



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL  
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUORA O AOTEAROA

In September 2015 the Medical Sciences Council published a communique seeking feedback on the proposed qualifications for the revised scopes of practice for the profession of medical laboratory science. This report summarises the feedback received by the Council and their subsequent decisions as to the qualifications required for New Zealand registration in the scopes of practice for medical laboratory science practitioners

## Outcomes of Consultation on Qualifications for Registration in the Scopes of Practice Defined for the Profession of Medical Laboratory Science

Medical Sciences Council of  
New Zealand

December 2015

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# Scopes of Practice Review: A Progress Overview



The Medical Sciences Council extends its appreciation to all those individuals and groups who responded to its September 2015 communique on the proposed qualifications for the revised scopes of practice for the medical laboratory science profession. This communique was one of a series of communications from the Council in respect of its review of the scopes of practice for medical laboratory science practitioners. The review was undertaken in accordance with the Council's responsibilities in regulating the profession of medical laboratory science under the Health Practitioners Competence Act 2003:

Date	Milestone	Highlights
2013	Initial consultation document <i>Scopes of Practice Review (medical laboratory science)</i> published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 561 responses</li> <li>• Strong support for inclusion of specimen services</li> <li>• Number of issues highlighted including a lack of clarity in respect of proposed registration pathways and practicalities for implementation</li> </ul>
2014: May	Industry discussion forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A one-day forum with representatives from the industry including the professional body, employers from public/private sector and large/small laboratories etc. to discuss issues identified through the 2013 consultation</li> </ul>
2014: December	Second consultation document <i>Medical Laboratory Science Scopes of Practice Review</i> published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This subsequent consultation document was revised to take into account the feedback from the 2013 version as well as the 2014 industry discussion forum</li> </ul>
2015: April	Meeting with industry representatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussions held with representatives of the professional body and embryologists as to the proposed scopes of practice and implications for practical application</li> </ul>
2015: May	Outcomes of 2014 consultation published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 447 responses</li> <li>• Proposed definition of the medical laboratory science adopted</li> <li>• Introduction of a new scope titled <i>Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician</i></li> <li>• A total of six scopes of practice:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Scientist (provisional registration)</li> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Scientist (full registration)</li> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Technician (provisional registration)</li> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Technician (full registration)</li> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician (provisional registration)</li> <li>○ Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician (full registration)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
2015: September	Communique <i>Scopes of Practice Review</i> published	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This communique summarised the progress to date in the Council's review of the scopes of practice for medical laboratory science and set out the proposed qualifications for registration in the revised scopes of practice</li> </ul>

## Response Rate (Qualifications for Registration)



<b>28</b>	<b>Individuals</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Groups</b>
<b>30</b>	<b>Total Responses</b>

While the total number of responses received was relatively small, the Council acknowledges that one of the group responses was from a key union organisation that represents the interests of a significant number of the medical laboratory science workforce.

## Response Themes



Recipients of the September 2015 communique were asked to provide the Council with feedback as to the following question:

*Are the qualifications for each scope of practice understandable and appropriate?*

### All Scopes of Practice

- The terminology “..... substantially equivalent to the New Zealand standard ....” Is not clear enough.
- A three-month timeframe is not sufficient for new registrants to demonstrate competency.

### Council Response

- Terminology has been amended to state “equivalency” in terms of a specific New Zealand qualification (rather than “equivalency to the New Zealand standards”). For example for the Medical Laboratory Scientist scope of practice this qualification pathway is now stated as “Hold a relevant overseas biological science undergraduate degree that has been assessed by the Council as being substantially equivalent to the New Zealand Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science”.
- No change has been made to the minimum period for provisional registration, that is, three-months for any of the scopes of Medical Laboratory Scientist, Medical Laboratory Technician, and Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician. This is in recognition of some applicants who may have extensive practical laboratory experience (in addition to their academic qualification) from a country with a comparable medical diagnostic laboratory system. Anybody new to the profession will be granted provisional registration for at least six months
- The Council has prepared a *Registration Guide: Medical Laboratory Science Scopes of Practice*. Those guidelines provide full descriptions of each of the scopes of the practice and the associated qualifications required for registration. They also include Questions and Answers sections to reflect many of the queries raised during the Council’s consultation phases.

## Medical Laboratory Scientist (Provisional and Full Registration)



- Overall respondents agreed that the qualifications for registration as a Medical Laboratory Scientist (provisional registration and full registration) are appropriate.
- The qualifications as proposed do not allow for those applicants who may have qualified prior to the introduction of relevant bachelor degree programmes.

### Council Response

- Qualifications for the Medical Laboratory Scientist scope of practice now include provision for completion of an examination/training that together with clinical experience is assessed as equivalent to the Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science.

