

Policy

Medical Laboratory Science Locum Practice

Effective 19 August 2025

Policy title	Medical Laboratory Science Locum Practice Policy
Reference number	20250819 MLS Locum Practice Policy
Scope	This policy applies to practitioners in the medical laboratory science profession registered with Te Kaunihera Pūtaiao Hauora o Aotearoa Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand practising in a locum capacity

Associated documents	File name
Medical Laboratory Science Scope of Practice	2021-Apr-MSc-Scope-and-Qualifications-MLS.pdf
Competence Standards for Medical Laboratory Science	Competence standards for medical laboratory science practitioners 2018
Practising Certificate policy	2021-May-Practising-Certificates-Policy.pdf
Registration policy	20250408-MLS-Registration-Policy.pdf
Supervision policy	2019-Aug-MLS-Supervision-Policy.pdf

Revision Schedule			
Version number	Version date	Approved by	Next review
One	November 2018	MSC	2020
Two	May 2020	MSC	2022
Three	August 2025	MSC	2028

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Legislative context

1. The Medical Sciences Council (the Council) is responsible for the regulation of medical laboratory science practitioners under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. The Council's core function is to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring medical laboratory scientists (MLS), technicians (MLT) and pre-analytical technicians (MLPAT) are competent and fit to practise.

Policy statement

2. All medical laboratory science practitioners working in a locum capacity must be registered with the Council and hold an annual practising certificate. Practitioners working in a locum capacity must not have a requirement for supervision on their practice.

Definitions

Locum

3. A locum practitioner is one who is contracted for a short period of time to work as a medical laboratory science practitioner. This may be to replace existing staff or in response to staff vacancies.

Supervision

4. Supervision serves to protect the health and safety of the public. It is a formal process of professional support and learning to enable the practitioner to build on their knowledge, skills and professional attributes, and to progressively assume responsibility for their own practice.

Scope

5. This policy applies to all MLS practitioners providing services in a locum capacity in Aotearoa New Zealand. This includes practitioners who come from overseas to take up a locum MLS position and then return to their country of residence once the period of locum work has ceased.

Background

6. Medical laboratory science practitioners may work in a locum capacity for a wide variety of reasons in both public and privately funded facilities.
7. Practitioners working as an MLS, MLT or MLPAT in Aotearoa New Zealand are required to be registered with the Medical Sciences Council and hold a current practising certificate, regardless of the length of the locum contract or the facility worked in.
8. Practitioners who have a requirement for supervision on their practice **cannot** work in a locum capacity.
9. Medical laboratory technicians and pre-analytical technicians working in a locum capacity must work under the direction of a medical laboratory scientist or other suitable health practitioner as described in the Scope of Practice.
10. All medical laboratory science practitioners working in a locum capacity are required to practise within the Scope of Practice and Competence standards along with other relevant Council statements and information.
11. The Council expects that medical laboratory science practitioners working in a locum capacity undertake appropriate orientation to the place of employment.

Supervision requirements by the Council

12. The Council may require a practitioner to be under supervision for a variety of reasons. Supervision is applied as part of the new graduate recertification programme to support practitioners into the transition from student to health practitioner. Supervision is also often required for practitioners new to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. The Council may also use supervision where a practitioner is subject to a competence, conduct or fitness requirements.

Responsibilities when working in a locum capacity

Medical laboratory science practitioner	Employer
Ensures that they have no supervision requirement on their practice	Ensures the practitioner is registered with a current practising certificate with no requirement for supervision on their practice.
Practices within all Council requirements for practitioners	Provides the practitioner with appropriate orientation to the place of work

Ensure direction is in place for medical laboratory technicians and medical Laboratory Pre-analytical technicians as required	Ensure direction is in place for medical laboratory technicians and medical Laboratory Pre-analytical technicians
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