
Consultation: Review of the Scope of Practice for Anaesthetic Technology Practitioners

This document sets out a number of proposed changes to the scope of practice for Anaesthetic Technicians. The proposals have been developed in collaboration with representatives of the Anaesthetic Technician profession in order to gauge their expert insights.

The principal purpose of the Council is to protect the health and safety of the public. The proposed changes to the scope of practice are supported by a new degree level qualification for registration and to ensure anaesthetic technology practice can respond to the changing healthcare environment. The review is part of the Council's regular programme of review to ensure the regulatory policies in place for Anaesthetic Technicians continue to be fit for purpose. This review of the scope of practice has been undertaken as a component of the Council's regulatory frameworks review programme.

The proposed scope of practice is designed to clearly articulate the work of the anaesthetic technician and to enable development and enhanced career growth for members of the profession. It should enable practitioners to work across various perioperative areas and their adjuncts if they choose to do so.

The Council looks forward to getting your thoughts and ideas. Please click on the link on page 13 to complete an online questionnaire.

Dr Susan Calvert
Chief Executive

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Scopes of Practice Review: An Overview

The Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand is appointed under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 to regulate the practice of Anaesthetic Technology practitioners. It is responsible for setting the scopes and standards of practice required of practitioners to protect the health and safety of the public of Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Council has a regular programme of review to ensure the regulatory policies in place for Anaesthetic Technicians continues to be fit for purpose. This review of the scope of practice has been undertaken as a component of the Council's regulatory frameworks review programme.

Within this document are a number of proposals that have been developed in order to effect changes in the scope of practice. The Council is proposing these changes to ensure that the scope remains contemporary and fit for purpose and to ensure that practitioners can work effectively in the modern health care environment.

Below we have listed some differences between the current and proposed scope of practice.

Current

- Title: Anaesthetic Technologist/Technician
- Focus is on anaesthesia and assistant to the anaesthetist
- Narrow focus and limited scope
- Difficult to work in what are currently "expanded practice" areas.

Proposed

- Title: "Perioperative Practitioner"
- Working Titles also include:
 - Anaesthetic Technician
 - Operating Department Practitioner
- Broader scope with a total perioperative focus
- Proposed scope allows ability to accommodate practice now and into the future.

Why reframe the definition of Anaesthetic Technology Practice?

The Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand's current gazetted definition of the practice of Anaesthetic Technology has served the profession and the public well. The proposal to reframe the scope is about ensuring the practice can respond to the changing health care environment. It is designed to enable flexibility for the workforce and should enable practitioners to work across various perioperative disciplines. The proposed changes:

- Align with how practice is framed in overseas countries with comparable health systems.
- Improves the ability to make comparative assessments of internationally qualified practitioners seeking registration which allows a more consistent approach in terms of experience and how that translates to practice.
- Reframes practice to ensure flexibility. Practitioners will be able to work in specialised practice areas without applying to the Council for further authorisation.

The proposals are as follows:

Proposal 1: Rename the scope of practice title to “Perioperative Practice”

Renaming the scope of practice title aligns with the ability for practitioners to practice across the perioperative space.

It aligns with the greater range of skills those in the workforce hold and the education they have received.

Proposal 2: Broaden the scope

Greater flexibility is crucial and will ensure the needs of the future workforce are addressed. Flexibility means practitioners are not restricted to work in one clinical area.

The Council recognises the importance of continuing to ensure its registration pathways are fit for purpose and enabling a responsive workforce.

Perioperative Practice – what does it mean?

The new scope recognises the need to provide for a changing and growing workforce. It allows greater flexibility for practitioners to work in specialised areas and to move, with appropriate education, into those practice areas, without the need for further Council accreditation. This reflects the changing nature of practice, and the needs of the workforce, while still ensuring all practitioners are competent and safe to practice.

Proposal 3: Perioperative Practitioner Definition and Qualifications

The introduction of the degree programme means the prescribed qualification for registration has changed. Practitioners who completed the diploma are still eligible for registration. The Council considers it may be appropriate to consider other registration pathways to reflect the changing practice environment.

Proposal 4: Supervision requirements

All newly registered practitioners must undergo a period of supervision. This supervision will ensure all new practitioners receive appropriate orientation and support when they transition from study to practice.

Proposal 1: Rename the scope of practice title to Perioperative Practice

From: Anaesthetic Technology to Perioperative Practice

Anaesthetic Technicians play a crucial role in patient care and a review of the scope of practice is important to ensure the health and safety of the public is maintained. Practitioners currently work under the title of 'Anaesthetic Technician', and this title is appropriate. However, the title may be somewhat restrictive given the changing practice of the workforce. While the title has met its intended purpose, the Council is proposing a new title to reflect a more agile and broad scope of practice.

