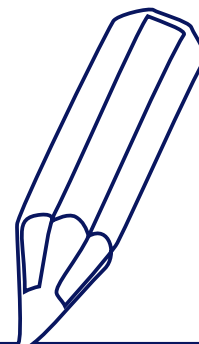


Podiatry Career Framework



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Glossary

Abbreviations

For the purposes of this document:

‘Bands’ refers to the educational attainment for set roles and career points within the Framework. It does not correlate to the pay banding utilised within the NHS workplace.

‘Podiatry Associates’ refers to the support level workforce.

AHP	Allied Health Profession/ Professional
RCPod	Royal College of Podiatry
HCPC	Health and Care Professions Council
HEE	Health Education England
PCF	Podiatry Career Framework
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland



1. Foreword

Podiatry is a first point of contact profession for foot and lower limb conditions. Basic training prepares podiatrists with core capabilities at level 6 in clinical practice, leadership and management, research and education; by graduation they are ready to develop any or all of these capabilities more broadly or more deeply with career portfolios that reflect their aspirations, talents and interests.

Over a career span, podiatrists accumulate knowledge, skills and experience - by formal training pathways such as in podiatric surgery, or more ad hoc as training opportunities become available. The aims of the Podiatry Career Framework (PCF) are twofold:

1. To communicate the breadth and depth of podiatrists' accumulated capabilities and experience to be easily readable to others.
2. To aid personal career planning.

Podiatrists are increasingly choosing hybrid roles and moving into new fields of work and yet this is often only evident on a retrospective CV. The PCF is prospective by design and aligns podiatry to relevant external frameworks to ensure the profession maps to existing clinical, education, research and management & leadership pathways. Podiatrists are first and foremost AHPs and share common areas of practice, governance, values and behaviours with other AHPs, nurses and doctors. There is, therefore, the potential for podiatrists, to be represented at every level of the health sector in clinical practice, research, development and innovation in leadership and management, and in education.

Podiatrists frequently work in isolation, and the regional branches of the Royal College of Podiatry (RCPod) create the primary opportunities for developing networks of support with fellow clinicians to develop essential supervision relationships. Having the PCF in common will be an additional tool to help with reflection and gap analysis in supervision conversations leading to more focused career planning.

A critical mass of podiatrists is required to achieve a robust future for the profession to ensure it continues to positively impact the health and mobility of people in the UK. Entry to the podiatry profession is represented in the PCF as one point along a continuum of education and training in foot health practice with the potential to build non-standard entry pathways into pre-registration podiatry/podiatric medicine degree programmes over time. With added flexibility into pre-registration degree programmes, the profession will have greater opportunity to grow and meet the ever-increasing healthcare needs of people with foot and lower limb conditions.

In this first iteration, the PCF is a '2D' tool but should be conceptualised as a 3D model with breadth and depth of experience, level of qualification and competence, and overall development in a career lifetime. With the capability of the profession mapped it will, in time, unveil the potential among podiatrists, in clinical practice, research, development and innovation, education, and leadership and management through portfolio careers, for maximum impact.



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2. Introduction and background to the Podiatry Career Framework

2.1 Introduction to the Podiatry Career Framework

In 2018 the Royal College of Podiatry (RCPod) and Health Education England (HEE) held a Podiatry Workforce Summit comprising representatives from podiatric clinical practice, management, education, service design, research and service user sectors. The Summit and subsequent events were held in response to the discontinuation of tuition fees and maintenance bursary for pre-registration training in podiatry, and a consequent decrease in recruitment into the profession. Following these events, the RCPod in partnership with HEE established the Podiatry Workforce Development Programme with three groups of workstreams designed to address the most urgent and important identified actions. The Image and Influence workstream was assigned the task of developing a career framework for podiatry.

Health Education England commissioned the project, but it will not be specific to England alone. The terminology used aims to relate to the statutory health sector in all four nations of the UK as well as to podiatrists working in independent practice.

The opinions of podiatrists, NHS podiatry service managers, and student podiatrists have been canvassed through social media and at an education provider of pre-registration podiatry with a presentation of the proposed model. Concerns and ideas offered in these forums helped modify the draft Framework, and further feedback and feedforward is welcome from members of the RCPod to ensure future revisions reflect contemporary podiatry practice, leadership, training and research priorities. Feedback can also be submitted at any time via the following link <https://rcpod.org.uk/contact>.

