



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUORA O AOTEAROA

POLICY AND GUIDELINES : RETURN TO PRACTICE

APRIL 2021

Policy Title		Return to Practice	
Reference Number		2021-Apr-V3-MSC Return to Practice	
Scope		This policy document applies to all registered medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technology practitioners looking to return to practice in New Zealand.	

Associated Policy Documents	
Competence Standards for Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand	
Competence Standards for Anaesthetic Technicians in Aotearoa New Zealand	

Revision Schedule			
Version Number	Version Date	Approved By	Next Review
One	2014	Medical Sciences Council	
Two	June 2019	Medical Sciences Council	2021
Three	April 2021	Medical Sciences Council	2023

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Policy Overview

The issue of an annual practising certificate (APC) is conditional on the Medical Sciences Council (the Council) being satisfied the practitioner is fit and competent to practise. This policy sets out the Council's requirements for the issue of an APC to practitioners:

- have not practised in New Zealand for more than 3-years immediately preceding the date of their application,
- have practised outside New Zealand since they last held an APC, or
- have not held a practising certificate since they graduated or were first registered in New Zealand.

Legal Context

Under section 27(d) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) the Council may decline to issue an APC when the practitioner has not held an annual practising certificate of a kind sought by the application within the 3-years immediately preceding the date of the application.

Section 29 of the Act enables the Council to consider what conditions it may impose or vary before it issues an APC.

Competence to Practise

To be issued with an APC, registered practitioners must provide evidence that they are practising within their registered scope of practice and are maintaining their competence to practise.

The scopes of practice (as articulated in the current and respective Gazette notices) provide the broad parameters of medical laboratory science practice, and anaesthetic technology practice. The Council's *Competence Standards for Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand* and *Competence Standards for Anaesthetic Technicians in Aotearoa New Zealand* provide the detail of how registered practitioners are expected to practise and what they must be capable of doing. The competence standards set the minimum threshold required of entry-level practitioners for the purpose of registration in the relevant profession.

To ensure public safety, as a minimum, practitioners applying for an APC must be able to work at the level expected of an entry-level practitioner and be able to demonstrate they meet all the competence standards for their registered scope of practice.

Return to Practice

Practitioners who fall into one of the listed below categories must meet return-to-practice requirements to assure the Council of their competence to safely practise in New Zealand. Those requirements may be different according to the length of time elapsed since the practitioner was first registered or ceased practising in New Zealand. Practitioners covered by this policy are:

- practitioners have not practised for more than 3-years immediately preceding the date of their application,
- practitioners have practised outside New Zealand since they were registered or last held a practising certificate (whichever is most recent) or
- practitioners have not held a practising certificate since they were first graduated or were first registered in New Zealand.

Standard Information Requirements

Irrespective of the return-to-practice category, each practitioner seeking to return to practice must provide the following documents at the time they apply for an APC:

- A criminal conviction history/police report from any country where the practitioner has lived for 12-months or more (including New Zealand). The report must be no more than 6months old.
- Curriculum vitae (CV) including a record of CPD activities for the 3-years immediately prior to the last date of practice in any country.
- Two written professional references.

In addition, practitioners who have practised overseas since they were first registered or ceased to practise in New Zealand (whichever is most recent) must provide the following:

- Certificates of professional status/letter of good standing (or equivalent) from relevant regulatory agencies in each of the countries they have been practising in since they were first registered or ceased practice, whichever is most recent, in New Zealand.
- A verifiable work history for the full period of their overseas practice.

Return to Practice Process

The following sets out the process for all practitioners applying to return to practice:

- Identify the appropriate return-to-practice category.
- Provide the standard information requirements along with any additional information as described in the appropriate return-to-practice category.
- Upon Council agreement the practitioner is fit to practise, an interim practising certificate (IPC) will be issued for those return to practice categories where a period of supervised practice has been specified.
- Upon evidence the practitioner has met all requirements for the period of supervised practice and including certification of practice competence, the IPC will be cancelled and replaced with an APC. Issue of the latter will be at no additional cost providing it is in the current APC year.

