

The Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association Inc.



Entry Level Competency Standards for Australian Orthotist/Prosthetists (3rd Edition)

May 2014



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Citation:

The Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association (2014). Entry Level Competency Standards for Australian Orthotist/Prosthetists (3rd Ed). AOPA, Melbourne, Victoria.



Introduction

The Australian health system requires a competent workforce to increase societal capacity to protect and promote the public's health¹. The Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association Inc. (AOPA) competency standards are designed to assist with meeting this need by describing the minimum competencies an orthotist/prosthetist must be able to demonstrate in order to be eligible to enter the Australian workforce. This document defines the way in which competency and entry level competency standards are interpreted for the orthotic/prosthetic profession, the way in which the standards have been developed and the standards themselves.

What is competency?

The concept of competency focuses on what is expected of an employee in the workplace, rather than the learning process. Competence relates to the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments² whilst integrating components such as values and attitudes. A competency is an observable quality of a health professional which can be measured and assessed to ensure acquisition by a professional³.

Structure of the AOPA competency standards

Competency standards utilise the meaning of competency to provide discipline specific detail regarding entry level attributes.

The AOPA competency standards are structured within six overarching **domains**. Domains are succinctly worded statements of the major work roles of a profession. In order to keep these statements succinct, a more lengthy description of each domain is also provided to allow an overview of the profession if these were to be viewed in isolation.

Each domain contains a list of **activities** which are intended as descriptions of tasks required to perform the work roles listed as domains. **Performance indicators** are then listed to describe the observable and/or measurable actions expected of the workforce when performing each activity.

Range statements are intended to define the context in which assessment would occur and the scope of practice inferred by the indicator. Range statements will be applicable to a number of performance indicators and activities throughout the document.

What is entry level eligibility?

The competency standards document describes the attributes expected of an orthotist/prosthetist to be eligible for entry to the Australian workforce. This may be at the point of graduation from a recognised tertiary training program in Australia or at the point of assessment for AOPA membership for International Health Practitioners. Individuals who meet the competency standards are expected to develop beyond the entry level described with work experience.

Development of the AOPA competency standards

The AOPA competency standards were first introduced in 1999 followed by a revised edition in 2003. The 1999 and 2003 editions were developed and endorsed by AOPA members.



The 2014 revision included three major phases. Initially, a review of competency standards and their development within Australian allied health disciplines and international orthotic and prosthetic organisations and investigation of the current Australian allied health workforce requirements and standards occurred. This review was conducted in order to identify common themes and allow analysis of areas which have developed since publication of the 2003 competency standards.

Two focus groups, one of experts and one of recent bachelor degree graduates were subsequently conducted with thematic analysis of the transcripts identifying the key purpose of the profession, major work roles and tasks. The identified information was incorporated into a revised draft version which was presented to a purposive representative sample of the AOPA membership for validation. The validation phase utilised the Delphi Technique to ensure completeness, appropriateness and clarity of the document prior to finalisation. Approval by the AOPA board was gained prior to the release of the 2014 competency standards third edition.

Planned review

The AOPA competency standards will be reviewed and re-released prior to May 2021 to ensure currency.

Acknowledgements

Funding was gratefully received for the development of the 2014 competency standards from the Australian Government via the Professional Services Development Program (PSDP).

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The AOPA acknowledge the extensive work of Bruce Poole and Peter Lendfers in relation to the 2003 competency standards which formed the foundation for this competency standards redevelopment.

- 1 Hughes. R. (2003). Competencies for effective public health nutrition practice: a developing consensus. *Public Health Nutrition*, 7(5), 683-691.
- 2 Community Services & Health Industry Training Board (2005). Competency standards for health and allied health professionals in Australia. Department of Human Services Victoria, ed. Melbourne: Department of Human Services Victoria.
- 3 Australian Medical Council. (2010). Competence-based medical education: AMC consultation paper. AMC, Kingston, ACT.
- 4 Phillips. S, Ash. S, & Tapsell. L. (2000). Relevance of the competency standards to entry level dietetic practice. *Australian Journal of Nutrition and Dietetics*, 57(4), 198-207.

