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The Development of Professionals

This is the first in a forthcoming series of open papers produced under the sponsorship of the Australian Army's Director General Training and Doctrine (DG TRADOC). These papers investigate targeted facets of professional development through comparative analysis. They aim to generate a robust discussion about the future of the Australian profession of arms on land, and about Army's future needs in the spheres of professional development and professional military education. Comments should be directed to claire.vonwald@defence.gov.au.

What is a profession? It is defined by [Professions Australia](#) as "a disciplined group of individuals who adhere to ethical standards and who hold themselves out as, and are accepted by the public as, possessing special knowledge and skills ... and who are prepared to apply this knowledge and exercise these skills in the interest of others".¹ Generally speaking, members of a profession are granted the freedom, right or responsibility by society to do something that others cannot. In return, society expects that a member of a profession will "carry out his or her duties to the highest possible standards of character and competence".² Well-known professions include medicine, law, policing and the profession of arms. Other occupational groups that many recognise as professions include engineers, teachers, veterinarians, social workers, accountants, architects, nurses and pharmacists.³

¹ *Professions Australia*, accessed 27 February 2017, <http://www.professions.com.au/about-us/what-is-a-professional>.

² Houle, C.O., *Continuing Learning in the Professions* (California: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1980), 7.

³ *Ibid.*, 16.

The Macquarie Dictionary defines a professional as a person “engaged in one of the learned professions”.⁴ Whether they are a doctor, lawyer, officer or soldier – a professional is developed over a period of time as a result of profession-specific training, education and experiences. The professional knowledge and skill that the professional development process must deliver is defined by a widely recognised body of knowledge derived from research, education and training at a high level.

As part of the growing discourse around the Australian profession of arms, this paper investigates the training and education experiences that contribute to the development of individuals in a number of professions, and compares these to the current practice in the Australian Army.

Initial Qualification

The first common element in the development of a professional is initial qualification. Individuals undertake intensive education and training in the key knowledge and skills relevant to the profession. This training and education normally begins with intellectual activity – detailed study of the profession so that the individual can acquire knowledge – and then moves to the practical application of that knowledge.

For example, an individual wanting to become a **doctor** in Australia must complete an undergraduate degree - a Doctor of Medicine (MD) or Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) - that requires four to six years of study. Prospective doctors then apply for provisional registration, which allows them to complete a year of supervised on-the-job training called an ‘Internship’. On successful completion of an internship, individuals may apply for general registration, and practice as a ‘Resident’ for at least one year.⁵

Similarly, an individual wanting to become a **lawyer** must complete an undergraduate degree - Bachelor of Laws (LLB) or in some cases a Juris Doctor (JD) - which is normally four years in duration. Following completion of this degree, prospective lawyers are required to complete a year of practical legal training (in some states called ‘Articles’) in a

⁴ *Macquarie Dictionary Online*, (Australia: MacMillan Publishers, 2017), accessed 12 April 2017, https://www.macquariedictionary.com.au/features/word/search/?word=professional&search_word_type=Dictionary

⁵ “Becoming a Doctor”, *Australian Medical Association*, accessed 24 February 2017, <https://ama.com.au/careers/becoming-a-doctor>.

practicing solicitor's office. Then prospective lawyers may apply to the Supreme Court in the relevant State or Territory for admission to the legal profession in that State, and then work towards obtaining a practicing certificate issued by the local legal professional body.⁶

A range of other professions require initial study, and then an application for registration. Teachers must successfully complete a minimum of four years of tertiary study (including placements where they can gain classroom experience while under supervision) before applying to the relevant State teacher registration board. Financial advisors must complete specified training and education activity before applying to the Australian Securities and Investment Commission (ASIC) for an Australian Financial Services license. Of note, and outside of the formal 'professions', the initial qualification process is also applicable to members of skilled trades. Electricians, plumbers and builders must complete specified vocational training before applying for the relevant license.

The common themes here are *detailed study* of the professional body of knowledge (PBK), *supervised practice* and then *registration or licensing*. This three stage initial qualification process ensures that the high standards expected of the profession are maintained, and increases the credibility of the profession in the eyes of the society that they serve. It is these standards, and the trust they develop over time, that are key to true 'professions' continuing to receive the freedoms that allow them to operate.

Career Progression

The second element in the development of a professional is career progression. In most circumstances career progression or promotion requires an individual to work in the profession for a period of time (to gain experience), and then to complete education and / or training to gain additional skills or knowledge. The collective output of this experience and education / training is then often tested or assessed prior to a formal acceptance ('accreditation') of progression. Again, various professions have different approaches to this developmental need.