2.2 Background to the Podiatry Career Framework

To fulfil the AHPs into Action agenda¹ in line with the NHS Long Term Plan², many allied health professions (AHPs) in the UK have developed career frameworks to create indicative routes from support worker to advanced roles. The Podiatry Career Framework is also structured to align with external frameworks as cited below, but importantly for podiatrists in clinical practice, aims to provide both general practice and sub-specialty clinical podiatry pathways, with specific competency frameworks, to fellowship level, and some specified Advanced Clinical Practitioner and Consultant Practitioner roles. These are new and add to the existing frameworks in place for research with organisations such as the Health Education England / National Institute for Health Research Integrated Clinical Academic Programme³ and the NHS Healthcare Leadership Model⁴. In order to integrate the support workforce effectively, the Podiatry Career Framework was aligned more closely with the [HEE Standards for the Foot Health Workforce](#).

Documents informing this Framework include:

- Multi-professional Framework for advanced clinical practice in England⁵
- Framework for advanced nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals in Wales⁶
- The Royal College of Podiatry standards for clinical practice⁷
- Post-registration career development framework for nurses, midwives and AHPs (Scotland)⁸
- Podiatric Surgery training curriculum and standards for podiatrists practising podiatric surgery⁹
- NHS England Long Term Plan
- Advanced AHP Practice Framework (Northern Ireland)¹⁰

The podiatry profession sits within a wider health landscape and is subject to national drivers and guidance. In 2019 Health Education England published an interactive tool¹¹ showcasing exemplar AHP careers, highlighting those developed outside of a purely clinical setting. Podiatrists, like all AHPs, have a wealth of transferable skills and can explore clinical, research portfolio careers (clinical / non-clinical combined) and non-clinical careers offering a valuable approach from their core training and professional culture.

The need for separate career frameworks for each allied health profession relates to the differences in each profession. Podiatry, for example, has annotations on the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) register that do not appear in some other professions, such as the prescription-only medicines annotations for supply and administration as well as independent prescribing for those who have undertaken further training. The Podiatry Career Framework blends the generic similarities and profession-specific career attributes together to help podiatrists and support workers navigate towards their personal career goals, developing personally mapped career portfolios.

2.3 Integration of the Podiatry Career Framework with the pre-registration podiatry curriculum

Entry to the podiatry profession is subject to meeting the educational requirements of the pre-registration Bachelor or Master of Science degree programmes in Podiatry or Podiatric Medicine. The HCPC sets out clear standards which need to be met to qualify and must be maintained following qualification, subject to audit. The podiatry pre-registration curriculum is being revised in 2019-20 by a further task and finish group at the RCPod. The aim is to reflect changes in contemporary practice whilst still adhering to HCPC Standards of Proficiency and Degree Apprenticeship Standards for Podiatry.

Some variation will inevitably be present offering uniqueness to each University pre-registration programme and with the codicil of the entry qualification leading to life-long learning through continuous professional development (CPD). The foot and ankle capability frameworks associated with the broader PCF, therefore, extend to podiatry associate-level training (effectively the pre-registration stages of training within the pre-registration Podiatry/Podiatric Medicine degree). The foot and ankle capability frameworks can then be used to inform curricula in both the pre-registration podiatry degree and the training standards of associate podiatrist roles, as well as CPD course/resource content. The foot and ankle capability frameworks will reflect both general and specialty practice, and be updated periodically and serve as contemporary documents to inform career progression from pre-registration podiatry/associate podiatry level to consultant level.

2. Domains of the Podiatry Career Framework

To ensure that careers in podiatry align with the Multi-professional Framework for Advanced Clinical Practice⁵, four domains are included in the PCF with additional features addressing the ongoing evolution of the profession.

The domains in the Podiatry Career Framework are:

- 1. Clinical Practice**
- 2. Research, Development and Innovation**
- 3. Leadership and Management**
- 4. Education**

2.1 Pathways in each domain of the Podiatry Career Framework

2.1.1 Clinical Practice

The RCPod is currently defining Advanced Clinical Practitioner roles related to musculoskeletal podiatry, high-risk foot podiatry, and podiatric surgery. The Faculty of Podiatric Surgery and related special advisory groups affiliated to the Royal College of Podiatry are working towards the development of sub-specialty foot and ankle capability frameworks that will align the Clinical Practice domain of the PCF up to the award of Fellowship in Podiatric Medicine or Podiatric Surgery of the Royal College of Podiatry. The fellowship pathways will be available for clinical podiatrists with general practice careers, general practice with a special interest in a sub-specialty careers, and sub-specialty focused careers. The fellowship pathways can also be weighted towards the non-clinical domains (research, development and innovation,

leadership and management, and education) for non-clinical podiatrists striving for fellowship.