Disclaimer

The Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association Inc. has taken care to ensure that at the date of publication, information within this document is accurate, up-to-date and free from errors, however it may not cover all circumstances relating to workplace activities undertaken by the entry level orthotist/prosthetist. The AOPA Inc. therefore does not make any warranty about the accuracy, reliability, currency or completeness of the material contained within the document. The AOPA Inc. and any individual or organisation associated with the preparation of this document disclaim any and all liability associated with any loss the user of this document may suffer as a result of reliance on the document. Individuals should exercise their own independent skill and judgement before relying on this document.



AOPA Entry Level Competency Standards Summary Table

| Domain | 1. Collaborative practice <i>Communicates and establishes rapport in order to deliver client-centred care</i> | 2. Provision of clinical care <i>Develops and manages a client centred care plan</i> | 3. Provision of orthoses and prostheses <i>Ensures the safe manufacture of orthoses and prostheses as part of the care plan</i> | 4. Service management and improvement <i>Contributes to the delivery of safe, quality and effective services</i> | 5. Professional values and behaviours <i>Practices in accordance with professional, ethical and legislative standards</i> | 6. Life-long learning and reflective practice <i>Maintains and extends professional competence and contributes to the learning and development of others</i> |
|------------|--|---|--|---|--|---|
| Activity 1 | Interacts effectively with client and/or carer | Collects client information | Undertakes and/or coordinates the manufacture of orthoses and prostheses | Prioritises individual work load | Adheres to workplace safety requirements and identifies potential risks | Undertakes and contributes to professional development |
| Activity 2 | Interacts effectively with other health professionals | Appraises the validity and importance of acquired information | Ensures the safety of orthoses and prostheses | Coordinates information relevant to client funding | Adheres to client safety requirements and practices duty of care | Demonstrates an enquiring approach to practice |
| Activity 3 | Interacts effectively with external bodies | Develops client centred treatment goals and care plan | | Contributes to service evaluation and improvement activities | Recognises professional role and scope of practice | |
| Activity 4 | | Evaluates, fits and/or modifies orthoses and prostheses, in relation to the treatment goals | | | | |
| Activity 5 | | Documents all aspects of care | | | | |



Key purpose of the orthotic/prosthetic profession

The role of the orthotist/prosthetist is to promote quality of life through a client centred approach to the provision of orthotic and prosthetic treatment.

Domain 1: Collaborative practice

Communicates and establishes rapport in order to deliver client-centred care

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|---|--|---|
| 1.1 Interacts effectively with client and/or carer | 1.1.1 Ensures all interactions with the client and/or carer demonstrate respect, honesty, empathy and dignity and are conducted in a culturally appropriate manner | <i>Client</i> : recipient of a professional health care service <i>Carer</i> : individual who provides ongoing personal care, support and/or assistance to another individual |
| | 1.1.2 Ensures the client is the focus of the care pathway | <i>Culturally appropriate</i> : the ability to be inclusive, effective and sensitive to the cultural, linguistic and spiritual needs of ethnically diverse groups |
| | 1.1.3 Ensures the client and/or carer is aware of their rights and responsibilities | <i>Care pathway</i> : includes all aspects of health care management, recognising orthotic/prosthetic treatment is only one component |
| | 1.1.4 Obtains informed consent from the client and/or carer prior to the provision of care | <i>Informed consent</i> : process by which a health care provider explains to the client/carers the process intended to be undertaken, treatment options and associated risks and benefits; and requests permission to proceed |
| | 1.1.5 Listens effectively to the client and/or carer | |
| | 1.1.6 Encourages the client and/or carer to participate and provide feedback | <i>Available resources</i> : may include but is not limited to; interpreter services, e-health modalities such as video conferencing or personal assistive communication aids, responses to and provision of verbal and non-verbal cues, body language, written as well as verbal information |
| | 1.1.7 Provides prompt, accurate and comprehensive information in clear terms to enable the client and/or carer to make an informed decision | |
| | 1.1.8 Uses all available resources to enhance communication | <i>Health professional</i> : a person whose primary employment role is to diagnose and treat physical and mental illnesses and conditions or recommend, administer, dispense and develop medications and treatment to promote or restore good health |
| 1.2 Interacts effectively with other health professionals | 1.2.1 Receives and develops client referrals, professional handovers, health professional team reports and care plans | <i>Access to care</i> : client is able to utilise health professional services at the right place and right time for their needs |
| | 1.2.2 Respects, acknowledges and utilises the expertise of other health professionals | |