In the medical profession, career progression usually means **specialising** in an approved field of medicine such as general practice, surgery or obstetrics.⁷ Doctors progress to

⁶ "Steps to practicing law", *University of Melbourne, Melbourne Law School*, accessed 24 February 2017, <http://law.unimelb.edu.au/students/career-services/steps-to-practising-law>.

become a Registrar where they undertake study, complete supervised practical training and complete assessments or examinations. This specialisation training is managed and accredited by a relevant Professional College (for example the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, or Royal Australian College of Surgeons). On successful completion of the education and training programs, doctors are appointed as a Fellow of the College,⁸ and are authorized to practice medicine without the supervision of another doctor. Some doctors will also complete additional, formalised education in the form of a research-based doctorate, before becoming a Consultant or Senior Medical Officer. The specific training, education and experience **requirements** for each career progression stage differ by specialty, but generally include study, supervised practice and examinations over a period of three to five years.⁹

Career progression in the legal profession sees individuals develop, normally within the same legal firm, from Solicitor to Associate, Senior Associate and then Partner. Solicitors and barristers are formally mentored through this process by a supervisor, tutor or ‘mentor’. In addition to this progression, barristers may apply to the Bar Association (the professional college equivalent for lawyers) to be appointed as a Senior Counsel (SC, previously known as Queen’s Counsel). It is worth noting that “the appointment of senior counsel is not just an acknowledgement of a person’s ability – it is an acknowledgement by the bar and judiciary that a person has qualities of leadership”.¹⁰ SC must have made “a substantial contribution to the tutoring of young barristers and the formation of jurisprudence through their submissions in particular cases”¹¹ – they have a professional leadership role, and must contribute to the PBK. Another form of career progression for lawyers is appointment as magistrates or judges. These individuals will **have** extensive legal experience, a high level of proficiency in the law and its underlying principles, and strong communication and

⁷ “List of specialties, fields of specialty practice and related specialist titles”, *Medical Board of Australia*, accessed 29 March 2017, <http://www.medicalboard.gov.au/Registration-Standards.aspx>

⁸ Hence the qualifications or post-nominals used by medical specialists. For example, qualified General Practitioners will be FRACGP – Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners.

⁹ “Becoming a Doctor”, *Australian Medical Association*, accessed 24 February 2017, <https://ama.com.au/careers/becoming-a-doctor>.

¹⁰ Justice Susan Kiefel quoted in Pelly, M. “What is the value in senior counsel?”, *The Australian Business Review*, 31 August 2012.

¹¹ *Legal Lawyers*, accessed 27 March 2017, <http://www.legallawyers.com.au/legal-topics/litigation/what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-qc-barrister/>

judgement skills.¹² So in the legal profession, while post-graduate education is encouraged, **career progression** is based on experience, performance and contribution to the profession rather than completion of specific courses or training requirements.¹³

Career progression for a professional is not a *fait accompli*. It is a competitive process, which requires individual effort to perform well, learn more about their profession, and apply that additional knowledge effectively.

Maintaining Standards and Currency

The third element in the development of a professional is focused on maintaining currency with the PBK and enhancing existing skills or proficiency. "Continuing professional development is important because it ensures you continue to be competent in your profession. It is an ongoing process and continues throughout a professional's career".¹⁴ This continuing professional development (CPD) is usually required of all members of a given profession, regardless of their career progression plans or drive for advancement. In most cases, completing CPD is a requirement for maintaining a professional's license or registration. CPD encourages the culture of professionalism that is expected by society.

For example, the Australian Medical Board maintains a **CPD Standard** which sets out the minimum requirements for CPD for medical practitioners.¹⁵ The objective of the CPD program is for medical professionals to "maintain, develop, update and enhance knowledge, skills and performance to ensure that they deliver appropriate and safe care".¹⁶ Each specialty defines an annual requirement in terms of CPD points, a number of mandatory CPD activities, and a range of other activities that can contribute to CPD points. These other activities include: tertiary study relevant to the specialty, small-group learning, publishing a peer-reviewed article, research, courses provided by accredited training providers, supervised clinical attachments, and providing training to other members of the profession. Understanding, sharing and developing the PBK is a primary focus.

