

# Understanding advanced and extended professional practice

## Abstract

The Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework Steering Committee (now replaced by the Pharmacy Practitioner Development Committee) undertook work to develop an advanced pharmacy practice recognition model. As part of that work, and to assure clarity and consistency in the terminology it uses, the Committee collated the definitions used in literature sources consulted. Most recently, this involved a review of the meaning attributed to the terms 'advanced' and 'extended' when used in the context of describing aspects of professional practice.

Both terms encompass the acquisition of additional expertise. While 'advanced' practice involves the acquisition of additional expertise to achieve a higher performance level, 'extended' practice relates specifically to scope of practice and involves the acquisition of additional expertise sufficient to provide services or perform tasks that are outside the usual scope of practice of the profession. Performance level operates independently of scope of practice but both must be elucidated to fully describe the professional practice of an individual practitioner.

## Background

The Advanced Pharmacy Practice Framework Steering Committee (APPFSC), which was established in March 2011, was a profession-wide collaborative forum which worked on behalf of the profession to progress initiatives associated with the national competency standards for pharmacists. In October 2012, the APPFSC published *An advanced pharmacy practice framework for Australia* (the 'APPF')<sup>1</sup> and is now (as the the Pharmacy Practitioner Development Committee) working on an implementation pathway for the APPF which will support the formal recognition of advanced pharmacy practice. One of the ongoing tasks of the Steering Committee was to ensure clarity and consistency in the language it uses. It sought to achieve this by collating and reviewing definitions of terminology used in other initiatives to recognise advanced practice to determine which are appropriate to use or adapt.

## Introduction

The APPFSC considered the way in which the terms 'extended' and 'advanced' were being used to describe certain characteristics of professional practice, particularly in relation to existing or proposed professional practice initiatives. It was noted that, although both terms are being used with increasing frequency within the health professions, they are not necessarily used in the same context or attributed with consistent meaning. This paper seeks to clarify the differences in meaning between the two terms by examining the definitions used in literature sources considered by the APPFSC in the course of developing the APPF and an advanced practice recognition model. Definitions referred to in this paper are presented in Table 1 with an asterisk used to denote those adopted by the APPFSC. To assist understanding, reference is also made to the four quadrant diagram presented in Section 1 – *Professional practice in focus* of the APPF and reproduced in Figure 1.

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## Performance level and advanced professional practice

Demonstration of advanced professional practice is intrinsically linked to the concepts of 'performance' and 'performance level'. Each of these terms is therefore examined to provide additional context for how advanced professional practice is defined.

The competency standards within the *National competency standards framework for pharmacists in Australia* (the 'National Framework')<sup>2</sup> have a number of elements each of which has several associated performance criteria. In contrast, the competency standards of the APPF are listed in a single column. To the right of this column are three columns labelled 'Transition level', 'Consolidation level' and 'Advanced level' representing three different levels in the continuum of advanced practice development. Each column contains one or several performance criteria for the competency listed in the first column.

The term 'performance' has been defined as 'an effective and persistent observable behaviour. What an individual actually does as opposed to what they can do'.<sup>3</sup> This definition is supportive of the concept of measuring or assessing performance by applying relevant behavioural criteria. Performance criteria are noted to 'focus on key aspects of behaviour and express what a competent professional would do in terms of observable results or behaviours. This allows the competency standards to serve as the external measure of expected performance against which the actual performance of an individual can be assessed'.<sup>1</sup>

Within the APPF 'performance level' is described as 'a level of accomplishment that reflects the expertise of the individual based on their training and experience' and defined as: *A characteristic of professional practice that reflects the knowledge, skills and experience of the pharmacist.*<sup>1</sup>