| | | | |
|---|-------|---|--|
| 1.3 Interacts effectively with external bodies | 1.2.3 | Establishes and maintains effective working relationships with other health professionals to enhance collaborative practice and client access to care | <i>External bodies:</i> includes but is not limited to orthotic/prosthetic component and material suppliers, funding bodies, community based health services, support programs and organisations, advocacy associations, transport services <i>Clinical justification:</i> provides broad and evidenced information which links the recommended care plan and prescription to the achievement of client goals |
| | 1.2.4 | Actively participates within the health professional team and seeks opportunities to demonstrate professional excellence | |
| | 1.3.1 | Provides clinical justification for prescribed orthotic/prosthetic client treatment | |
| | 1.3.2 | Provides relevant information in order to facilitate client access to care | |



Domain 2: Provision of clinical care

Develops and manages a client centred care plan

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|---|--|--|
| 2.1 Collects client information | 2.1.1 Identifies subjective and objective information to enable development of an appropriate orthotic/prosthetic care plan | <i>Care plan:</i> the order and time frame in which orthotic/prosthetic management is expected to occur |
| | 2.1.2 Selects assessment techniques, outcome measures and other tools/instruments based on evidence, which are relevant to the client's presentation | <i>Subjective information:</i> includes but is not limited to; personal, social, psychological, medical, historical prosthesis/orthosis use and any other data relevant to orthotic and prosthetic treatment which is able to be influenced by feelings and opinions |
| | 2.1.3 Performs assessment professionally, safely and effectively | <i>Objective information:</i> the data obtained during assessment which cannot be influenced by feelings and opinions. This includes but is not limited to; gait analysis, muscle strengths, joint ranges of motion and any other data relevant to orthotic and prosthetic treatment |
| 2.2 Appraises the validity and importance of acquired information | 2.2.1 Accesses and utilises evidence to guide clinical decisions | <i>Outcome measures:</i> valid and reliable tests against which treatment is assessed |
| 2.3 Develops client centred treatment goals and care plan | 2.3.1 Facilitates client and/or carer to establish personal goals | <i>Evidence:</i> refers to utilisation of the best available information on a particular topic with consideration of the hierarchy of evidence |
| | 2.3.2 Considers the information obtained, the client and/or carer's goals and evidence when formulating treatment options | <i>Personal goals:</i> the key objectives the client/carers wishes to achieve, established by the client/carers in consultation with their personal network and health professional team |
| | 2.3.3 Discusses treatment options with the client and/or carer to support client centred care and informed choice | <i>Treatment goals:</i> the aim of orthotic/prosthetic treatment in relation to assisting the client to achieve their personal goals |
| | 2.3.4 Discusses short and long term treatment goals with the client and/or carer | <i>Integrated care planning:</i> ensures orthotic/prosthetic treatment provision is complementary to treatment provided by other health professionals |
| | 2.3.5 Identifies clients who require collaborative care and liaises with the health professional team to ensure integrated care planning | <i>Design details:</i> includes but is not limited to application of biomechanical principles to determine trim lines, components for inclusion, materials for manufacture, manufacturing processes to be undertaken |
| | 2.3.6 Determines and justifies the design details of the orthosis/prosthesis prescription | <i>Education:</i> provision of information to assist the client to be able to use the orthosis/prosthesis provided to the best of their ability and in a safe and sustainable manner |



