applicant contact the Education and Competency Assurance Team to discuss the details and suitability of any course of education.

Stage 1 Recommendation – For Completion by Line Supervisor (if appropriate)

Name (Print):	
Grade:	

Stage 1 - Applicant Work Performance (Previous 12 Months)	Satisfactory			
Attendance:	Yes		No	
PCR/AQUA Compliance (as appropriate):	Yes		No	
Audit Compliance	Yes		No	
SOP/Policy Compliance:	Yes		No	
Work Performance:	Yes		No	
Conduct:	Yes		No	
Applicant Recommended for Course Fee Refund/Payment	Yes		No	

Please outline your Recommendation Rationale:

Signed:	Date:

Application Form – Course Fee Refund/Payment   *Page 1 of 3*

Stage 2 Recommendation – For Completion by Line Manager (as appropriate)

Name (Print):	
Title	

Stage 2 - Applicant Work Performance (Previous 12 Months)	Satisfactory			
Attendance:	Yes		No	
PCR/AQUA Compliance (as appropriate):	Yes		No	
Audit Compliance	Yes		No	
SOP/Policy Compliance:	Yes		No	
Work Performance:	Yes		No	
Conduct:	Yes		No	
Applicant Recommended for Course Fee Refund/Payment	Yes		No	

Please outline your Recommendation Rationale:

Signed:	Date:

Stage 3 Recommendation – For Completion by Education & Competency Assurance Officer

Name (Print):	

Stage 3 - Applicant Training/CPC Performance (Previous 12 Months)	Satisfactory			
Training Compliance:	Yes		No	
Audit Compliance:	Yes		No	
Mentoring of Staff (where applicable):	Yes		No	
PCR/AQUA Compliance (as appropriate):	Yes		No	
Applicant Recommended for Course Fee Refund/Payment	Yes		No	

Please outline your Recommendation Rationale:

Signed:	Date:

Service Management Recommendation and Approval

Stage 4 Recommendation – For Completion by Operations Performance Manager

Name (Print):	

Applicant Recommended for Course Fee Refund/Payment	Yes		No	

Please outline your Recommendation Rationale:

Signed:	Date:

Budget Holder Recommendation and Approval

Stage 5 Recommendation – For Completion by Area Operations Manager

Name (Print):	

Applicant Recommended for Course Fee Refund/Payment	Yes		No	

Amount Approved (If Applicable)						
1/4		1/2		3/4	Full	

Please outline your Recommendation Rationale:

Signed:	Date:

ADVANCED PARAMEDIC - SELECTION PROCESS

Stage 1: Candidates must complete the appropriate form and seek a nomination from the Area Operations Manager seeking approval to participate in the Selection Process

Stage 2: The process will consist of a written examination with a required pass mark of 75%. Examination areas will include CPGs, Pharmacology, A & P, Operations, etc. This process will be facilitated regionally. Successful candidates will then proceed to Stage 2 of the Selection Process. This stage will be delivered regionally.

Stage 3: A number of PCRs for each candidate will be audited. These PCRs will be selected from a twelve month period preceding the Selection Process. In exceptional circumstances such as in the case of a candidate having returned from long term leave, etc, PCRs may be extracted from a period greater than the preceding twelve months. The PCRs will be audited and the minimum data set established by PHECC will provide the basis of the assessment of compliance.

Stage 4:   This stage will consist of a structured interview based in part on a report developed from the stage two findings.   Exploration of commitment to life long learning, professional development and motivation will also be included.

Stage 5: Candidates must seek a nomination from the Area Operations Manager seeking approval to attend and complete all appropriate documentation.

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