Return to Practice Categories

The time periods and return to practice requirements described in each category are indicative of the Council's expectations for practitioners in those circumstances. Each practitioner seeking a practising certificate after an absence from practice exceeding 3-years will be considered on a caseby-case basis.

The Council will consider all relevant information pertaining to a practitioner's return to practice including their qualification, clinical practice experience, and any relevant experience since ceasing practice.

Return to Practice Categories and Requirements

Practitioners who are on the Medical Sciences Council register and are returning to practise fall into one of eight categories:

Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners or Anaesthetic Technicians Who Have:	Return to Practice Requirements
Not practised in New Zealand or overseas following graduation or registration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practitioners in this category will be required to meet return to practice requirements depending on the length of time since they graduated or were first registered in New Zealand (whichever is the most recent). -
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practised in New Zealand following graduation and taken a break from practice for less than 3-years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practitioners in this category do not fall within the definition of formal return-to-practice requirements under the criteria of the Act. - Must complete the routine recertification requirements required of all practitioners seeking issue of an APC.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practised in New Zealand and taken a break from practice for between 3 to 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete a period of supervised practice for a minimum of 3-FTE months (480 hours).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Been out of clinical practice for more than 5 but less than 10-full years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Complete a period of supervised practice for a minimum of 6-FTE months (960 hours) which may be reduced upon application to the Council with certification of competence.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Remained in a relevant clinical health care role but out of direct medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology practice for 10 years or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May be required to pass an examination as set by the Council. - Complete a period of supervised practice for between 6-FTE months and 12-FTE months which may be reduced upon application to the Council with certification of competence.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not remained in a relevant clinical health care role and out of medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology practice for 10 years or more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must successfully pass an examination as set by the Council OR may be required to undertake further tertiary study - Subsequent to the passing of an examination, the practitioner would normally complete a period of supervised practice for a period of 12-months which may be reduced upon application to the Council with certification of competence
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Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners or Anaesthetic Technicians Who Have:	Return to Practice Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Held an APC in New Zealand within the past three years and have practised medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology overseas and wish to return to practise in New Zealand. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide standard return to practice documentation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Registered practitioner who has not previously held a New Zealand APC and wishes to practice in New Zealand after practising in medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology overseas. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provide standard return to practice documentation. - Complete a period of supervised practice ranging from 1 month to 12 months.

Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners or Anaesthetic Technicians who have practised overseas since they were first registered or last held an APC in New Zealand	Return to Practice Requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practised medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology overseas for between 3 to 5-full years immediately preceding the date of application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The practitioner must complete a period of supervised practice for a minimum of 3-FTE months (480 hours) - Provide a verifiable work history for the full period of their overseas practice - Provide a record of CPD activities for the 3-years immediately prior to the last date of practice in any country
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Practised medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology overseas for less than 3-full years immediately preceding the date of application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The practitioner must complete a period of supervised practice for a minimum of 4-FTE months (640 hours) - Provide a verifiable work history for the full period of their overseas practice - Provide a record of CPD activities for the 3-years immediately prior to the last date of practice in any country

All practitioners who are required to complete a period of supervised practice

- The supervisor must be a registered health practitioner (under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003) and hold a current practising certificate
- Medical laboratory science supervisors must hold full registration.
- Practitioner will be required to complete between 4 FTE weeks to 12 months FTE supervised practice.
- Supervision will initially be within Level 1 for a minimum of 4-FTE weeks (160 hours).
- Level 1 supervision requires the supervisor to be in the same room as the practitioner being supervised, at all times.
- Medical laboratory science practitioners working in the practice of phlebotomy must be signed off as meeting minimum clinical competencies before working off-site (from the laboratory).
- The level of supervision can be incrementally reduced after the initial minimum period of Level 1 supervision as mutually agreed by the nominated supervisor and the return-to-practice practitioner.
- At the conclusion of the period of supervised practice the practitioner must be certified by the Council-approved supervisor as meeting the competence standards for their scope of practice.
- The practitioner and nominated supervisor must meet all reporting requirements as specified by the Council.