| | | |
|---|-------|--|
| 2.4 Evaluates, fits and/or modifies orthoses and prostheses, in relation to the treatment goals | 2.3.7 | Includes client, carer and/or health professional team education and follow-up when planning treatment |
| | 2.3.8 | Selects appropriate outcome measures |
| | 2.4.1 | Considers all relevant characteristics of the client during orthosis/prosthesis fitting and review processes |
| | 2.4.2 | Uses appropriate techniques to ensure optimal fit and function of the orthosis/prosthesis |
| | 2.4.3 | Reviews the client at appropriate intervals to evaluate fit, function, quality and safety of the orthosis/prosthesis |
| | 2.4.4 | Evaluates and monitors treatment outcomes using patient feedback and/or outcome measures |
| 2.5 Documents all aspects of care | 2.4.5 | Modifies treatment to ensure best possible outcomes are maintained |
| | 2.4.6 | Discusses progress toward goals with the client and/or carer |
| | 2.5.1 | Adheres to legislative and organisational requirements for all documentation |
| | 2.5.2 | Maintains legible, concise and accurate documentation using contemporary methods |
| | 2.5.3 | Safely and securely stores information and acts to maintain confidentiality whilst ensuring availability of information to other health professionals involved in the care pathway |

Relevant characteristics: include but are not limited to: client physical and mental health, motivation, memory, compliance

Appropriate techniques: include but are not limited to bench alignment, biomechanical analysis, surface pressure assessment, peer review, patient feedback, outcome measures

Appropriate intervals: are determined by factors such as client achievements relative to goals, durability and maintenance requirements of orthosis/prosthesis, rate at which client is changing and accessibility to treatment

Legislative: may include but is not limited to legislation relating to Privacy and Freedom of Information

Contemporary methods: refer to handwritten and/or electronic documentation in line with organisational requirements, client consent and national health communication strategies e.g.: e-health records

Secure storage: confidentiality is maintained through use of locked storage areas or password protected access when records are stored electronically



Domain 3: Provision of orthoses and prostheses

Ensures the safe manufacture of orthoses and prostheses as part of the care plan

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|--|---|--|
| 3.1 Undertakes and/or coordinates the manufacture of orthoses and prostheses | 3.1.1 Utilises appropriate casting, measuring and/or cast modification techniques to facilitate fabrication | <i>Manufacture:</i> incorporates all aspects of producing an orthosis/prosthesis including casting, measuring, fabricating and modifying |
| | 3.1.2 Fabricates and/or coordinates the optimal fabrication of orthoses/prostheses | <i>Appropriate casting or measuring techniques:</i> include electronic scanning, 3D imaging and printing, plaster casts and measurement instruments in line with available technology |
| | 3.1.3 Performs and/or coordinates required modifications of orthoses/prostheses | <i>Fabrication:</i> use of materials and components to produce a custom made orthosis/prosthesis |
| 3.2 Ensures the safety of orthoses and prostheses | 3.2.1 Assesses the orthosis/prosthesis for structural safety at appropriate intervals | <i>Modification:</i> adjustments which will change the fit and function of an orthosis/prosthesis <i>Structural safety:</i> strength of custom fabricated sections, integrity of supplied componentry |
| | 3.2.2 Ensures the orthosis/prosthesis is compliant with manufacturer guidelines and standards | <i>Manufacturer guidelines and standards:</i> may include but are not limited to torque ratings, procedures for assembly, ISO standards, re-use instructions, weight and activity ratings |