2.1.2 Clinical Practice: the foot and ankle capability frameworks:

The foot and ankle capability frameworks relate primarily to the 'Clinical Practice' domain in the PCF and offer a tangible route from podiatry associate roles to consultant practitioner. As such, they can be used to inform pre-registration course curricula and engage students with PCF early in their training with a view to them continuing onwards with their pathway(s) of choice following qualification and registration with the HCPC.

The biopsychosocial and other core aspects of patient interactions and CPD are built into the general practice pathway (aligned to similar domains in the Multi-professional framework for advanced clinical practice in England)⁵, and it is anticipated that users of the PCF will draw from both the sub-specialty and general practice capability frameworks throughout their careers. By referring to the PCF and associated sub-specialty / general practice capability frameworks, podiatrists can go on to meet the criteria needed to progress to Advanced Clinical Practitioner and ultimately, Consultant Practitioner.

2.1.2 Research, Development and Innovation

The research, development and innovation domain relates to formal scientific research activity and development of best clinical practice through synthesis, translation and communication of research to the wider clinical community. This journey, however, begins with the basic training in research sensitivity and translation at pre-registration level and is considered an intrinsic and essential attribute of any podiatrist in training and post-registration. The RCPod is dedicated to supporting podiatrists in research and has set out its Research and Development Strategic Plan for the Royal College of Podiatry available here <https://membersarea.rcpod.org.uk/governance/clinical-senate/research-development-and-innovation-committee>.

Information about clinical academic careers for podiatrists can also be found at <https://www.nihr.ac.uk/our-research-community/NIHR-academy/nihr-training-programmes/nihr-hee-ica-programme/>. NIHR awards are competitive but open to application from all registered podiatrists from pre-doctoral candidates who want to begin their research training with an internship, through to Senior Clinical Lectureship awards for experienced researchers. There are many avenues to explore in research and the Royal College of Podiatry Research and Innovation Committee have set out a strategic plan which can be accessed here. To find out more about research opportunities and pathways available to podiatrists contact the Royal College or your local HEIs with research centres. In addition, clinical research funding opportunities are available for charities, and research councils and signing up to Research Professional and the National Institute of Health Research can help podiatrists begin to seek opportunities for funding and training. In addition, schemes such as Knowledge Transfer Partnerships can bring together clinical practice and industry product development.

2.1.3 Leadership and Management

Personal development in podiatry includes investment in leadership and management skills. Podiatrists who have invested in training and experience in leadership and management are critical to effective operation and vision in public, private and third sector organisations. Frequent examples in podiatry include NHS service managers, charity trustees, and business administration and clinical innovation roles in industry and independent practice.

To begin to develop leadership and management skills to fellowship level, opportunities might be found through regional Royal College of Podiatry regional branch committees as well as numerous other portals both in the NHS and in independent practice. The RCPod seeks significant and sustained contributions to the profession in members applying for fellowship.

Leadership and management preparation will often be intrinsic to meeting this criterion as sustained contribution requires strategic planning, analysis and evaluation of gaps for improvement and impactful outputs to meet the needs of the profession.

An achievable and valuable way to begin to develop leadership and management skills is through student mentorship. Contact your local podiatry education provider to find out if opportunities are available for you to offer placement provision or join other activities such as university open days or offering educational sessions for students.

2.1.4 Education

Formal education is the domain used to define summative points leading to academic awards (eg a degree) along the PCF continuum. Entry to the podiatry profession is achieved with a Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) accredited degree (BSc (Hons) or pre-registration MSc). Beyond graduate podiatrist level, several other assessed gateways are available to podiatrists aiming to progress either within a broader clinical, educational or leadership and management portfolio or with a more specialist path. CPD below the educational level of the final year of the podiatry pre-registration degree may be helpful in developing scope of practice to some extent but podiatrists should aim to undertake most CPD (formally assessed or approved by the Royal College of Podiatry) at the educational level, of qualification (i.e. **SEEC level 6** or above) or above to develop beyond initial training and ensure sufficient advancement in practice compared to podiatry associate roles.

Supervision is essentially a 'professional health check' which can be undertaken formally in professional development reviews or informally and on an ad hoc basis in 'critical friendships' with peers. The Care Quality Commission describes the purpose of supervision being "to provide a safe and confidential environment for staff to reflect on and discuss their work and their personal and professional responses to their work". Through a process of review and reflection during supervision sessions podiatrists gain perspective on how their practice relates to contemporary best practice. A helpful guide about what supervision entails can be found [here](#).