The proposed title "Perioperative Practice and Perioperative Practitioner" reflects the range of work undertaken by Anaesthetic Technicians and reflects the need of practitioners to have flexibility in how they work.

The Council considers the change also reflects the change in the prescribed qualification from a diploma to a degree. Graduates from the Bachelor of Health Science (Perioperative Practice) degree will cover wider areas of practice, including PACU, and circulating roles, PICC insertion, as well as anaesthesia and patient care.

Since 2012, Anaesthetic Technicians have been registered with the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand. In that time, the scope has broadened, and it is appropriate to review the current scope to ensure the definition and title are still fit for purpose. Practitioners who hold an appropriate qualification may continue to practice within the parameters of their current scope of practice. In time, and with appropriate education, they should be able to practice in the total perioperative environment.

Proposal 2: A broader scope

Key features of the Perioperative Practitioner scope

Anaesthetic Technicians have typically worked within anaesthesia. However, a change in the title reflects the need for the future scope to have a focus on perioperative care, rather than a narrower anaesthesia focus.

Perioperative Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualification pathways have changed. The diploma has been replaced by a degree programme. The degree programme may mean graduates will gain education and training in areas previously considered to be expanded practice. The qualifications pathways to registration have therefore been reformatted to show different pathways for internationally qualified practitioners.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Must ensure they practice safely and effectively within their area(s) of competence and do not practise in areas where they are not proficient to do so. <p>At the point of initial registration, it is proposed that they are required to complete a minimum period of supervised practise to facilitate their orientation and smooth transition as regulated health professionals</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive workplace titles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Perioperative Practitioner – Perioperative Practitioner – anaesthetics – Anaesthetic Technician – Operating Department Practitioner
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anaesthetic Technicians already registered with the Council will continue to work in the same professional manner and will not become obsolete. The scope review is aimed at broadening opportunities for all practitioners.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expanded Practice will become obsolete. However, all practitioners may, with appropriate education, insert PICC lines and work in theatre in scrub, circulating and traditional anaesthetic technician roles as well as pre-operative care and PACU.

Why is the Council Proposing a Change?

Within its responsibilities under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, the Council is legislatively obliged to set the scopes and standards of practice for the Anaesthetic Technology profession. As Anaesthetic Technology is practised in an ever-changing health environment impacted by continuous medical and technological advancements, it is important the Council regularly reviews the regulatory frameworks it has in place to ensure they will continue to be fit for purpose in supporting the Council’s primary function, which is to protect the health and safety of the public of Aotearoa New Zealand.

From Anaesthetic Technician to Perioperative Practitioner	Preliminary feedback from the profession indicates the scope of practice will be aided by considering a broader and more flexible scope. Practitioners should have the ability, with appropriate education, to work in all areas of perioperative practice. The Council aims to remove some complexity, and cost, in terms of the need to apply to practise in “expanded practice”.
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	<p>Instead, employers/hospitals will have the ability to provide appropriate, Council approved, education programmes that will allow practitioners greater ability to work across different practice areas.</p>
<p>Broader Scope of practice</p>	<p>A broad and flexible scope is essential. The Council must ensure the scope is fit for purpose and capable of responding to the changing health care environment. Enabling more flexibility in practice and allowing practitioners greater ability to move within their area of skill and competence will enable a more responsive workforce.</p>
<p>New qualification pathways</p>	<p>Enabling more flexibility to work in other practice areas would require practitioners to demonstrate they are competent to practise in that new area. The qualification pathways will be updated to reflect the change to a perioperative degree, while ensuring those with the diploma are still eligible for registration for the short term. Newly registered practitioners will undergo a period of supervision and will help ensure all practitioners have the necessary foundation to practise safely.</p>

Proposal 3: Perioperative Practitioner – Scope Definition and Qualification Pathways

Proposed Changes to the Qualification Pathways for Anaesthetic Technicians

The qualification pathways available to practitioners seeking registration as a “Perioperative Practitioner” will be clarified to recognise the change from the diploma to the degree programme. The new pathways will, however, ensure holders of the diploma continue to be eligible for registration, provided they have sat and passed the NZATS practical examination. This registration pathway will conclude in early 2024.

