

Notice of Scopes of Practice and Prescribed Qualifications for the Practice of Medical Laboratory Science

The Medical Sciences Council (“Council”) hereby gives notice that the following notice replaces the previous notice, published in the New Zealand Gazette, issued by the Medical Sciences Council.

This notice sets out the scopes of practice and qualifications for the practice of medical laboratory science in Aotearoa New Zealand as required by sections 11 and 12 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“Act”).

This notice takes effect from XXXXX.

The Practice of medical laboratory science

Medical laboratory science is the collection, receipt, preparation, investigation, laboratory analysis and interpretation of samples of human biological material for the purpose of supporting patient diagnosis, management and treatment, and for the maintenance of health and wellbeing.

The practice of medical laboratory science includes but is not limited to:

- Medical laboratory management
- Medical laboratory science research and development
- Medical laboratory science teaching
- Medical laboratory quality and compliance management.

Medical laboratory science is practised predominantly in accredited medical laboratories within both the public and private health sectors, and blood donor facilities. Medical laboratory science practitioners may work in the health sector outside the laboratory setting and will require mechanisms to be in place to support their practice and competence.

Medical laboratory science encompasses a number of disciplines, a list of which the Council maintains.

Scopes of practice

Medical Laboratory Scientist

Medical Laboratory Scientists (“scientists”) collaborate closely with health practitioners in diagnosing and monitoring disease processes, as well as monitoring the effectiveness of treatment and therapy. They do this through collecting, processing, testing and analysing human biological material including blood, body fluids, tissues, and cells. They are skilled in the selection of appropriate samples and preparation for testing and analysis, and in the use of sophisticated analytical equipment. Scientists analyse and interpret laboratory results and report their findings to referring clinicians. They may also advise of the need for further relevant testing and/or provide advice about interpretation of tests.

Scientists may use their educational preparation and laboratory expertise to practise within a specialist area of laboratory practice, as well as to manage, teach, evaluate, and research medical laboratory science practice.

While scientists typically practise in one or two of the disciplines within the medical laboratory science profession, the breadth and depth of their education may allow them to practise across all disciplines. Scientists must ensure they practise safely and effectively within their area(s) of competence and do not practise in areas where they are not proficient to do so. They need to exercise professional judgement by undertaking any necessary education and demonstrating competence before moving into a new area of practice.

Embryology

Due to the specialised nature of embryology-related qualifications, scientists practising in this discipline will typically have their practice limited to embryology.

Medical Laboratory Technician

Medical Laboratory Technicians may work in a wide variety of areas and follow guidelines and protocols to collect, receive, prepare, process, test and analyse human biological material to support patient diagnosis, management and treatment.

Medical laboratory technicians may work in one or more of the following areas:

- Technicians practising in **specimen collection** have direct contact with patients and must have a good foundational knowledge of human anatomy and pathology. They may work both within and outside of the laboratory environment. Specimen collection includes collection of blood and non-blood specimens. It may also involve some specialised tests and procedures that are performed at the point of contact with patients.
- Technicians practising in **specimen preparation** are responsible for the receipt and registration of samples prior to laboratory testing. They may perform a limited range of pre-analytical preparation of samples within the parameters of approved guidelines and protocols.
- Technicians perform examinations and analysis of human biological samples including blood, body fluids, tissues, and cells. Technicians select appropriate samples and prepare those for analysis using the appropriate laboratory equipment and testing protocols. While technicians may analyse and interpret laboratory results, they work within approved guidelines and protocols. Technicians refer departures from protocol to other registered health practitioners in accordance with local workplace policies and protocols prior to their release to the referring practitioner.
- The practice of **donor technology** involves the collection of blood and blood component donation from blood donors within the New Zealand Blood Service.

Technicians may practise under different workplace titles including but not limited to *medical laboratory technician*, *phlebotomist*, *donor technician*, and *pre-analytical technician*. The scope of practice of the medical laboratory technician is inclusive of these workplace titles.

Medical laboratory technicians must ensure they practise safely and effectively within their area(s) of competence and do not practise in medical laboratory science domains/disciplines where they are not competent to do so. They may move to practising in another domain and/or discipline of medical laboratory science while remaining within the technician scope of practice, providing they have undertaken any necessary education and/or competence requirements.

Mortuary technician

Due to the specialised nature of mortuary practice related qualifications, technicians practising in this discipline will typically have their practice limited to mortuary.

Prescribed qualifications

Medical Laboratory Scientist

The medical laboratory scientist must satisfy one of the following:

1	Hold an undergraduate bachelor level qualification in medical laboratory science issued by an education provider accredited and monitored by the Council.
2	Hold a graduate medical laboratory science qualification issued by an education provider accredited and monitored by the Council.
3	Hold a biological science undergraduate or post-graduate degree that has been assessed by the Council as being <i>substantially equivalent</i> to the accredited qualification, and meet the Council's competence requirements.
4	Hold an undergraduate or post-graduate science degree that has been assessed as <i>relevant</i> to the accredited qualification, pass a Council examination, and meet the Council's competence requirements.

Medical Laboratory Technician

The medical laboratory technician must satisfy one of the following:

1	Hold a medical laboratory technician qualification from an education provider accredited and monitored by the Council.
2	Hold a qualification with a major in a relevant biological science assessed by the Council as being <i>substantially equivalent</i> to the accredited New Zealand qualification and meet the Council's competence requirements.