## Medical Laboratory Technician (Provisional and Full Registration)



- While respondents were generally of the view that the qualifications for registration as a Medical Laboratory Technician are appropriate, a number of questions were raised as to the practical application.

## Council Response

- Please refer to the Medical Sciences Council’s publication *Registration Guide: Medical Laboratory Science Scopes of Practice (December 2015)* which can be downloaded from the website [www.msCouncil.org.nz](http://www.msCouncil.org.nz)

## Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician



- A Level 6 New Zealand Certificate in Science was suggested as also being an appropriate pathway for registration as a Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician.
- There was some query as to the appropriateness of nursing qualifications as a pathway for registration in the Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician scope of practice.
- Some concerns were raised as to the “fairness” of allowing some specimen services staff with no formal qualifications to apply for registration as a component of a transition phase.

## Council Response

- Qualification pathways for the Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician scope of practice includes a Level 6 New Zealand Certificate in Science in a relevant biological science.
- In the past a number of applicants with a nursing qualification have applied for registration as a Medical laboratory Technician and when registration was approved it was typically done so with a condition that the registrant practised in phlebotomy only. This qualification pathway has been amended to include that, in addition to registration as either a New Zealand or overseas registered nurse, the applicant must also have post-qualification medical laboratory experience in either phlebotomy or donor technology that in the opinion of the Council is sufficient for provisional registration.
- The Council acknowledges that many staff working in the area of specimen services have opted to study for the Qualified Medical Laboratory Technician Certificate in Specimen Services and commends those individuals who have taken this initiative. However staff working in specimen services have not, until now, been required to be registered and therefore there has never been

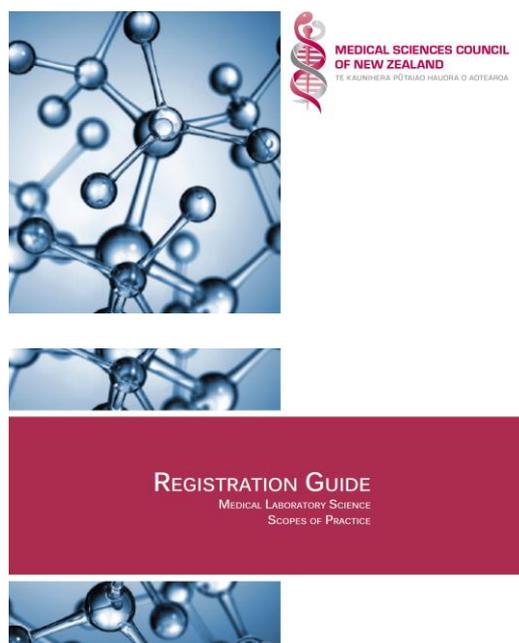
a requirement from a regulatory perspective that these individuals needed to hold a formal qualification. The Council's decision to allow for a transitional pathway to registration for specimen services who have not gained a formal qualification but are able to demonstrate competence gained through many years of recent on-the-job experience is in keeping with similar historical opportunities offered to other previously unregistered groups of practitioners within the medical laboratory profession (that is, medical laboratory technicians, "phlebotomists" and "donor technicians"). Applications through this pathway must be supported by documented certification of the individual practitioner's competence by a registered medical laboratory science practitioner. Registration through this pathway will only be available within a finite period after which time applicants will need to demonstrate that they hold a relevant formal qualification.

## A Series of "Roadshow" Meetings



- Earlier this month two Council representatives undertook an intensive three-day tour of five of the main centres – Auckland, Hamilton, Wellington, Dunedin, and Christchurch – to touch base with medical laboratory science practitioners and employers to present the core outcomes of the Council's scopes of practice review.
- The Council would like to take this opportunity to thank all of those individuals who took the time out of their busy schedules to come along and hear first-hand of the pending changes to the scopes of practice for the medical laboratory science profession.
- Also a big thank-you to those individuals at each of the centres who worked with Council staff to arrange the meeting venues. Your assistance was invaluable and most appreciated.
- A total of 280 people attended the presentations at the various venues and the Council would like to make a special mention of the attendance at Southern Community Laboratories in Dunedin where 91 people took the opportunity to listen to the presentation and ask questions.

# Keynote Document: Registration Guide



- The Council has now released its publication *Registration Guide Medical Laboratory Science Scopes of Practice* which can be downloaded from the website [www.msccouncil.org.nz](http://www.msccouncil.org.nz)
- This document provides important information on the pending changes for the scopes of practice the Council has defined for registration in the medical laboratory science profession.
- Those changes come into effect from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2016.