

PARAMEDIC

WHAT DOES A PARAMEDIC DO?

Paramedics respond to medical emergencies: as the first healthcare professionals on the scene, they can deal with the aftermath of any situation, from a serious road accident or violent assault, to a heart attack or minor injury. Their duties typically include assessing the patient's condition; starting any necessary treatment; giving appropriate drugs or oxygen; driving the ambulance; recording information; ensuring the ambulance and equipment are working properly.

They are usually part of a two-person ambulance crew with the other person being an ambulance technician or emergency care assistant. However, some work will be undertaken alone, using an emergency response car, motorbike or bicycle to get to a patient. Paramedics can become air ambulance crew members with additional training.

SKILLS REQUIRED

Applicants for Paramedic courses and jobs will need to demonstrate that they have:

- a caring attitude and outgoing, helpful personality
- a responsible and highly motivated approach
- good interpersonal and teamwork skills
- strong oral and written communication skills
- excellent driving skills
- physical and emotional stamina
- good initiative and decision-making skills
- a calm and reassuring approach
- good general fitness to cope with lifting patients and equipment

QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED

- Registration with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC): to join the register, an applicant needs to complete a qualification approved by the HCPC that includes clinical placements with an ambulance service and other healthcare providers.
- Applicants can qualify as a paramedic, and become eligible for HCPC registration, in one of the following ways:
 - by completing a Foundation Degree or BSc in Paramedic Science or Paramedic Practice (degree titles vary) that has been approved by the HCPC (<http://www.hpc-uk.org/>). Applicants with paramedic experience can also apply for a Diploma of Higher Education (DipHE) course;
 - by applying for a student paramedic post offered by some NHS authorities and trusts and studying whilst learning on the job. A list of NHS authorities and trusts is available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/thenhs/about/pages/authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>
- Because the job involves constant travel, a driving licence is essential. Some ambulance services require staff to hold a licence to drive heavier vehicles.
- Applicants will need to pass a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check.
- Check entry requirements and course content with individual course providers.

UNDERGRADUATE COURSES

For new entrants to the Paramedic role, there are 8 undergraduate Paramedic courses in the West Midlands that have been approved by the HCPC. Two examples are given below.

Foundation Degree in Paramedic Science: Coventry University (<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 2 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: A minimum of 5 GCSEs including English Language, Mathematics and Science or specified equivalents.

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* need to have obtained 60 credits, to include 45 Level 3 credits with 15 at Distinction in health modules. In some cases, it will require Merit or Distinction grades in a number of units or in nominated subjects.

BTEC applicants require a minimum of Distinction/Merit/Merit in a Health subject.

Entry requirements - work experience: not specified.

BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science: University of Worcester (<http://www.worcester.ac.uk/>)

Length of study: 3 years full-time

Entry requirements - qualifications: All potential students are required to have a minimum of 5 GCSEs at grade C/4 or above (or a suitable equivalent) to include Maths and English. Where potential students do not possess GCSE (or a suitable equivalent) in Maths and English subjects, equivalency testing opportunities will be made available to the candidate should they so desire (this will incur a cost to the candidate).

Applicants with an *Access to HE Diploma* full award (60 credits) in Health Studies, Health Science, Nursing or another Science will be considered. A minimum of 45 credits must be at Level 3, with at least 24 of these Level 3 credits at Merit or Distinction.

For *BTEC* students, please contact the university's Admissions department.

Entry requirements - work experience: None specified.

NB Please check with individual course providers as entry requirements can change.

EMPLOYMENT SECTORS

Paramedics are employed by NHS ambulance services, the Armed Forces, private hospitals, private ambulance services and a few major industries such as oil and gas exploration companies.

There is also the option of working for private paramedical agencies for occasions such as sporting fixtures, major events or on film and TV sets. Other opportunities exist as first-aid instructors and health and safety trainers.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The emergency ambulance service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Paramedics usually work 37.5 hours a week, including some night and weekend shifts, and bank holidays. Part-time hours are often also available. Paramedics wear a uniform, which includes protective clothing such as a bright jacket and safety boots.

Emergency calls may take a Paramedic to any environment. Though primarily based in an ambulance, Paramedics also spend time in hospital units and other healthcare settings. Increasingly, Paramedics are working in patients' homes.

SALARY

NHS salaries can range from £22,000 to £35,250 per year. Additional allowances may be paid to staff in certain parts of the country and to those working on standby or in shift patterns.

NB These figures are only a guideline: see NHS pay scales, and job advertisements, for up-to-date information

LABOUR MARKET DATA

In May 2018, there were 25,465 Paramedics registered with the HCPC. Most work for NHS Ambulance Services, and they are usually committed to having at least one Paramedic on each emergency ambulance. Job opportunities are therefore generally good, but the number of vacancies varies between UK regions.

INFORMATION SOURCES

- College of Paramedics: <https://www.collegeofparamedics.co.uk/>
- Health & Care Professions Council (HCPC): <http://www.hpc-uk.org/>
- National Careers Service: <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/>
- NHS Careers: <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/>
- Paramedic Resource Centre: <http://www.paramedic-resource-centre.com/>
- Prospects: <https://www.prospects.ac.uk/>
- UCAS: <https://www.ucas.com/>

VIDEO CLIPS

- <http://www.nhs-careers.nhs.uk/explore-by-career/ambulance-service-team/careers-in-the-ambulance-service/paramedic/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-tyne-27688733>

ASSOCIATED ROLE: EMERGENCY CARE ASSISTANT

Role: Emergency Care Assistants (ECAs) drive ambulances under emergency conditions and support the work of Paramedics. They help to safely transfer patients to and from ambulance vehicles, using suitable equipment and manual handling skills; help Paramedics deal with urgent hospital admissions; help to complete a handover report, recording all patient information; make sure their vehicle is roadworthy, properly kitted out and cleaned (paying particular attention to infection prevention) after every call.

Entry requirements: Each NHS ambulance trust sets its own entry criteria, and arranges for local training, so potential applicants need to contact any ambulance trusts that they would like to work for. A list of NHS authorities and trusts is available at:

<https://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/thenhs/about/pages/authoritiesandtrusts.aspx>

NHS ambulance trusts usually look for a minimum of 3-4 GCSEs (A*-C) including English, Maths and a Science; a full UK manual vehicle driving licence; excellent driving skills and up-to-date knowledge of the highway code; good fitness levels and good eyesight (prescription glasses are acceptable). Some ambulance services may also require applicants to have a current first aid certificate and experience of working in a patient care setting, ideally within the NHS. A full Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be carried out on potential recruits.

Updated: May 2018