Recording of supervision meetings can also help a podiatrist prepare for HCPC audit as they reflect on how their CPD impacted their practice. Supervision is also an opportunity to determine a step-wise pathway to the achievement of a career goal. Whilst supervision in podiatry is not a mandatory requirement it aids professional development and is recommended to make best use of the PCF.

3. Titles in the Podiatry Career Framework



The professional titles 'podiatrist' and 'chiropodist' are designated under the Health and Social Work Professions Order (2001) but currently, there is no way of adequately communicating preparation for a role beyond threshold graduate-level practice. Titles in the public sector are not standardised to reflect competency adequately, and practitioners may frequently adopt prefixes such as 'Specialist' or 'Sports' to denote experience or a special interest e.g. Sports Podiatrist, although no standards are currently set to outline clearly what such a pre-fix indicates in terms of competency or capability.

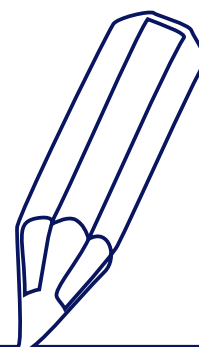
The PCF aims to outline descriptors characteristic of different stages of a career, with associated titles. These are not legally protected or designated but help communicate the accumulated capability and experience of a podiatrist in the years following qualification.



4. How to use the Podiatry Career Framework

Participants should engage with the Podiatry Career Framework with a career goal in mind or to discover their opportunities and aptitudes that might form a career pathway where a clear goal has not yet been identified. It is recommended that early-career podiatrists work towards a foundation of building core skills, knowledge and behaviours across all four domains which will enable them to progress either with a broader generalist focus or along a specialist fellowship route. The aim is that podiatrists maintain momentum by building a volume of work that reflects learning and acquisition of skills as well as maturation in the realm of leadership and management. Many podiatrists, although not actively engaged in undertaking empirical research in their practice setting or team, have a vital responsibility and opportunity to ensure we are an evidence-informed profession. We must all endeavour to be research sensitive, literate and applied in practice. Podiatrists should seek to ensure all clinical practice is evidence-led and access resources and support to help develop their research or research implementation activity in this respect.

5. The Podiatry Career Framework



American Society of Anesthesiologists (ASA) Legend:

ASA Grade	Definition	Examples (not exhaustive)
1	A normal healthy patient	Healthy, non-smoking, no or minimal alcohol use
2	A patient with mild systemic disease	Mild diseases only without substantive functional limitations e.g. current smoker, social alcohol drinker, pregnancy, obesity (30 < BMI < 40), well-controlled DM/HTN, mild lung disease
3	A patient with severe systemic disease	Substantive functional limitations; One or more moderate to severe diseases. E.g. poorly controlled DM or HTN, COPD, morbid obesity (BMI ≥40), active hepatitis, alcohol dependence or abuse, implanted pacemaker, CKD undergoing regularly scheduled dialysis, history (>3 months) of MI, CVA, TIA, or CAD/stents.
4	A patient with severe systemic disease that is a constant threat to life	E.g. recent (< 3 months) MI, CVA, TIA, or CAD/stents, ongoing cardiac ischemia or severe valve dysfunction, sepsis
5	A moribund patient who is not expected to survive without the operation	E.g. ruptured abdominal/thoracic aneurysm, massive trauma, intracranial bleed with mass effect, ischemic bowel in the face of significant cardiac pathology or multiple organ/system dysfunction
6	A declared brain-dead patient whose organs are being removed for donor purposes	

The Royal College of Podiatry is developing foot and ankle capability frameworks to map clinical capabilities to stages 1 - 4 of the PCF. These capability frameworks are essentially 'off-the-shelf' guides to clinical generalist and sub-specialty skills and knowledge training pathways and are currently available in:

- Diabetes (Capability Framework for Integrated Diabetic Lower Limb Care¹²)
- Podiatric Surgery (standards and curriculum⁹)
- Podiatric Sports Medicine (from educational level 7 only - curriculum in PG certificate at Queen Mary University London)
- Foot and Ankle Musculoskeletal Competency Framework (under development)
- Children's Podiatry Clinical framework¹³

Other podiatry foot and lower limb specific capability frameworks may be available in time.

The framework indicates the required attainment to occupy each band in each domain (educational awards, clinical practice and supervision, management and leadership and research). To progress to the next band work will need to be undertaken prior to progression eg in band 1, podiatry associates must complete an HCPC approved BSc(Hons) podiatry/ podiatric medicine qualification to register with the HCPC and enter band 2. Similarly, band 3 podiatric surgical trainees must complete the FCPodS qualification prior to progressing to band 4.

