

AHCS

Standards of Proficiency for Healthcare Science Assistants

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About the Standards of Proficiency

To secure and retain registration with the Academy for Healthcare Science as a healthcare science assistant, you must be able to demonstrate that you are 'fit to practise'. This means that you have the knowledge, skills, character and capacity to practise safely and effectively as a healthcare science assistant to secure and maintain registration. To demonstrate this, you need to meet the Standards of Proficiency (SoP) set out in this document. These align with the AHCS *Good Scientific Practice (GSP)*, the Academy standards that relate to all members of the healthcare science workforce, at all levels of practice and job roles. The sub-element of each is mapped to *GSP*.

These SoP define the threshold standards for securing and maintaining registration as a healthcare science assistant. They are structured according to the five domains of *GSP*. These are as follows:

- **Domain 1: Professional practice** – Patient-centred care; Scope of practice; Communication; Professional responsibilities; Working with others.
- **Domain 2: Scientific practice** – Data and reporting; Technical proficiency; Quality assurance.
- **Domain 3: Clinical practice** – Clinical activity; Clinical investigation.
- **Domain 4: Research, development and innovation** – Research activity; Service development.
- **Domain 5: Clinical leadership** – Developing self; Leading others.

The SoP do not define your scope of practice. We recognise that the scope of practice of each member of the healthcare science workforce is individual and subject to change. We define scope of practice as the area or areas of a registrant's profession in which they have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger or harm to the public. Several of the standards make clear that they should be interpreted and demonstrated in the context of individual competence, scope of practice and job role.

At the point of registration, you need to demonstrate that you meet the SoP and are of good character and in good health. Registrants are then required to self-declare that this is the case when they renew their registration each year.

Domain 1: Professional practice

Patient-centred care

Standard 1 You take into account patient-centred care in how you enact your role.

- 1.1. You consider patient impact first in how you do the following:
 - Perform your role.
 - Fulfil your duty of care, including if you have a concern about a patient's safety.
 - Contribute to service delivery.
 - Engage in appropriate safeguarding processes.
- 1.2 You uphold individual patients' rights, autonomy, dignity and privacy as appropriate to your role.
- 1.3 You understand the importance of individual patients' values, beliefs and wishes as appropriate to your role.
- 1.4 You understand the importance of patients as individuals and do the following:
 - Treat individual patients with compassion.
 - Are sensitive to and respectful of individual patients' physical, psychological, religious and cultural needs and their preferences for how they engage with their care.
 - Contribute to supporting individuals to manage their own health and well-being.
- 1.5 You uphold and champion equality, diversity and inclusion in service delivery and challenge or report discriminatory behaviour.
- 1.6 You fulfil your duty of candour if something goes wrong.

Scope of practice

Standard 2 You work within your scope of practice.

- 2.1 You understand your personal scope of practice, competence and job role and how you contribute to the delivery of healthcare science services to meet patient care needs.
- 2.2 You undertake activity that is within your personal competence, scope of practice and job role.
- 2.3 You take appropriate action if a potential activity sits outside your competence, scope of practice and job role, including by seeking advice from or referring a matter to an appropriate colleague.

Standard 3 You engage with arrangements for the direct and indirect supervision of your activity.

- 3.1 You engage with supervision arrangements for your practice, including by seeking and securing clarity on the following:
 - The specific activity that is due to be delegated to you, its purpose and intended outcomes.

- The specific arrangements for your supervision for a particular activity, including whether this is direct or indirect.
- Arrangements for how you should seek guidance or support if you need this while undertaking the activity.
- Arrangements for how you raise a concern, if required, while you undertake the activity.
- Arrangements for how you report on the outcomes of the activity, and any issues relating to it.

Communication

Standard 4 You communicate effectively.

