

Policy

Medical Laboratory Science Qualification Assessment

Effective 08 April 2025

Policy Title	MLS Qualification Assessments Policy
Reference Number	20250408 MLS Qualification Assessments Policy
Scope	This policy applies to practitioners applying for registration with the Medical Sciences Council in the medical laboratory scopes of practice

Associated Policy Documents	
Medical Laboratory Science Scope of Practice	Scope of Practice and Prescribed Qualifications for the Practice of Medical Laboratory Science 2021
Medical Laboratory Science Registration Policy	MLS Registration Policy 2021
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency Policy 2021
Medical Laboratory Science Supervision	Supervision and Direction for Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners 2019

Revision Schedule			
Version Number	Version Date	Approved By	Next Review
One	October 2018	Medical Sciences Council	2020
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Policy overview

1. The Medical Sciences Council (the Council) is responsible under the [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#) (the Act) for the registration of medical laboratory science practitioners.
2. Eligibility for registration requires the practitioner to satisfy the Council that they have a prescribed qualification for the relevant scope of practice; they are fit to practise; and they are competent to practise.
3. All internationally qualified applicants for registration are subject to a formal qualification assessment against a set of standard criteria that is applied to each assessment.
4. This policy sets out the qualification requirements for registration in any of the scopes of practice the Council has defined for the practice of medical laboratory science in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Legislative context

5. Sections 15 – 25 of the HPCA Act set out the requirements for registration of health practitioners.
6. In accordance with section 7 of the Act, an unregistered person may not use any of the names, titles, and/or abbreviations used for the medical laboratory science scopes of practice; or do anything to suggest they are qualified to be registered or able to practise in any of those scopes of practice.
7. The Council will only register persons who meet the qualifications, competence, and fitness for registration requirements as stated in the Act and this policy.

Scopes of practice

8. The scopes of practice are described in the [Gazette notice](#):
 - a. Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician: Provisional Registration – Medical Laboratory Science
 - b. Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician: Full registration – Medical Laboratory Science
 - c. Medical Laboratory Scientist: Full Registration - Medical Laboratory Science
 - d. Medical Laboratory Scientist: Provisional Registration – Medical Laboratory Science
 - e. Medical Laboratory Technician: Full Registration – Medical Laboratory Science

Qualifications

9. Under section 12 of the Act, the Council has prescribed a number of qualifications for the purpose of registration in one of the medical laboratory science scopes of practice.

Prescribed New Zealand qualifications

10. The Council has prescribed the following New Zealand qualifications. The providers of each of the prescribed qualifications are subject to an ongoing accreditation and monitoring process to ensure the programme of study continues to be fit for the purpose of registration as a health practitioner under the Act. Graduating students must meet the entry-level competencies required of medical laboratory science practitioners.

Qualification	Education Institution	Scope of Practice Registration
Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science	Auckland University of Technology	Medical Laboratory Scientist (Provisional or Full)
Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science	University of Otago	Medical Laboratory Scientist (Provisional or Full)
Postgraduate diploma in Medical Laboratory Science	University of Otago	Medical laboratory Scientist (Provisional or Full)
Graduate Diploma in Science (Medical Laboratory Science)	Auckland University of Technology	Medical Laboratory Scientist (Provisional or Full)

Qualification	Accredited Provider	Scope of Practice Registration
Qualified Medical Laboratory Technician Certificate	New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science	Medical Laboratory Technician (Provisional or Full)

Qualification	Accredited Provider	Scope of Practice Registration
New Zealand Diploma in Applied Science Level 5 (PAT Pathway)	ARA Institute of Canterbury	Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician (Provisional or Full)
Qualified Phlebotomist/Donor Technician/Specimen Services Technician Certificate	New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science	Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician (Provisional or Full)

Medical laboratory scientist: graduate diploma pathway to registration

11. Registered medical laboratory technicians who hold a bachelor's degree (as a minimum) can apply to the Auckland University of Technology to complete a Graduate Diploma in Science (Medical Laboratory Science) or University of Otago's Postgraduate Diploma in Medical Laboratory Science.
12. Practitioners applying to register as a scientist through this pathway must provide the following evidence:
13. They have held registration as a medical laboratory technician or a medical laboratory pre-analytical technician for at least the two years immediately preceding their application; and
 - Successful completion of the Graduate Diploma in Science (Medical Laboratory Science).
 - Initial registration will be as a medical laboratory scientist (provisional registration) for a period of up to 12 months.