1	Podiatry career framework title (Status and eligible affiliation with RCPod)*	Education	Clinical practice General practice or sub-speciality competency	Leadership and management	Research, development and innovation	Time estimate (years)
	Eg Reflexologist Beautician Shoe / Boot fitter	NVQ, GCSE, BTEC	-	-	-	1-2
	Foot Care Assistant/ NHS Senior Healthcare Support worker (Associate Member of the RCPod)	Approved Support worker training programme (RQF Level 3); Diploma in healthcare, A-level, Access course, T levels	Capability frameworks Level A* ASA1** patients under podiatrist supervision depending on task (set out in HEE Standards for Foot Health Workforce)	Works under delegation and supervision of podiatrist in the NHS	Works with research sensitive podiatrist	1-2
	Foot Health Practitioner	Approved FHP programme (RQF Level 4) (stage 1 of BSc); Certificate of Higher Education, Higher National Certificate	Capability frameworks Level A* ASA1-2** patients under podiatrist supervision in the NHS depending on task (set out in HEE Standards for Foot Health Workforce)			1
	Assistant Practitioner (Associate member of the RCPod)	Diploma of Higher Education (RQF Level 5) / Foundation Degree (stage 2 of BSc)	Capability frameworks Level B* ASA1-3** patients under podiatrist supervision depending on task (set out in HEE Standards for Foot Health Workforce)			1

2	Podiatry career framework title <i>(Status and eligible affiliation with RCPod)*</i>	Education	Clinical practice	Leadership and management	Research, development and innovation	Time estimate (years)
	Podiatrist (MRCPod)	BSc (Hons) (***or pre-reg MSc) Podiatry or Podiatric Medicine	Capability frameworks Level C* Works with ASA1-4 patients unsupervised by podiatrist	Manages own caseload, clinic and supervises podiatry associates	BSc honours project (***MSc dissertation)	1
	Podiatrist Specialist Podiatrist (MRCPod) First Contact Podiatrist (MRCPod)	SEEC Level 6 CPD Begins Level 7 PGCert - PGDip	Capability frameworks Level D* Works with ASA1 and above patients unsupervised	Engages in peer supervision Team Leader Clinical Educator	Evidence informed clinical practice	1-2

3	Podiatry career framework title <i>(Status and eligible affiliation with RCPod)*</i>	Education	Clinical practice	Leadership and management	Research, development and innovation	Time estimate (years)
	<p>Advanced Clinical Practitioner (FRCPodM)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>First Contact Podiatrist (FRCPodM)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Advanced Podiatrist (FRCPodM)</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Podiatric Surgery Trainee grade (MRCPod)</p>	SEEC Level 7 qualification / MSc / MRes / SEEC level 7 equivalence	<p>Capability frameworks Level E*</p> <p>Works with ASA1 and above patients unsupervised</p>	<p>Manager</p> <p>Lecturer / Senior Research Fellow / Senior Teaching Fellow (HEI dependent)</p>	<p>MSc dissertation or MRes / MPhil</p> <p>Eligible to apply for Chartered Scientist status</p>	<p>1-6</p> <p>(min 6 in podiatric surgery)</p>

4	Podiatry career framework title <i>(Status and eligible affiliation with RCPod)</i>		Education	Clinical practice	Leadership and management	Research	Time estimate (years)
	A	Consultant Practitioner Podiatrist (FRCPodM) Or Consultant Podiatric Surgeon (FRCPodS)	SEEC Level 8 qualification / PhD / Professional Doctorate / SEEC level 8 equivalence	Capability frameworks Level F* Works with ASA1 and above patients unsupervised	Senior Manager Surgical Service clinical lead Associate Professor or equivalent	Professional doctorate, PhD thesis publication	Onward career
Consultant Practitioner Podiatrist / Consultant Podiatric Surgeon	B and above	Consultant Practitioner Podiatrist (FRCPodM) Or Consultant Podiatric Surgeon (FRCPodS)			Professor (or equivalent)	Post-doctoral research and post-doctoral grants and publications	

*Refers to skills levels in foot and lower limb capability frameworks

**ASA = American Society of Anaesthesiologists grade

***The MSc entry qualification is considered to be equivalent in professional terms to the BSc entry point ie doesn't equate to additional experience acquired by a podiatrist over time.

* Attribution of post-nominal letters is not automatic when this role is achieved. Only members of RCPod are entitled to use the listed post-nominals. Please consult with the RCPod Fellowship requirements to apply for the post-nominals of FRCPodM and FRCPodS.

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