¹² *Sydney Criminal Lawyers*, accessed 27 March 2017, <http://www.sydneycriminallawyers.com.au/blog/becoming-a-magistrate-or-judge-in-nsw/>

¹³ "Steps to practicing law", *University of Melbourne, Melbourne Law School*, accessed 24 February 2017, <http://law.unimelb.edu.au/students/career-services/steps-to-practising-law>

¹⁴ "Why is CPD Important?", *Continuing Professional Development*, accessed 17 March 2017, <http://continuingprofessionaldevelopment.org/why-is-cpd-important/>

¹⁵ Medical Board of Australia, *Registration Standard: Continuing Professional Development*, 1 October 2016.

¹⁶ Medical Board of Australia, *Registration Standard: Continuing Professional Development*, 1 October 2016, 2.

Legal professionals are also required to complete a number of **CPD** points each year in order to retain their practicing certificate. Again there are mandatory topics and activities, along with a range of optional topics or activities. These include: attendance at seminars, workshops, on-line courses; research, preparation or editing of an article for a legal publication, non-legal publication or Law Report; preparation and delivery of training for other legal professionals; post-graduate study; and membership of the committee of a professional body or association.¹⁷ As with the medical profession, CPD is largely about understanding, sharing and developing the PBK; a collaborative requirement to advance the profession.

A CPD requirement is common to other professions, and also to skilled trades. ASIC requires financial advisors to take action to maintain and update their skills and knowledge, teacher registration boards mandate regular CPD for teachers, and health professionals such as nurses, physiotherapists and pharmacists must complete regular CPD activities as well. There are also moves to link **license renewal** for tradesmen (for example builders and electricians) to CPD to ensure currency (awareness of standards) and ongoing proficiency.¹⁸ These examples indicate that professions (and other regulatory bodies) value activities that enhance proficiency, generate additional knowledge, and ensure members of the profession remain current.

Comparison to the Australian Army

Members of the Australian Army are said to be members of the profession of arms. This belief generally makes no discrimination for rank or role. So how does the professional development system in Army compare with that of other professions?

Initial Qualification

Initial training for a soldier is made up of initial recruit training followed by trade-specific initial employment training. The focus of a soldier's initial training is on practical skills rather than knowledge, reflecting the vocational nature of a soldier's initial employment. After

¹⁷ "Practising Law in NSW", *The Law Society of New South Wales*, accessed 28 February 2017, <http://www.lawsociety.com.au/ForSolicitors/practisinglawinnsw/mclecpd/index.htm>

¹⁸ "Builders Continuing Professional Development", *New South Wales Fair Trading*, accessed 17 March 2017, http://www.fairtrading.nsw.gov.au/ftw/Tradespeople/Builders_Continuing_Professional_Development.page

successful completion of this training soldiers commence working in the military (practicing in the profession of arms) with no further licensing or registration process required.

Initial officer training varies. Some complete the 18-month First Appointment Course (FAC) at RMC, and others follow the ADFA-then-RMC route. Some officers are commissioned following an Army Reserve FAC. Other officers are commissioned through the Army Senior NCO and Warrant Officer Commissioning Scheme (ASWOCS), which currently does not require additional officer-specific training or education – experience is deemed to be sufficient to replace the FAC / RMC courses. A further group of officers are specialists and undertake a shorter and less comprehensive course prior to being commissioned. Unlike other professions, completion of a specific (military-related) undergraduate qualification¹⁹ (while desirable) is not a requirement prior to being "registered" or "licensed" (that is, receiving a commission). The process for earning a commission also takes less time than in other professions (although the 18-month FAC is a very intensive program of study).

So the initial qualification requirements of the profession of arms are not as intensive or time-consuming as those of other professions, and are not consistent across all elements of the profession. For soldiers this likely reflects the initial practical / vocational nature of their work. 'Professional certification' of an officer recognises that a variety of training, education and experience contribute to individual development, and suitability for commissioning.

Career Progression

Army's career progression processes are extensive. Detailed direction exists on training, experience and performance requirements that must be met before an officer or soldier can be considered for promotion. Army recognises that individuals need to develop different professional knowledge and skills at different points in their career, and promotion courses are intended to satisfy this need. These courses are designed to develop the skills, knowledge and attitudes appropriate for the next rank, and generally include activities to impart knowledge, and apply that knowledge in practice. Promotion courses include formative and summative assessment in order to assure a minimum standard, but they are also valued for the inherent learning benefit that is derived from attendance and

¹⁹ While officers are encouraged to complete an undergraduate degree, a tertiary qualification is not a pre-requisite for commissioning.

participation. For this reason, selection to attend a promotion course is not always a competitive process (although this changes at higher rank levels).

There is much that other professions could learn from Army with regard to performance assessment and professional development in preparation for career progression.