Domain 4: Service management and improvement

Contributes to the delivery of safe, quality and effective services

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|--|---|--|
| 4.1 Prioritises individual work load | 4.1.1 Facilitates appropriate completion of treatment | <p><i>Triage</i>: the ability to consider factors related to the diagnosed pathology, risk of further injury or progression of deformity and client characteristics e.g.: mental health, transport availability, support, in order to determine which client is treated first</p> <p><i>Supportive activities</i>: includes but are not limited to quality improvement activities, administrative tasks, ward rounds, meetings</p> <p><i>Client funding documentation</i>: may include but is not limited to requests detailing clinical justification, letters of referral, costs for provision of treatment</p> <p><i>Financial transactions</i>: includes but is not limited to invoicing to external bodies, clients or internal departments for treatment provided</p> <p><i>Service gaps</i>: areas of treatment provision which are either not conducted or not conducted in line with best practice and could be improved with access to knowledge, resources and/or equipment</p> <p><i>Audit processes</i>: may include but is not limited to infection control, occupational health and safety reviews, financial review</p> <p><i>Quality improvement initiatives</i>: projects addressing a specific aspect of practice, undertaken to improve, evaluate or formalise processes</p> |
| | 4.1.2 Demonstrates an ability to triage individual client case load within broader facility requirements for client care | |
| | 4.1.3 Facilitates appropriate completion of all supportive activities | |
| 4.2 Coordinates information relevant to client funding | 4.2.1 Determines available funding for prescribed care plan | |
| | 4.2.2 Prepares and/or coordinates submission of client funding documentation as required | |
| | 4.2.3 Prescribes and designs orthosis/prosthesis to achieve optimal outcomes within the approved budget for client treatment | |
| | 4.2.4 Understands and conforms to funding arrangements, budget allocations, statistical reporting and financial transaction requirements relevant to the work place | |
| 4.3 Contributes to service evaluation and improvement activities | 4.3.1 Recognises service gaps or inefficiencies and works collaboratively to identify solutions | |
| | 4.3.2 Participates in audit processes and quality improvement initiatives | |



Domain 5: Professional values and behaviours

Practices in accordance with professional, ethical and legislative standards

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|---|---|---|
| 5.1 Adheres to workplace safety requirements and identifies potential risks | 5.1.1 Adheres to legislation and workplace guidelines relating to safety | <p><i>Safety legislation:</i> Occupational Health and Safety Legislation including but not limited to manual handling guidelines, infection control measures, material safety data sheets</p> <p><i>Relevant laws:</i> including but not limited to, the Therapeutic Goods Act, Mandatory Notification, Freedom of Information, Privacy, Equal Opportunity, Anti-discrimination</p> <p><i>Applicable codes of ethics and conduct:</i> may include but are not limited to; the AOPA Ethical code and professional conduct, workplace policies and research ethical expectations</p> <p><i>At risk client:</i> health will deteriorate further in the immediate future if left without treatment at that point in time</p> <p><i>Professional scope of practice:</i> the area or areas of your profession in which you have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets professional standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to yourself; refer to prosthetic and orthotic scope of practice guidance tool for further information</p> |
| | 5.1.2 Identifies workplace hazards and acts to eliminate or reduce risks | |
| 5.2 Adheres to client safety requirements and practices duty of care | 5.2.1 Recognises the responsibility to do no harm | |
| | 5.2.2 Complies with relevant laws, regulations, policies and guidelines | |
| | 5.2.3 Abides by applicable codes of ethics and conduct | |
| | 5.2.4 Recognises and responds appropriately if client is at risk | |
| 5.3 Recognises professional role and scope of practice | 5.3.1 Works within professional scope of practice, consent of client and/or carer and authority of employer | |
| | 5.3.2 Seeks assistance or refers on when beyond own level of competence | |
| | 5.3.3 Recognises where further training is required to conduct competent practice | |



Domain 6: Life-long learning and reflective practice

Maintains and extends professional competence and contributes to the learning and development of others

| Activity | Performance Indicators | Range Statement |
|--|---|---|
| 6.1 Undertakes and contributes to professional development | 6.1.1 Undertakes independent learning to further own knowledge and skills on a continuous basis | <i>New techniques:</i> may include but is not limited to clinical casting and manufacturing processes <i>Technology:</i> advancements in materials, components and other relevant products |
| | 6.1.2 Shares skills and knowledge with health professional colleagues and students | |
| | 6.1.3 Participates in health professional training and research as opportunities arise | |
| | 6.1.4 Seeks out leaders within the profession for advice and mentoring | |
| | 6.1.5 Offers constructive feedback and assistance to other health professionals | |
| 6.2 Demonstrates an enquiring approach to practice | 6.2.1 Assesses and critically analyses sources of evidence | |
| | 6.2.2 Demonstrates a systematic approach to analysis and decision making | |
| | 6.2.3 Integrates evidence and new learning into practice to improve health outcomes for clients | |
| | 6.2.4 Demonstrates knowledge of new techniques and technology relevant to orthotics/prosthetics | |
| | 6.2.5 Critically and continuously evaluates practice | |