

Consultation document

Recertification programme for internationally qualified anaesthetic technicians entering practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

1. Te Kaunihera Pūtaiao Hauora O Aotearoa | The Medical Sciences Council is responsible for protecting the health and safety of New Zealanders by ensuring practitioners registered in the profession of anaesthetic technology are competent and fit to practise.

Background

2. Approximately half of the anaesthetic technicians registered by the Council each year are internationally qualified.
3. Internationally qualified anaesthetic technicians are currently registered with a period of supervised practice being required - the length and amount of the supervision period being determined by the Council. The supervision period provides support and oversight of the practitioner during a period of professional transition. It also provides the Council and the public with an assurance that the practitioner is competent to practise in Aotearoa New Zealand.
4. The Council is of the view that safe professional practice encompasses, not only appropriate clinical skills, but also an understanding of the environment for practise in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Council is proposing to update the requirements for internationally qualified anaesthetic technicians beginning practice in Aotearoa New Zealand for the first time.

5. This includes specifying supervision required that allows flexibility in the way it's applied, and the inclusion of education relating to the New Zealand health context.
6. A draft policy has been developed, and the Council is seeking the views of stakeholders in shaping the policy.

Previous feedback

7. Feedback about the use of supervision for internationally educated practitioners was sought in August 2024 as part of the Consultation on Anaesthetic Technician Supervision Requirements.
8. Most submissions supported supervision of internationally qualified practitioners starting practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. Conversely, some felt that supervision should not be required for experienced practitioners and could put potential practitioners off registering. Factors that submitters noted that should be considered in the length of the supervision period included:
 - a. the length and type of experience
 - b. the country of qualification
 - c. English language skills
 - d. the employment environment
 - e. other practitioner- specific influences.
9. Many submitters also noted that knowledge of the New Zealand health system, relevant legislation and the expectations for service delivery are also important for safe practice and should be understood by practitioners.
10. Some submissions noted the role of professional and clinical supervision in supporting safe practice to meet the competence standards, and the intersection of supervision with workplace orientation and credentialing processes.

Proposed changes

11. The Council proposes to retain the requirement for supervision and formalise this as a recertification programme. This ensures that practitioners beginning practice are required to complete the supervision within a particular time.
12. In addition, the Council proposes that the practitioner completes a programme of education. This includes education relating to:
 - a. the Aotearoa New Zealand health context
 - b. Aotearoa New Zealand Health Privacy law
 - c. the provision of health services in Aotearoa New Zealand.
13. The education that is being proposed is currently available at no charge. The only cost to the practitioner or their employer is the time required to complete this education.

Supervision

14. To ensure that the supervision requirements are flexible enough to meet the varying needs of practitioners, a minimum period of supervision is proposed - this may vary depending on the requirements of the practitioner.
15. Supervision in this context may take many forms and these are referenced to in the policy. The proposed policy states that technicians are required to practice under supervision and, like new graduates, need to meet outside of the direct clinical practice environment for a minimum of one hour each week for a period of three months. During this time practitioners and their supervisors are required to develop a plan for entering the workforce which outlines the learning goals, orientation and clinical supervision requirements and development opportunities, including the education requirements of the recertification programme. The plan may also include relevant employment requirements such as health and safety requirements and input from managers, employers, and other staff.

Supervisor

16. It is proposed that supervisors will require training and must adhere to the [Supervision Guidance](#) and other requirements in the same way as for new graduate anaesthetic technicians.

Education

17. The proposed online education courses can be viewed below:
 - a. [Ngā Paerewa Te Tiriti eLearning module 1](#): A high-level introduction to Te Tiriti o Waitangi requirements in the [Ngā Paerewa Health and Disability Service Standards](#) and how to meet the intent of those criteria.
 - b. [Health ABC and Privacy ABC](#): online training relating to the management of personal health information in Aotearoa New Zealand.
 - c. [Online learning provided by the Health and Disability Commissioner](#) to understand the Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights (the Code):
 - i) How the code of rights improves health and disability services.
 - ii) What you need to know about informed consent.
 - iii) Complaints management and early resolution.
 - d. Practitioners would also be required to review a resource that assists with orientation to the New Zealand environment, including the health structure and funding arrangements.

Completion of the programme

18. A satisfactory supervision report and proof of completion of education is required to be provided to the Council for the recertification programme to be completed. This report provides assurance to the Council that the practitioner has met the requirements of the recertification programme and is competent to safely practice without supervision.

Fee

19. The Council is considering setting a fee to cover the costs of monitoring and processing the internationally qualified recertification programme and reports. At present these costs are subsidised by other practitioner fees, which is not reflective of the operating model of the Council.

Specific requirements

20. Where a practitioner has a specific requirement that would not be met through the proposed recertification programme, the Council will continue to apply specific conditions as per the current 'supervision as a condition' policy.

Failure to complete

21. The proposed policy has mechanisms to ensure that practitioners must complete the requirements of the recertification programme and details the actions the Council may take when completion does not occur.

Regulatory impact

22. In considering the requirements the Council is mindful of its responsibility to protect the health and safety of the public, while acknowledging the needs of the workforce. The supervision requirements are designed to be flexible to allow adjustment, depending on the practitioner's circumstances and experience, while requiring protected time (at least one-hour per week meeting outside of the clinical practice environment) to ensure a safe professional transition. The education requirements are available free of charge online so may be completed at anytime, anywhere in the country, or (if preferred) overseas before the practitioner arrives in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Return to practise

23. The Council is also considering if the same or similar requirements should be applied to practitioners returning to practise in Aotearoa New Zealand after a break in practise of more than three years. Practitioners in this group are qualified and have experience but need to re-orientate themselves to the workplace and current practise. The [current return to practise policy](#) is available on the Council's website under: Already registered/ceasing or returning to practise.