- 4.1 You communicate with others, which may include patients, their carers, service users and colleagues, in ways that demonstrate the following:
 - Active listening.
 - Sensitivity to individuals' needs and preferences.
 - Sensitivity to non-verbal cues.
- 4.2 You adapt how you communicate in response to the needs of the individuals you are addressing, including to take account of any sensory or cognitive impairments.
- 4.3 You communicate basic technical and non-technical information and advice, both verbally and in writing in line with your competence, scope of practice and job role.

Professional responsibilities

Standard 5 You practise within the legal, professional and ethical boundaries of your role.

- 5.1 You understand and engage with the standards set by the Academy for Healthcare Science and how they relate to you.
- 5.2 You adhere to legal, ethical and governance requirements that are relevant to all aspects of your role.
- 5.3 You fulfil your duty to report on any situations, behaviours or errors that could compromise patient safety or patient outcomes, or the safety of others.

Standard 6 You act with professionalism and maintain your fitness to practise.

- 6.1 You take responsibility for the following:
- The service that you provide.
 - Your contribution to the wider activity of your team and service delivery.
 - Your workload and supervision arrangements.
 - Your use of resources.
- 6.2 Your conduct justifies the trust that others place in you and the healthcare science workforce.
- 6.3 You meet expectations of how you engage with and present yourself in your role in a professional manner, including in terms of the following:
- Dressing appropriately.
 - Personal appearance.
 - Hygiene.
 - Time-keeping.
- 6.4 You engage with the importance of maintaining your own health and levels of personal fitness and well-being to perform in your healthcare science role.
- 6.5 You maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct, both in and outside your role and workplace, and including how you use social media.

Standard 7 You maintain and develop your knowledge and skills, including through reflection.

- 7.1 You keep your knowledge and skills, as relevant to your scope of practice and job role, up-to-date and actively engage in learning and development opportunities.
- 7.2 You reflect on your performance and situations that arise in your day-to-day practice, including to do the following:
- Learn from specific events and experiences.
 - Identify areas of your practice in which you have learning needs.
 - Raise with your line manager any issues or learning and development needs arising from your reflections.

Working with others

Standard 8 You work effectively with others.

- 8.1 You work with all colleagues, service users and others in ways that best serve the needs of individual patients and optimise effective, efficient service delivery and patient outcomes.
- 8.2 You work effectively as a member of a multi-disciplinary team, including by valuing and recognising your colleagues' knowledge, skills and contribution to patient care and service delivery.
- 8.3 You share information with colleagues to protect the health, safety and well-being of patients, service users and the public.

Domain 2: Scientific practice

Data and reporting

Standard 9 You maintain records appropriately.

- 9.1 You provide clear reports, in line with your job role and area of practice, using appropriate methods to summarise and present information and in ways that are accessible to and understandable by non-scientific professionals.
- 9.2 You present the data that you gather through routine procedures clearly and in line with agreed protocols.
- 9.3 You keep complete, clear, accurate and timely records of your activity.

Technical proficiency

Standard 10 You engage with the technical requirements of your healthcare science role.

- 10.1 You have the numeracy, literacy and digital and technological skills required to perform your role safely and effectively.
- 10.2 You understand the purpose of and need for protocols and procedures for investigating and diagnosing disease and disorder.
- 10.3 You understand the principles and practice that underpin the effective use of protocols and standard operating procedures relevant to your area of practice to do the following:
 - Maintain safe, effective practice and service delivery.
 - Support the continued improvement of service delivery.
- 10.4 You know the standards of practice and performance expected from the correct use of relevant equipment, methods and other technology and when to seek advice on their use.

Quality assurance

Standard 11 You contribute to assuring the quality of service delivery.

- 11.1 You contribute to assuring the quality of healthcare science service delivery.
- 11.2 You contribute to regular and systematic audits.
- 11.3 You follow specific quality control and quality assurance techniques, in line with standard operating procedures.
- 11.4 You engage with the outcomes of audits, appraisals and performance reviews, including when this involves undertaking further training and development to meet identified needs.

Standard 12 You contribute to maintaining a safe environment for service delivery.