Continuous Professional Development

In our civilian examples, CPD is about enhancing individual skill and proficiency, and being aware of changes in the profession - staying current with developments in the PBK. The intent is to enhance in individual's professionalism, not to enhance or assess their promotion prospects. There is also the requirement to ensure 'fitness to practice'; a check of professional currency as risk-management against mistakes or failure.

Army acknowledges the requirement for CPD with the **recognition** that courses provide individuals with initial competency, and that units develop proficiency through regular practice and experience.²⁰ The responsibility for developing and maintaining individual proficiency through CPD rests with units and individuals. The organisation does not currently issue formal guidelines or direction for CPD, and there are no published CPD standards.

So What - Developing Australian Army Professionalism

The current approach to developing officers and soldiers in the Australian Army is comprehensive and sound. It has consistently provided high quality individuals to serve the nation in a range of roles and operating environments. However, this approach may need to be refined in order to develop individuals capable of successfully performing in the future operating environment.²¹ If the Australian Army seeks to develop a heightened 'professional' approach, the comparison of development in other professions above suggests a number of opportunities for Army to enhance the development of its soldiers and officers, and therefore enhance capability.

²⁰ Commonwealth of Australia, *Land Warfare Procedure-General 7-0-1: The Conduct of Training*, (Puckapunyal: Australian Army 2015), Chapter 2.

²¹ For the ADF's analysis of the likely nature of the future operating environment, see Commonwealth of Australia, *Future Operating Environment 2035* (Canberra: VCDF Gp, 2016).

Education Standards

Army does not have a common educational or academic standard for admission to the profession in the same way that other professions do. Educational standards for *recruitment* exist, and provide a standard for commencing military training and education, but there is no specified educational standard required for the completion of that training and education and *admission* to the profession of arms.

A comparison of an officer candidate with a potential doctor identifies that both individuals are required to successfully complete a Year 12 education before starting their professional training and education process. This educational standard is considered to be **equivalent** to Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Level 2.²² In order to apply for provisional registration (to practice medicine as an intern), the potential doctor must successfully attain AQF Level 7 – Bachelor Degree. A similar level of education is not required for individuals to be commissioned. Many officers *do* attain AQF Level 7, either through completion of a Bachelor Degree at ADFA, or by completing a Bachelor Degree prior to being recruited, but this educational standard is not a requirement for receiving a commission and becoming a member of the profession.

Should attainment of a higher educational/academic standard be a requirement for service in the profession of arms? The descriptions of knowledge, skills and application provided by the AQF may help to answer this question. The following table describes the knowledge, skills and ability to apply those knowledge and skills at AQF 2 and AQF 7²³.

	AQF Level 2	AQF Level 7
Knowledge	Graduates at this level will have basic factual, technical and procedural knowledge of a defined area of work and learning	Graduates at this level will have broad and coherent theoretical and technical knowledge with depth in one or more disciplines or areas of practice
Skills	Graduates at this level will have basic cognitive, technical and communication skills to apply appropriate methods, tools, materials and readily available information	Graduates at this level will have well-developed cognitive, technical and communication skills to select and apply methods and technologies to:

²² A year 12 education is considered to be equivalent to Australian Qualifications Framework Level 2 or 3, although it is widely acknowledged that the determination of equivalency is problematic. "The vocational equivalent to year 12," *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth*, accessed 30 March 2017, https://www.isay.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/181510/Executive-summary.pdf

²³ "AQF Levels," Australian Qualifications Framework, accessed 30 March 2017, <http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf/in-detail/aqf-levels/>

	to: - undertake defined activities - provide solutions to a limited range of predictable problems	- analyse and evaluate information to complete a range of activities - analyse, generate and transmit solutions to unpredictable and sometimes complex problems - transmit knowledge, skills and ideas to others
Application	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy and limited judgement in structured and stable contexts and within narrow parameters	Graduates at this level will apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate autonomy, well-developed judgement and responsibility: - in contexts that require self-directed work and learning - within broad parameters to provide specialist advice and functions

The table illustrates that successfully completing the education required to progress from AQF 2 (entry standard) to AQF 7 (completion standard) develops individuals with significantly improved knowledge, skills and the ability to apply them. If this development step is considered valid and appropriate for other professions such as medicine or law, could it also be valid and appropriate for the profession of arms?