Table 1. Definitions of terms

Number	Definition	Reference
<b>Terms relating to 'advanced practice'</b>		
1a*	Advanced practice is practice that is so significantly different from that achieved at initial registration that it warrants recognition by professional peers and the public of the expertise of the practitioner and the education, training and experience from which that capability was derived.	4
1b	An advanced practice radiation therapist is a 'clinical specialist' or 'expert' who has significant experience and the opportunity to develop and demonstrate expertise within an area of specialisation. The role requires a high level of knowledge and clinical experience.	5
1c	The term 'advanced practice' means circumstances in which a Diagnostic Radiographer or Radiation Therapist performs a clinical practice, duty or task on a regular basis that is beyond the established core practice boundaries of their profession. In doing so the Advanced Practitioner demonstrates clinical leadership and a high level of knowledge, skills, ability and personal attributes, as well as professional autonomy and responsibility. These are applied to a specific, delegated clinical role in order to provide optimum service quality and patient care.	6
1d	Advanced clinical practice involves high level clinical skills, knowledge and practice. This advanced clinical capacity is reinforced and enhanced by its close integration with clinical leadership skills, applied clinical research and evidence based practice capacities, and competence in facilitating the education and training of others. Advanced clinical practice is relevant to generalist and focussed clinical contexts, as well as profession-specific situations and situations relating to specific client groups or geographical settings.	7
1e	Advanced scope of practice is taken to mean an increase in clinical skills, reasoning, knowledge and experience so the practitioner is an expert working within the scope of traditional practice.	8
<b>Terms relating to 'scope of practice'</b>		
2a	The areas and extent of practice for an individual health professional, usually defined by a regulatory body or employer, after taking into consideration the health professional's training, experience, expertise and demonstrated competency.	9
2b*	Scope of practice is a time sensitive, dynamic aspect of practice which demonstrates those professional activities that a pharmacist is educated, competent and authorised to perform and for which they are accountable.	10
<b>Terms relating to 'extended scope of practice'</b>		
3a	Extended scope of practice includes expertise beyond the currently recognised scope of practice of the profession.	8
3b	Extended scope of practice involves tasks which Advanced Practice Radiation Therapists perform that are outside current legislation. These tasks require a high level of knowledge and clinical experience, accredited further education and ongoing credentialing.	5
3c	Extended scope of practice describes a discrete knowledge and skill base additional to the recognised scope of practice of a profession and/or regulatory context of a particular jurisdiction. Any health practitioner, at any health practitioner level, might undertake tasks that constitute extended scope of practice for their profession.	7, 11

\* Preferred definitions adopted by the APPFSC.

This definition shows that performance level is a function of the expertise of the individual and may be considered a vertical dimension of practice as represented on the vertical axis of Figure 1. The definition of ‘advanced practice’ adopted by the APPFSC (1a in Table 1) confirms the link between advanced practice and demonstration of additional acquired expertise or a higher performance level.

This functional link is evident in each of the additional definitions (presented in Table 1) of ‘advanced practice’ (1b and 1c) and ‘advanced clinical practice’ (1d). In this respect all demonstrate consistency with the APPFSC-adopted definition of ‘advanced practice’ (1a) and the diagrammatic representation of performance level in Figure 1 as a vertical dimension of practice related to the expertise of the individual.

However, there are significant differences in the above definitions in the association that has been made between the acquired additional

expertise and the practitioner’s scope of practice. In Figure 1 it is clear that advanced practice may exist for either a broad or narrow scope of practice. The definition of ‘advanced clinical practice’ (1d) is consistent with Figure 1 in explicitly stating that the additional expertise can be applied in either generalist (broad scope) or focussed (narrow scope) professional practice. However, the two additional definitions of ‘advanced practice’ (1b and 1c) associate the additional expertise of an advanced practitioner only with a specialised/focussed/narrow scope of practice. This may be accounted for by the fact that these two definitions were sourced from documents where advanced practice was being examined only in the context of a narrow or focussed scope of practice.

The APPFSC also found reference to the term ‘advanced scope of practice’ (1e). This definition is comparable to the others in demonstrating an expectation of the practitioner acquiring additional expertise across any part of the usual

scope of practice. For this reason, inclusion of the words ‘scope of’ in the defined term seems unnecessary as they do not enhance understanding but may, instead, be confusing.

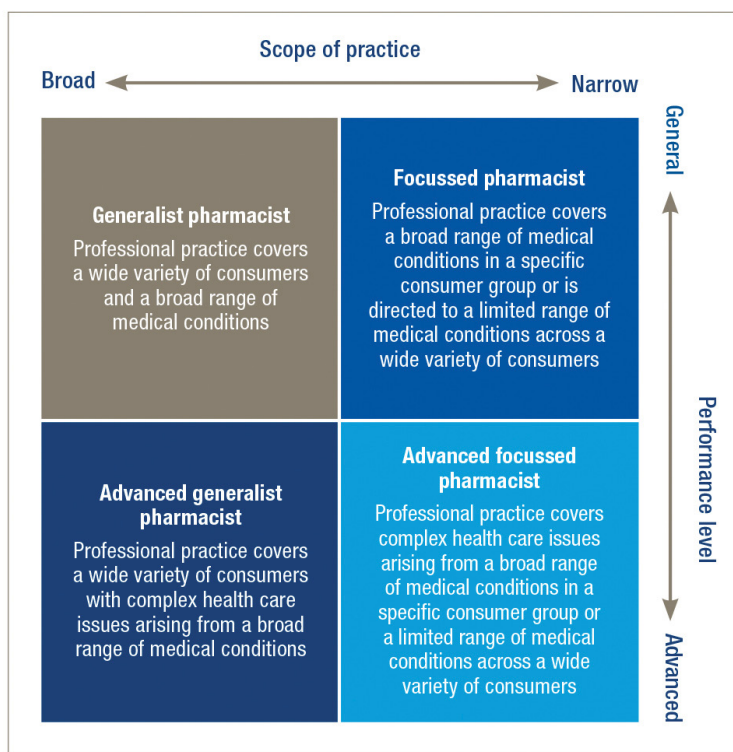
### Scope of practice and advanced professional practice