- 12.1 You take all reasonable care to maintain a safe environment for yourself, your colleagues and others and comply with health and safety requirements, including those set by your employer.
- 12.2 You comply with safety and risk management legislation and guidelines and take appropriate action if an incident or emergency occurs.
- 12.3 You apply correct methods of disinfection, sterilisation, decontamination and personal protective equipment and deal with waste and spillages correctly.

Domain 3: Clinical practice

Clinical activity

Standard 13 You engage with informed consent and uphold confidentiality.

- 13.1 You understand the concept and importance of informed consent, including the following:
 - Why and when it is needed.
 - How to seek, obtain and record it.
 - Appropriate action if informed consent is not given.
- 13.2 You understand the need to uphold the confidentiality of patient and service user information and records (including test results, recordings, digital images and illustrations) in line with legal requirements and published guidance and protocols.
- 13.3 You maintain the confidentiality of colleagues or patient and service user information and records (including test results, recordings, digital images and illustrations) in line with legal requirements and published guidance and protocols.

Standard 14 You perform your role openly and transparently.

- 14.1 You engage in a culture of openness by doing the following, in line with your scope of practice and job role:
- Being welcoming and listening.
 - Appropriately responding to feedback.
 - Reporting individuals' concerns through your employer's procedures.
 - Reporting when something goes wrong through your employer's procedures.
- 14.2 You protect others from risk or potential harm, including that presented by your own or another person's conduct, performance or health and including by doing the following:
- Taking appropriate action if you have a concern.
 - Taking appropriate action if a concern is raised with you.
 - Using your employer's procedures to raise a concern.
- 14.3 You share information with colleagues and other services in ways that fit with your scope of practice and job role and to do the following:
- Support the delivery of high-quality care.
 - Comply with all relevant legal requirements and published guidance, including on data protection, confidentiality and equality, diversity and inclusion.
 - Enable individual patients to engage with their care and make decisions if appropriate to your role
- 14.4 You recognise and report any factors that may adversely impact on safe and effective service delivery and patient care.
- 14.5 You recognise potential or actual reportable events, taking appropriate action to record and report on the following:
- A 'near miss' event.
 - A serious adverse event.
 - A critical incident or a major incident.

Standard 15 You support clinical activity in the delivery of healthcare science services.

- 15.1 You safely prepare, move, position and use equipment, methods and other technology for routine technical and scientific procedures in line with standard operating procedures and protocols.
- 15.2 You appropriately conduct routine healthcare science procedures in line with the following:
- Your competence, scope of practice and job role.
 - Following standard operating procedures and protocols.
 - Maintaining the safety of patients, carers, service users and others involved in service delivery.
 - Under appropriate arrangements for your direct or indirect supervision of specific activities.
- 15.3 You present the data that you gather through routine procedures in line with agreed protocols and ensure that it is complete, clear, accurate and timely.
- 15.4 You keep complete, clear, accurate and timely records of your activity, in line with relevant legislation, protocols and guidelines.

Domain 4: Research, development and innovation

Research activity

Standard 16 You contribute to research, development and innovation activity.

- 16.1 You understand the importance of research in healthcare science and how you can contribute to it within your scope of practice and job role.
- 16.2 You are aware of the principles of the research process and how research findings are used to inform evidence-based practice in healthcare science.
- 16.3 You understand that research is conducted with adherence to research governance frameworks, including to uphold patient safety, serve the public interest, and maintain high standards of professional conduct and practice.

Service development

Standard 17 You contribute to quality improvement.

17.1 You contribute to improving how services are delivered, in line with your competence, scope of practice and job role, including by working in partnership with any of the following: patients and service users, colleagues, local communities and the public.

Domain 5: Leadership

Standard 18 You commit to self-development and contribute to collective leadership models.

18.1 You demonstrate self-awareness. This includes awareness of the impact of your own values and beliefs on your practice.

18.2 You contribute to distributed models of leadership, including in the following ways:

- Being aware of the impact of your behaviour and approach on your colleagues.
- Engaging in activities to enhance team performance.