A related issue is the content and context of the additional education. Doctors or lawyers must attain AQF 7 with study *in their chosen profession*. An individual who attains a Bachelor Degree in Engineering cannot become a doctor, and an individual with a Bachelor Degree in History cannot become a lawyer. There is a direct correlation between the field of study and being admitted to the profession. We have already seen that many officers attain AQF 7, and will therefore have a corresponding level of intellectual skills and abilities. However their field of study is generally not war studies, defence studies, security studies or “the profession of arms”. Again, if other professions require individuals to have a detailed knowledge of that profession, could a similar requirement be appropriate for Army?

The discussion above is centered on officers, but a similar approach could be applied to soldiers. Is there merit in detailing a specific educational standard that soldiers should achieve by the end of their Initial Employment Training? Are the expectations of our soldiers, as described in current employment specifications, appropriate for the future operating environment?

CPD

The second key difference between the Australian Army and other professions is a detailed requirement for, and description of, CPD. While Army has a defined career progression training system, it does not have a continuous or collaborative CPD 'system' in the same way that some other professions do. The concept is not defined in doctrine or policy, and a detailed description of acceptable CPD activities and their value does not exist. While study of the profession of arms is encouraged, there is no stated requirement for CPD to be completed. Individual, persistent participation in CPD is not monitored, recorded or valued, and is not consistently used as a tool to manage individual careers. Instead, the focus is on developing professionals using career progression activities, usually residential promotion courses, with little guidance on the continuous individual learning that needs to occur between these residential courses.

Incorporating CPD in unit training programs can be challenging. It is not easy to balance the CPD needed to ensure individual development with the need to develop collective capability. Similarly, individual self-directed CPD is affected by time pressures and the need to maintain an effective work-life balance. Individual interest in CPD may also be limited by Army's focus on career progression activities. However, CPD has the potential to make a significant contribution to capability, particular given future trends of demographics and technological development in war.

CPD can generate and maintain individual knowledge and intellectual ability. It mitigates the risk that knowledge and skills will fade or become outdated during the significant time lapses between residential courses. CPD may reduce the risk that those individuals who have reached their ceiling rank, and therefore no longer have a need to attend residential courses, will suffer from knowledge fade, skill fade or motivational issues. It also provides regular opportunities for individuals to consider the profession and work towards the improvement of the profession.

There are pockets of Army that "do" CPD well, but this is more attributable to individual passion and motivation than it is to good management or a culture of CPD. Guidance and direction on CPD at the organizational level would ensure consistency in the content, format, quality and quantity of CPD. This focused guidance could ensure that the

knowledge required to effectively deliver Army capability is being developed and maintained across the trained force.

Professional Body of Knowledge

The final key difference is the professional body of knowledge (PBK) and its relative importance. Other professions require their members to have a detailed understanding of the PBK, and actively encourage them to critically review, update and add to it. It is an intellectual activity that is valued because it is critical to the ongoing development of the profession.

In contrast, Army's focus is on skills and practical application. A detailed understanding of the PBK is not required for most career progression courses and, anecdotally members of the profession don't refer to and use the PBK in their day-to-day roles. Many within the profession of arms operate within a small 'bubble' of their role-specific PBK, without being encouraged to examine it in width, depth and context.

Further, there are challenges for in Army is maintaining the PBK. As described in [The Ryan Review](#), Army is not currently delivering responsive, contemporary doctrine in a timely fashion, which has the effect of "reinforcing doctrine's lack of utility in the minds of users".²⁴ There are also concerns with accessibility, readability and the size of the doctrine library.²⁵

Rethinking the approach to Army's PBK has the potential to increase the professionalism of Army, with corresponding benefits to capability and performance. Regular and consistent effort should be placed into developing and maintaining a PBK that is coherent, detailed and current. The PBK should not be confined to doctrine publications. Lessons products, research papers, books, essays and journal articles can, and should, also be considered part of the PBK. Such a resource would be further validated by the expectation that members of the profession of arms acquire knowledge of the PBK, take action to maintain and extend that knowledge, and contribute to the further development of the PBK. It should be noted that such an approach is not just inwardly focussed; Army requires to continuous

²⁴ Ryan, M., *The Ryan Review: A Study of Army's Education, training and doctrine needs for the future* (Commonwealth of Australia, April 2016), 83.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 84.

develop its PBK in order to advance the relevance of land power as part of Australia's future military capability.

Conclusion

The way that professionals are developed varies across professions. Although three key types of professional development can be seen in most - initial qualification, career progression and continuous professional development - detailed implementation of these activities is different, as is the relative importance of each type. Opportunities exist for Army to adjust professional development processes with respect to educational standards, continuous professional development, and the professional body of knowledge. Taking advantage of these opportunities could increase the professionalism of Army's officers and soldiers and thereby enhance their ability to perform in the future operating environment.