In Figure 1 scope of practice is identified as being a horizontal dimension of practice which defines the boundaries or breadth of professional practice. It is influenced by the tasks, roles and services provided by the individual practitioner. Given the obligation of all health professionals to perform only those activities in which they are competent, the scope of practice of any individual is inevitably determined by the competencies of that individual. This perspective and that of the scope of practice being ‘authorised’ in some manner is recognised in the two definitions, 2a and 2b, in Table 1. The APPFSC favours the second definition largely because it incorporates the concept of professional practice, and therefore scope of practice, evolving and changing over time as a result not only of the choices made by individual practitioners but also due to changing professional roles and technological developments.

In the APPF it is noted that, just as performance level can be increased by the acquisition of additional expertise above that usually observed, scope of practice ‘can be extended at the discretion of the individual practitioner by incorporating into their practice the knowledge, skills and expertise required to deliver a new professional service’. Neither term implies a higher quality of service is being provided but, instead, is reflective of a directed change in the competency of the individual either in the horizontal or vertical direction, or perhaps in both directions.

Where expertise is acquired at a performance level that is higher than is usually observed in the profession, but for an existing range of professional

Figure 1. Classification of practice type through scope of practice and performance level



tasks or services, scope of practice is unchanged but practice may be deemed to be advanced by virtue of an enhanced capability to contribute (e.g. advanced registered nurses). In contrast, nurse practitioners are deemed to have acquired additional expertise sufficient to perform at a higher level (advanced practice) but also to undertake an extended range of activities or tasks beyond those usually performed (extended scope of practice).

### Extended scope of practice

Three definitions of 'extended scope of practice' (3a, 3b and 3c) are presented in Table 1. All recognise that extended scope of practice involves a departure from the usual boundaries of practice to include additional tasks. Definition 3a recognises that extended scope of practice involves a departure from the usual scope of practice, while 3b links the additional tasks involved in extended scope of practice to requirements for legislative change and completion of accredited education leading to credentialing. This scenario parallels the development of the nurse practitioner where both scope of practice and performance level are impacted. Only definition 3c clearly shows that a change in scope of practice may occur at any performance level.

When additional expertise is acquired to provide a service or perform a task that is outside the usual scope of practice of the profession, this can be referred to as 'extended scope of practice'. The key concept here is that the task or service is beyond the usual scope of practice of the profession. It is this concept that means that 'extended scope of practice' does not apply to the provision by pharmacists of either immunisation services or complex compounding. These services are within the scope of practice of the profession because the required competencies for both can be described using the National Framework. This also means that both services are provided at the general rather than advanced performance level despite the fact that individual

pharmacists may need to acquire additional expertise to competently deliver these services.

### Extended and advanced professional practice in summary

Advanced professional practice is a function of acquired higher level expertise that impacts on the 'performance level' of the individual and which is best described within the vertical dimension of practice. In contrast, extended scope of practice involves the acquisition of the additional expertise required to undertake new professional tasks or services that are outside the usual scope of practice of the profession. It addresses the breadth of practice and although it is best described within the horizontal dimension of practice, it falls beyond the usual scope of practice depicted in Figure 1. Performance level operates independently of scope of practice to the extent that changing the performance level does not automatically change scope of practice (or vice versa). When used in the context of the activities of a whole profession, both terms provide a description of a dimension of practice compared to what is usual or generally observed for that profession. However, both terms also have a context for individual practitioners in that performance level and scope of practice at any point in time are unique to the individual and are the result of the efforts of that individual. This means that both dimensions of professional practice require clarification to fully elucidate the practice of an individual pharmacy practitioner.

Broader discussion of the issue is available in a recent publication by the Australian Pharmacy Council.<sup>12</sup>

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