



Examination  
Annual Report  
2016-2017

# Executive Summary

As Chair of the Examination Committee for the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators/Organisation Canadienne des Régulateurs Paramédicaux (COPR), I am pleased to provide a report for the period of 2016/17.

The Entry to Practice Examinations for Primary Care Paramedics (PCP) and Advanced Care Paramedics (ACP) continues to be delivered by our contracted firm Yardstick Inc., with input from key stakeholders including working paramedics from every province. I am pleased to report that in 2017 British Columbia joined Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador in adopting the COPR Entry to Practice Exams for their PCP and ACP graduates applying for licensure/registration.

The examinations meet or exceed all professional standards as specified in the *American Psychological Association Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing*. Each 200 question examination is created from the over 1100 items currently located in the examination item bank. An Examination Working Group meets regularly to review the content of the questions and data bank, create new questions to ensure different versions of the examination are available, and to retire questions as needed. As in year one of the exam delivery, the results of the paramedic national examinations have been consistent with the results of other defensible regulatory body exams. Statistically there has been minimal variability in results between examination administrations, which signifies examination consistency.

The *Examination Handbook* and the *Examination Study Guide* are revised regularly. These tools created for examination candidates can be found on the COPR website; [www.copr.ca](http://www.copr.ca). COPR participates in the national initiative to revise the National Occupancy Competency Profile upon which the examinations are based. Our website is updated periodically and content added.

COPR operates the examinations on a cost recovery basis. Revenues in 2016/17 allowed COPR to advance the examinations by commencing an examination blueprint review and revision process and upgrading the preparatory tests.

The Examination Working Group is a dedicated group of volunteers who continue to contribute their time and expertise to develop, review and revise and retire exam questions. Their expertise and dedication is essential to the validity of the exam. There are two EWG sessions each year that are held in different provinces. This year the sessions were hosted in Saskatchewan and Prince Edward Island. COPR and the Examination Committee would like to extend sincere appreciation to all members of the Examination Working Group for their dedication and hard work.

Tammy Leach and Ben Maartman continue to provide dedicated and expert day to day management of the examination processes, contractor relationship, and exam committee guidance. Thank you.

Ms. Susan Dyck, Chair  
COPR Examination Committee

# Annual Report

The Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators / Organisation Canadienne des Régulateurs Paramédicaux (COPR) have offered entry to practice examinations for Primary Care Paramedics (PCP) and Advanced Care Paramedics (ACP) since 2012. This year British Columbia joined Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador in using the COPR Examinations as their entry to practice examinations.

## *Background*

The COPR Entry to Practice Examinations were created to support provincial regulators who are responsible for protecting the public and to allow for ease of license mobility for paramedic practitioners between Canadian jurisdictions to comply with the Agreement on Internal Trade/Labour Mobility Agreement.

The examinations are the product of a two year project that involved Paramedic Regulators from every province and stakeholders including the Paramedic Chiefs of Canada, Paramedic Association of Canada (PAC), Canadian Medical Association (CMA), Canadian Association of Emergency Physicians CAEP), the Society for Prehospital Educators in Canada (SPEC) and individual paramedics from every province. COPR received funding from the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Program. In addition, provincial regulators collectively provided over \$650,000.00 of in-kind contributions. This funding and support allowed COPR to develop and implement the examinations and to move toward full labour mobility. COPR was created as a way to share information, and to discuss and communicate regulatory matters. COPR Council created the COPR Examination Committee in 2012 to provide oversight for the examination process. Committee members consist of regulators and/or designates from member jurisdictions.

## *The Exams*

The examination has been developed and maintained with the expertise of psychometricians from Yardstick Inc. who specialize in the development, delivery, maintenance and analysis of high stake examinations. COPR has built a solid foundation for the examinations to ensure that they are achieving the organization's stated purpose: to protect the public by ensuring that those who are successful at the COPR examination possess sufficient competencies to enter paramedic practice safely and effectively. A rigorous test development process is utilized that meets or exceeds all professional standards as specified in the most recent edition of *American Psychological Association Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing* including the requirements of periodic evaluation. This process results in examinations that are fair, relevant to practice, psychometrically sound, and legally defensible.

Examination Management Services have been provided under contract since December 2012 to administer and provide oversight to the examinations. Examination Management Services report to the COPR Examination Committee, who meet quarterly.

## *Exam Blueprinting and Test Assembly*

The first objective in the examination development process was the creation of examination blueprints. The blueprints are based on the National Occupational Competency Profile (NOCP), which were developed by the PAC, and are an integral part of creating a defensible examination program.

The blueprints provide the necessary information to the Exam Working Group (EWG), as to the number and level of difficulty of the questions for each competency. Each province is represented on the EWG by primary and advanced paramedic practitioners trained in question writing, who develop and review content for the examination. As part of

the development and review process, each question progresses through a series of quality control stages, including the initial writing, review and refinement, appraisal from the different provincial members of the EWG to ensure that exam questions are not inclined to any one province, and professional editing to ensure clarity, consistency and appropriateness of the language used. A forty page *Item Development Author Guide* was completed in the fall of 2013 to ensure consistency in item development. This guide covers topics from approved abbreviations to the rules of item writing. Items are then entered into an official item bank for future retrieval. Following best practice, the examination blueprints are currently under review and refinement.

