

Making the most of advanced practice

A short guide for prosthetists and orthotists

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Introduction

This document provides an overview of advanced practice for prosthetists and orthotists, with links to further resources at the end.

This document is primarily for prosthetists and orthotists in England. However, we have provided some information about advanced practice in the other UK countries at the end of this document.

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Author

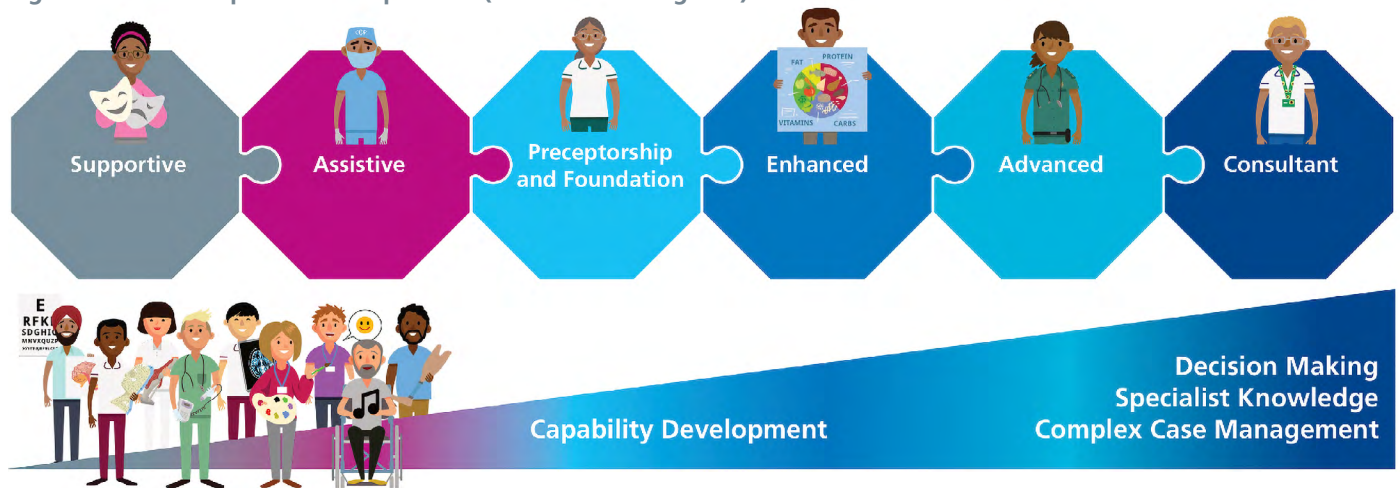
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What is advanced practice?

Advanced is a level of professional practice – see Figure 1 below – which sits between enhanced practice and consultant practice. **This level of practice is characterised by a high degree of autonomy and designated responsibility for complex decision making.** At this level, health and care professionals will have completed a post-registration Master's level award or equivalent that encompasses all four pillars of clinical practice, leadership and management, education, and research. They normally work as part of a multi-disciplinary team to manage and take responsibility for whole episodes of a person's care.

Figure 1: Levels of professional practice (Source: NHS England)



What does advanced practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

Advanced practice is in its relative infancy in prosthetics and orthotics and, at the time of writing, there were relatively few practitioners working at this level of practice.

At this level of practice, prosthetists and orthotists will be able to handle complex patient presentations from start to finish, with the ability and authority to make critical decisions in patient care, order investigations and create comprehensive management plans. They will often work with medical consultants and other senior health and care professionals but will practise with high levels of clinical autonomy.

Across the allied health professions, most advanced practice roles will be within the the primary scope of practice of each profession – the care pathways and areas of practice typically associated with each profession. Other roles will cut across pathways and professional boundaries and utilise the knowledge and skills of practitioners from a range of different regulated professional backgrounds.

Advanced practice is a level of practice and not a job role, title or salary band. However, to help in understanding what advanced practice might look like in the profession, Table 1 below gives some indicative job titles, qualifications and bandings for advanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics.

Table 1: Advanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics

Indicative job titles	Qualifications (from)	Indicative NHS Agenda for Change band (from)
Advanced prosthetist Advanced orthotist Advanced practitioner Advanced clinical practitioner	Master's degree in advanced practice (or equivalent), addressing all four pillars of practice	7 (trainee) 8a (qualified)

Please note that Agenda for Change bandings are indicative only and may vary between different employers and the UK countries.