Mortuary practice

14. Medical laboratory science practitioners working in mortuary services assist the pathologist during the post-mortem procedure and manage operational requirements of the mortuary facility and the post-mortem suite.
15. The practitioner must hold a relevant qualification that, as a minimum, includes:
 - Basic knowledge of human anatomy and physiology
 - Application of appropriate techniques including photography in post-mortem examinations
 - Identification and management of potential hazards within the mortuary environment
 - Application of New Zealand legislation and codes of practice relating to the mortuary and the deceased
 - Application of administrative procedures and management of visitors to the mortuary and post-mortem suite.

Medical Laboratory Scientist

16. The Bachelor of Medical Laboratory Science as prescribed for New Zealand qualified medical laboratory scientists does not include specific learning on mortuary practice. Registered medical laboratory scientists practising in mortuary must hold a relevant qualification in mortuary that is approved by the Council and gained either as a New Zealand qualification through post-graduate study, or as an approved international qualification. A practitioner with an international qualification in mortuary may be subject to a condition on their registration status whereby their practice is limited to mortuary services.
17. Medical laboratory scientists wanting to practise in mortuary must contact the Council to have their qualification assessed.

Medical Laboratory Technician

18. New Zealand qualified medical laboratory technicians practising in mortuary must hold the Qualified Medical Laboratory Technician Certificate in Mortuary (QMLT Mortuary) as issued by the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science.

Non-equivalent and international qualifications

19. Under section 15 of the Act, the Council may treat a non-accredited qualification as a prescribed qualification if the qualification has been assessed as being equivalent to, or as satisfactory as, a prescribed New Zealand qualification.
20. All non-accredited and international qualifications are subject to an assessment to determine if they meet the equivalent to or as satisfactory as provisions within the Act.
21. Assessments are conducted in the first instance by a regulation advisor at the Medical Sciences Secretariat (MSS). The Registrar is responsible for accepting and registering successful applications from internationally qualified applicants.
22. Regulation advisors work under a delegation framework and must adhere to the requirements within it. Advisors can seek the advice of:
 - a. A professional advisor (a health professional in the same profession that the applicant is seeking registration)
 - b. The Deputy Registrar or Registrar.
23. A set of criteria are applied to all qualifications requiring assessment. Assessments are recorded on a standard report template.

Qualification assessments

24. This section sets out the criteria and assessment process for determining the status of a non-accredited New Zealand qualification or an international qualification in terms of its equivalency or satisfactoriness for the purpose of registration.
25. For more information about the complete registration pathways, please refer to the Medical Laboratory Science [Registration Policy](#).

Qualification assessments criteria

26. Applicants who have their qualification/s assessed must align with the following criteria:
- a. Applicant has completed the requirements of the qualification
 - b. Qualification leads to registration and/or allows the practitioner to practise in the profession for which they are seeking registration in the country of origin
 - c. Education provider is subject to and meets external quality assurance
 - d. Medical Laboratory Science: focus of the programme of study is in the practice of medical laboratory science.
 - e. Applicant provides evidence of relevant clinical practice in addition to academic learning
 - f. Education level of qualification.

Outcomes

Definitions

Qualification status	Category	Outcome
Equivalent	The applicant's qualification is equivalent to the prescribed New Zealand qualification.	Qualification is assessed as equivalent. Registration may be granted if other registration requirements are met
Relevant	The practitioner's qualification is relevant but not equivalent to the prescribed New Zealand qualification, and the applicant has relevant experience	Applicant may be offered a Council-approved examination as per the examination policy. Registration may be granted if exam passed, and other registration requirements are met

Not equivalent or relevant	The practitioner's qualification is not equivalent or relevant to the prescribed New Zealand qualification.	Proposal to decline application
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Council-approved examination

27. In the event of a qualification being assessed as relevant but not equivalent to a prescribed qualification and the applicant has relevant experience, the applicant may be offered an opportunity to sit a Council approved examination.

28. The examination is conducted according to the examination policy.

29. A successful pass of the examination in this circumstance is recognised as a prescribed qualification for the purpose of registration. The applicant being able to demonstrate that they have the required knowledge for the scope of practice in accordance with section 12(c) of the Act.

Decline MLS and propose MLT

30. In the event of a medical laboratory science applicant's qualification being assessed as relevant but not equivalent to a prescribed qualification and the application for registration as a medical laboratory scientist is declined, the Council may consider suitability for registration in the medical laboratory technician scope of practice.