### *Standard Setting*

The process of establishing a defensible passing score is accomplished using two methods: standard setting or statistical equating. Standard setting is accomplished using the Modified Angoff method, an industry standard often used for certification examinations. The psychometrician facilitates the process with the EWG to ensure the passing score represents the performance minimally expected of entry-level practice paramedics. Statistical equating is used to quantify any differences in difficulty between examination forms and to inform possible adjustments to the passing score identified through the Angoff process. In March of 2017, COPR introduced standard scores. The standard score for the COPR entry to practice examinations has been set at 450.

The results of the COPR entry to practice examinations have been consistent with the results of other defensible regulatory body exams. Statistically there has been minimal variability in results between examination administrations, which signifies examination consistency. As with all high-stake certification/licensure examinations, the content and process for development, administration and analysis of the COPR examinations are subject to continual quality assurance and review to ensure that they are effective tools for determining competence.

*Table: Exam Statistics for 2016/17 (May 2016 – March 2017)*

Practice Level	Number of candidates	Successful	Failed	Pass Rate (%)
<b>Primary Care Paramedic</b>	612	404	208	66.0%
<b>Advanced Care Paramedic</b>	116	90	16	77.6%

*Table: Exam Banks as of May 1, 2017*

### Primary Care Paramedic

In use*	673
In development	709
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1382</b>

### Advanced Care Paramedic

In use*	606
In development	314
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>920</b>

\*Operational, Experimental, Technical Review workflow states

Yardstick coordinates and monitors the delivery of each examination, provides training and support to the EWG and ensures the ongoing development, maintenance and statistical analysis of the COPR examinations.

### *COPR Entry to Practice Examination Handbook*

COPR offers candidates detailed information regarding the examination and the exam process through the *COPR Entry to Practice Examination Handbook*. This *Handbook* is updated regularly as policies are being developed and items are identified for clarification. The *Handbook* is available at [www.copr.ca](http://www.copr.ca). Information provided includes:

- The examination development process;
- Eligibility requirements;
- What to expect when applying for the exam;
- What happens after a candidate applies for the exam;
- What happens on the exam day; and
- What to expect after the exam.

COPR encourages each candidate to review the *Handbook* to ensure that they are informed of the exam process.

## ***COPR Examination Study Guide***

COPR also created, and revises as needed, an *Examination Study Guide*. This *Study Guide* assists candidates in preparing for the examination process by providing tips and strategies for exam preparation as well as sample exam questions. The *Study Guide* is available at [www.copr.ca](http://www.copr.ca). Information provided includes:

- A summary of the examination development process;
- The examination format;
- Recommended exam taking strategies;
- Examples of type, format and content questions that will be seen on the Entry to Practice Examination;
- An appendix of abbreviations and acronyms; and
- A list of reference textbooks utilized when preparing the Entry to Practice Examination.

COPR encourages each candidate to review the *Study Guide* to ensure that they are well prepared for the examination.

## ***Preparatory Test***

In May of 2015, COPR, in collaboration with Yardstick, launched its first online Preparatory Test. The test may be purchased at <https://coprpreparatory.ysasecure.com> for \$75.00. The Preparatory Tests are designed to simulate the format of the actual entry to practice examination on a smaller scale and provide test takers with exposure to the types of questions, exam structure, and online examination writing skills. It is accessible at any time by purchasers and provides feedback on performance so that candidates may adjust their exam preparation for the COPR Entry to Practice Examination. To date, three tests have been developed at the Primary Care Paramedic (PCP) level and two at the Advanced Care Paramedic (ACP) level. In 2017 the Preparatory tests are being upgraded to provide test takers with an explanation of the correct response, an explanation of each incorrect response, linkage to the examination blueprint and NOCP, as well as a reference to a commonly used textbook.

## ***Examination Budget***

The budget for the exam is reviewed on a regular basis by the Examination Committee. Recommendations from the Committee are provided to COPR Council. The revenue is based on the number of candidates that write the exam or undertake the preparatory tests, and expenses are related to the administration and maintenance of the exam. For 2016/17 revenue was higher than expenses allowing for additional projects such as the blueprint review and preparatory test upgrade.

## *The Future*

COPR has undertaken to continue to administer the examinations and ensure they are sustainable through the examination registration fee. As COPR continues to move forward, its goals include:

- Continue to work with the Paramedic Association of Canada to ensure the competency profile remains current;
- Complete the examination blueprint review to ensure it is both up-to-date, and optimized for defensible testing.
- Create and revise policy and process for the examinations;
- Continue regular meetings of the COPR Examination Working Group to build and revise the examination and preparatory test data banks and to maintain currency and defensibility of the exam;
- Train, develop and sustain the Exam Working Group;
- Develop a standardized report for educational programs on COPR examination statistical data to assist with curriculum development and meet accreditation standards;
- Work with COPR Executive to encourage other provinces to adopt the COPR exam; and
- Investigate the potential for creating an Emergency Medical Responder (EMR) level of the entry to practice examination.

## *Acknowledgements*

COPR would like to thank Yardstick Inc. for its continued psychometric expertise. COPR would also like to thank examination managers Tammy Leach and Ben Maartman for their dedication and expertise in administering and managing the COPR Entry to Practice Examinations. Finally, the Exam Committee would like to thank the many dedicated paramedics across the country who have donated their time and expertise to the Examination Working Group.

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