The Council is also seeking feedback on including an alternative pathway that provides a pathway for those people who may hold a sufficiently relevant degree to undergo an online perioperative practice examination as a pathway to registration. In the proposed scenario, a practitioner with an undergraduate degree in a relevant anaesthesia, perioperative related field, could be granted registration, provided they also pass the online examination. These practitioners would also be subject to reasonable supervision to ensure they were fit for practice. This pathway may help to address the current workforce issues.

The revised qualification statements will be reformatted to more clearly show the different pathways for Aotearoa | New Zealand graduates and internationally qualified practitioners.

Revised Scope Definition in Detail

Perioperative Practice

Practitioners should be able to practice across the perioperative environment. Accordingly, the Council proposes practitioners may, with appropriate education if required, practice across areas previously known as “expanded practice”.

Practitioners working in perioperative care and anaesthetic technology may, following appropriate education, insert PICC lines and work in theatre in scrub, circulating and traditional anaesthetic technician roles, as well as pre-operative care and PACU.

PACU	Post Anaesthetic Care Unit
PICC	Peripherally Inserted Central Catheters
Scrub Assistant	Provide surgeon or proceduralist with skilled support to facilitate safe and effective patient care. The scrub assistant selects and handles instruments and surgical devices used in surgeries.
Circulating Role	Circulating Practitioner/s

Perioperative Practitioner – Revised Definition

In Aotearoa | New Zealand, Perioperative Practice is the provision of perioperative technical management and patient care and safe perioperative and anaesthetic services in New Zealand accredited health facilities. Perioperative Practitioners work with other health practitioners including anaesthetists, nurses, and surgeons and are a crucial part of the medical team responsible for providing a high standard of care at all stages of surgery.

Perioperative Practitioners work within both the public and private health sectors in Aotearoa | New Zealand. In a small number of circumstances, practitioners may work in the health sector but outside of direct care of people. For example, in management, regulation, quality, safety or education.

Activities included in this definition, include but are not limited to:

- Perioperative care in the disciplines of anaesthesia, pre- and post-anaesthesia care, surgical scrub and circulating roles
- Advanced patient monitoring
- Collection of samples for diagnostic investigation
- Contributing personnel to emergency response teams
- Pre- and post-operative related research and development
- Anaesthetic related research and development
- Applied science and perioperative practice education
- Applied science and anaesthetic technology education and
- Management and leadership.

Practitioners have a responsibility to ensure they only practice in those areas in which they have demonstrated competency

The profession of Perioperative Practice contains one scope of practice of Perioperative Practitioner. Practitioners may practice under a number of *workplace titles* including *but not limited to*: Perioperative Practitioner, Perioperative Practitioner – Anaesthetics, Anaesthetic Technician, Operating Department Practitioner. The scope of practice of Perioperative Practitioner is inclusive of these workplace titles.

Proposed Scope of practice: Perioperative Practitioner

Perioperative Practitioners (“Practitioners”) collaborate closely with clinicians in providing patient care, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of treatment and therapy. They do this through the provision of perioperative technical management and patient care that supports the provision of quality surgical care and safe anaesthetic services in New Zealand accredited health facilities. They are skilled in perioperative care in the disciplines of surgical support, anaesthesia, pre- and post-anaesthesia and in the use and maintenance of sophisticated anaesthetic equipment. Practitioners establish quality assurance programmes to monitor and ensure patient care is a fundamental skill and ensure they engage in lifelong learning.

Practitioners may use their educational preparation and clinical expertise to practise within their area of competency, as well as to manage, teach, evaluate, and research anaesthetic and perioperative practice. Practitioners will ensure they develop their practice through continuing education, experience, and ongoing competence development.

Practitioners with a qualification specialising in Perioperative Practice typically practise in anaesthetics and perioperative care. However, their breadth and depth of education may allow them to practise across the perioperative environment. Perioperative Practitioners may, with appropriate education and demonstrated competence, insert PICC lines, work in theatre in scrub, circulating and traditional anaesthetic technician roles as well as pre-operative care and PACU. Practitioners may practise in these roles but must complete appropriate education.

Practitioners must ensure they practise safely and effectively within their area(s) of competence and do not practise in areas in which they are not proficient. Practitioners must exercise professional judgement by undertaking any necessary training and/or gaining experience before moving into a new practice area.

Note:

At the point of their *initial registration* Practitioners will normally be required to complete a minimum period of three (3) months of supervised practice. The period of supervised practice may be longer than three (3) months and will be determined in accordance with the Council’s registration policies. Supervision is a formal process of professional support and teaching to enable the practitioner to build on their knowledge, skills, and professional attributes within the Aotearoa New Zealand medical environment.

