

Policy P.2.2

Working Under Supervision or Direction

Purpose

In 2004 the Board defined the profession of medical laboratory science and stated:

“A medical laboratory scientist may practice independently and a medical laboratory technician may practice under the direction of a medical laboratory scientist or under the direction of another registered health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice, other than a medical laboratory technician.”

In the Board’s Code of Competencies and Standards for the Practice of Medical Laboratory Science (2006) standard 1.11 states:

“Where appropriate, both medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians are expected to take responsibility for supervision of unregistered trainees or other staff members required to work under supervision.”

This policy describes “direction” and “supervision” as it applies to the diagnostic medical laboratory environment.

Policy

With the exception of laboratory assistants, all diagnostic medical laboratory personnel performing phlebotomy or diagnostic testing in the health service categories (see Glossary) of medical laboratory science, must be registered or in training towards registration.

1. Working under Direction

- 1.1 A registered medical laboratory technician must always work under the direction of a medical laboratory scientist or under the direction of another registered health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice (such as a pathologist), but not another medical laboratory technician.
- 1.2 The exception to the above is that in Collection Services (Phlebotomy), direction may be provided through a supervising medical laboratory technician. However all medical laboratory technicians involved will be under the ultimate direction of a medical laboratory scientist or other registered health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice, but not another medical laboratory technician.
- 1.3 At all times a registered medical laboratory scientist or technician must practice within his/her area of competence.

- 1.4 Responsibilities given to a medical laboratory technician, and the level of direction provided by other registered staff, must take into account the skill and experience of the individual technician.

2. Working under Supervision

- 2.1 Medical laboratory scientist interns are required to work under supervision for a minimum of six months in an ISO 15189 accredited diagnostic medical laboratory before they may be issued with an annual practising certificate in the scope of practice of medical laboratory scientist.
- 2.2 Graduates of the Graduate Diploma of Science course of study are required to work under supervision for a minimum of six months in an ISO 15189 accredited diagnostic medical laboratory before they may be issued with an annual practising certificate in the scope of practice of medical laboratory scientist.
- 2.3 All medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians issued with an interim practising certificate will be required to work under supervision until they have been signed off by their supervisor as being competent to practice in their registered scope of practice.
- 2.4 A registered medical laboratory scientist or medical laboratory technician may be required to work under supervision through having a condition placed on his/her annual practising certificate.
- 2.5 A registered medical laboratory scientist or technician returning to the workforce and who has not held an annual practising certificate or practiced the profession of medical laboratory science within the last three years, will be required to work under supervision for a minimum of six months.
- 2.6 All persons working in a diagnostic medical laboratory prior to meeting the minimum registration requirement or relevant experience are regarded as being in training and must work under supervision.
- 2.7 The level of supervision provided will depend on the laboratory procedure being performed and the level of competence of the person being supervised. However provision must be made for reasonable access to the supervisor who must on site
- 2.8 Unregistered staff may be supervised by a registered medical laboratory technician with the appropriate skills and experience providing a medical laboratory scientist or other registered health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice (such as a pathologist) acting as a supervisor (but not another medical laboratory technician) is also on site and provides overall supervision.
- 2.9 Registered medical laboratory science practitioners can only provide supervision within their area of competence.
- 2.10 Supervision can only be provided by a registered practitioner who holds a current annual practising certificate, and never by a registered practitioner holding an interim practising certificate or an annual practising certificate that requires that practitioner to work under supervision.

Procedures

Practitioners registered with the Medical Laboratory Science Board may be required to work under supervision according to a number of circumstances including:

Interim Practising Certificate Holders

1. Medical laboratory scientist interns are required to work under supervision for at least 6 months before they may be issued with an annual practising certificate.
2. Overseas qualified applicants where the Board requires assurance a person is competent to receive an annual practising certificate.
3. Registered practitioners returning to the workforce where a person has not held an annual practising certificate or practiced the profession within the last 3 years.

Annual Practising Certificate Holders

1. Those who have a condition placed on their APC by the Board as an order that they practice under supervision for a specified time (e.g. after a review of competence or investigation of misconduct).

Unregistered Persons Training Towards Registration

1. Those persons working in the laboratory prior to meeting the minimum registration requirement or relevant experience are regarded as being in training and must work under supervision.
2. "Trainee" positions include:
 - 2.1 "Trainee medical laboratory technician", "Trainee phlebotomist", or "Trainee Donor Technician" - those in training for QMLT and QPT.
 - 2.2 "Trainee medical laboratory scientist" - those in the 4th year of the Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science degree programme (clinical placements) or those working in a diagnostic medical laboratory while studying towards a Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science degree.
 - 2.3 "Trainee scientist" - those entering the diagnostic medical laboratory with post-graduate science qualifications (e.g., Bachelor of Science (Honours), Master of Science, PhD) but with no diagnostic medical laboratory experience.

Unregistered Persons Not Training Towards Registration

1. Some diagnostic medical laboratory personnel may not be in a training programme towards registration as a MLT or MLS.
2. The Board uses the title "laboratory assistant" for this group.
3. A laboratory assistant is a person who performs pre-analytical work in the diagnostic medical laboratory (work that is not part of a sample analysis or

results interpretation). Staff employed in the pre-analytical areas are those handling and processing samples prior to analysis and those employed in the data processing areas of the laboratory.

4. Laboratory assistants as described above are not required to be registered in medical laboratory science.
5. Exceptions to this are laboratory personnel performing phlebotomy, blood donor, and post-mortem work, all of whom are required to be registered in medical laboratory science.
6. All staff involved in the analysis of samples in a diagnostic medical laboratory in the health service categories as listed in the Glossary must be registered or be in training towards registration with the New Zealand Medical Laboratory Science Board.
7. Should an unregistered person breach any of the standards set by the Board, the medical laboratory scientist or technician who has allowed the unregistered person to work unsafely will be deemed as being responsible for that breach.