Why does advanced practice matter in prosthetics and orthotics?

Drawing on early innovation in prosthetics and orthotics and the experience of other professions and clinical services, the following are the benefits of advanced practice:

- Advanced practice roles, where effectively utilised, can help services transform clinical services to better meet the needs of patients and address service challenges.
- Prosthetists and orthotists benefit from more career development opportunities, improving job satisfaction and retention in the workforce.
- Advanced practice roles can benefit patients, carers and the public by improving access to high quality, timely and inclusive care.

We know that there are some challenges which need to be addressed for advanced practice to become better established in the profession. By using our influence we can encourage employers to consider how advanced practice roles can enable them to redesign their services to better meet patient demand, helping to build fulfilling professional careers and retaining more of our talented workforce to provide high quality, timely, inclusive care for patients and carers.

What does advanced practice mean for me?

I can make the most of the opportunity of advanced practice by:

BEING ACTIVE IN MY OWN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Prosthetists and orthotists at all levels of practice need to be active in their own career development. This means being clear about their career aspirations and learning needs. Good, open career conversations with employers are crucial. These might be part of annual performance reviews or during one-to-one meetings with managers.

We know that opportunities for education, training and career progression can sometimes be frustratingly limited. By being open about their career aspirations and development needs, prosthetists and orthotists can work with their employers to identify how they can best be supported to develop their knowledge and skills. For example, this might include identifying opportunities for learning and development so that they are well positioned when a suitable trainee advanced practitioner position becomes available.

UNDERSTANDING THE PATHWAY TO BECOMING AN ADVANCED PRACTITIONER

Education and training in advanced practice is only undertaken by health and care professionals who have substantial professional experience.

The first step to training in advanced practice is to be appointed to a trainee advanced practitioner role.

The typical training pathway involves the following steps:

- The employer identifies the need and requirements for a prospective advanced practitioner role, and has funding in place.
- The employer recruits / appoints a health and care professional into a trainee advanced practitioner position.
- The employer supports the trainee advanced practitioner to complete an accredited Master's programme in advanced practice, which addresses the required capabilities for advanced practice across all four pillars of practice. These programmes are normally three years in duration. The Master's programme includes both academic preparation and preparation in the workplace.
- On successful completion of the Master's programme, the health and care professional is equipped with the capabilities required to practise at an advanced level. The employer employs the health and care professional as an advanced practitioner.

Advanced practice education and training has developed over time and as a result, some existing advanced practitioners will have followed a variety of different education, training and development routes into advanced practice roles.

ADVOCATING FOR ADVANCED PRACTICE

We all need to be proactive advocates for our profession and for our own career development.

The first step in developing more advanced practice roles in the profession is to identify a service need. This includes identifying the current service challenges and exploring how advanced practice roles, as part of redesigned services, can help address those challenges for the benefit of our patients.

If you are interested in developing advanced practice roles in your service, you might start by building your clinical network who can support you – for example, AHP leaders, other advanced practitioners and medical colleagues. A good evidence-based business case, with support from other members of the multi-professional team, can help persuade employers and commissioning organisations of the benefits of advanced practice.

Advanced practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Although there are some differences, the approach of each of the four countries of the UK to advanced practice is very similar, including arrangements for education and training.

Prosthetists and orthotists in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland are encouraged to look at the professional frameworks in place in their countries and to be active in their own career development.



Resources

What is advanced practice?

- [Multi-professional framework for advanced practice in England](#) – includes a definition and explanation of advanced practice including required capabilities across all four pillars of practice
- [Centre for advancing practice](#) – includes information and resources for advanced practice, as well as for enhanced and consultant practice

What does advanced practice look like in prosthetics and orthotics?

- [Advanced practice in prosthetics and orthotics](#) – includes information about challenges for prosthetics and orthotics, identifying the service need for advanced practice roles, and case studies

Education and training in advanced practice

- [List of accredited advanced practice programmes](#)

Advanced practice in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

WALES

- [Professional framework for enhanced, advanced and consultant clinical practice](#)

SCOTLAND

- [Advanced practice toolkit](#) – includes information about education and training programmes in Scotland
- [Nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals \(NMAHP\) development framework - post-registration framework](#)

NORTHERN IRELAND

- [Advanced AHP practice framework](#)



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