Prescribed Qualifications for Perioperative Practitioners

For the purpose of registration, a practitioner must hold one of the following:

New Zealand Graduates

- a. A L7 bachelor's degree in Perioperative Practice issued by a New Zealand university accredited by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand; or
- b. A L7 graduate diploma in anaesthetic technology issued by a New Zealand university accredited by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand; or
- c. A tertiary qualification in anaesthetic technology from a New Zealand university combined with relevant and specialised anaesthetic technology experience and successful completion of an anaesthetic technician examination, all of which are accredited and/or approved by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand; or
- d. A course of training and/or examinations combined with relevant and specialised anaesthetic technology experience that, in the opinion of the Medical Sciences Council, is substantially equivalent to the course of the New Zealand prescribed qualification; or
- e. New Zealand registered nurses who have at least three years' post-nursing-qualification experience specialised in perioperative practice or anaesthetic technology in a New Zealand health facility, and may be required to pass an examination set by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand; or
- f. A New Zealand degree or higher in a relevant human health science linked to perioperative practice, or anaesthesia and approved by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand; **and**
 - A pass in an examination for perioperative practitioners set by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand.

Internationally Qualified Practitioners

- a. Certification in perioperative practice/anaesthetic technology by an authority outside New Zealand, combined with relevant and specialised perioperative experience and/or the successful completion of an anaesthetic/perioperative examination, all of which are approved and/or accredited by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand and that, in the opinion of the Council, is sufficient for registration as a perioperative practitioner; or
- b. A graduate perioperative practice/anaesthetic technology/operating department practitioner qualification assessed by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand as substantially equivalent to the prescribed New Zealand qualification; or
- c. A bachelor's or postgraduate degree in a relevant anaesthesia discipline linked to perioperative practice, and approved by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand combined with appropriate clinical experience; **and**
 - A pass in an examination for perioperative practitioners set by the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand.

Proposal 4 All new practitioners will be required to complete a period of supervision

Currently, graduates (of the prescribed qualification) are not required to undergo supervision. It is proposed that all newly registered practitioners (which includes those registered from overseas) will complete a period of supervision. This will require the practitioner to be supervised by another appropriately qualified and registered health practitioner who holds a current practising certificate and has appropriate expertise and knowledge in perioperative practice. This will provide assurance that practitioners new to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand will be given appropriate support and guidance to ensure they are able to practice safely.

From a regulatory perspective, supervision is an important element in protecting the health and safety of the public. As registered health practitioners under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003, Anaesthetic Technicians (or “Perioperative Practitioners”) have responsibilities, like any other registered health practitioner, to ensure they are safe to practise. This requirement is consistent with requirements to practice safely and competently. The new scope definition will allow practitioners to work across a broader range of practice areas. Supervision also ensures practitioners begin their practice with a robust foundation that will provide them with the confidence and skill necessary to work in this manner.

Decisions around which areas a practitioner may work in, provided they receive appropriate education, is ultimately an employment matter once a practitioner is deemed competent. The reframed scope definition articulates all practitioners must ensure they practise within their area(s) of competence, skill and training, and do not practise in areas where they are not proficient to do so. The Council considers the supervision requirement will ensure newly registered practitioners gain the necessary familiarity with practice as a Perioperative Practitioner.

Your feedback is important

Online Questionnaire

1. We ask that you provide your feedback through an online questionnaire which you can access through the [Medical Sciences Council website](#).
2. Please complete the questionnaire by no later than 4.30pm Thursday, 14 September 2023.
3. The Council aims to make a final decision and publish this and the outcome of this consultation by the end of 2023.

Questions for Practitioners to Consider

The Council has four specific proposals:

- **Proposal 1:** The Council proposes to change the title of Anaesthetic Technician to Perioperative Practitioner. Do you agree or disagree with this proposal? If you disagree, do you have a suggestion for what the title could be?
- **Proposal 2:** The Council proposes to broaden the scope of practice to enable practitioners to work in all areas in the perioperative environment and adjuncts including emergency department and interventional radiology. Do you agree with this proposal?
- **Proposal 3:** The Council is proposing to include a registration pathway for applicants who do not hold the prescribed qualification, but instead hold a relevant qualification in anaesthesia or perioperative practice (pathway f on page 11). Do you agree with this proposal? If not, why not?
- **Proposal 4:** The Council is proposing to require that all newly registered practitioners undergo a period of supervision. Do you agree? If not, why not?