

Policy

Medical Laboratory Science Practising Certificate

Effective March 2026

Policy Title	MLS Practising Certificate Policy
Reference Number	20260317 MSC MLS Practising Certificate v4
Scope	This policy applies to all medical laboratory science practitioners registered with the Medical Sciences Council applying for a practising certificate in Aotearoa New Zealand

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 Competence Standards	Competence standards for medical laboratory science practitioners 2018
Medical Laboratory Science Registration Policy	MLS Registration Policy 2025
Medical Laboratory Science Return to Practice Policy	MLS Return to Practice Policy 2025
English Language Proficiency	English Language Proficiency Policy 2026
Medical Laboratory Science Supervision	Supervision and Direction for Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners 2019
Code of Ethical Conduct	2020-Jun-Code-of-Ethical-Conduct.pdf

Revision Schedule			
Version Number	Version Date	Approved By	Next Review
One	2014	Medical Sciences Council	2016
Two	June 2019	Medical Sciences Council	2021
Three	May 2021	Chief Executive	2023
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Overview

1. This document sets out the Medical Sciences Council's (the Council's) policy on the issue of a practising certificate to registered Medical Laboratory Science practitioners, in accordance with the [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#) (the Act).
2. Under [Section 8](#) of the Act, no Medical Laboratory Science practitioner may practise in Aotearoa New Zealand unless they are registered under the Act within a scope of practice defined by the Council, **and** hold a current practising certificate.
3. [Section 29](#) enables the Council to consider what conditions it may impose or vary before issuing a practising certificate.

Scope

4. This policy applies to all medical laboratory science practitioners applying for a practising certificate.

Policy and process

5. Upon receipt of a complete application for a practising certificate and payment of the required fee, the Registrar must issue a practising certificate unless, under [Section 27\[1\]](#) of the Act, they believe on reasonable grounds that the applicant:
 - a. Has at any time failed to maintain the required standard of competence
 - b. Has failed to fulfil, or has failed to comply with, a condition included in the applicant's scope of practice
 - c. Has not satisfactorily completed the requirements of an educational programme that they have been ordered to complete
 - d. Has not held a practising certificate in New Zealand within the three (3) years immediately prior to the date of application
 - e. Is unable to perform the functions required to practise as a medical laboratory science practitioner because of a mental or physical condition
 - f. Has not lawfully practised as a medical laboratory science practitioner within the three (3) years immediately prior to the date of application.
6. If the Registrar believes that one or more of the above grounds apply, they must determine whether they are able to consider and issue the practising certificate under delegation. In any other case, the Registrar submits the application to the Council (Section 27).
7. A practitioner who, within the three-years immediately prior to the date of application, has either not held a practising certificate in New Zealand, or not engaged in the practice of medical laboratory science, will be subject to the Council's [MLS Return to Practice](#) policy.

8. When considering a practising certificate application, the Council must be satisfied the applicant meets the required standards of competence. To satisfy that criterion, the Council may include conditions on the applicant's scope of practice or vary any existing conditions.

Practising certificates requirements

9. Regardless of application type, all practitioners applying for a practising certificate **must** complete the online application form and pay the required fee, as per the current [Gazette Notice 2021](#). Requirements for specific practitioner classes are provided on the table below.

Practising Certificates		
Practising certificate category	Issuing process	Documentation required
Applying to renew practising certificate	Completed application and fee paid	Any documentation as required by the Practising Certificate application process.
Application for a practising certificate within three years of holding a practising certificate	Completed application and fee paid	Any documentation as required by the Practising Certificate application process AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Criminal conviction history check from each country resided in for more than 12 months since last practising certificate including NZ (if applicable) • Certificate of Good Standing from each regulatory or professional body for each country worked in as a medical laboratory science practitioner since last practising certificate (if applicable).
Applying for first practising certificate within 12 months of being registered in the scope of practice	Completed application and fee paid	Any documentation as required by the Practising Certificate application process.
Registrant applying for a first practising certificate more than 12 months after registration Note: if it is more than three years since registration then the return to practice policy is applicable.	Review to ensure competence and fitness to practise Personalised support based on circumstances: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Period of supervision • Education to prepare for commencing practise in NZ Consideration of other evidence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overseas employment • Further study • Relevant professional development 	Any documentation as required by the application process AND <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV/resume outlining what they have undertaken in the interim • Two written professional references if applicable • Commencing practice plan • Evidence of relevant CPD if applicable • Criminal conviction history check from each country resided in for more than 12 months since registration including NZ (if applicable) • Certificate of Good standing from each regulatory or professional body worked in since registration (if applicable).
Application for practising certificate if practitioner has been out of practice for more than three years	Return to practice policy applies	

Practitioner responsibility

10. Holding a current practising certificate permits medical laboratory science practitioners to practise in their registered scope of practice, provided they comply with any conditions or recertification programme/s listed on their certificate.
11. It is the individual's responsibility to ensure they hold a current practising certificate when they are practising as a medical laboratory science practitioner in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Timeframes for issue of a practising certificate

12. Practising certificates are issued for up to 12 months and cannot be backdated. It is therefore important that practitioners apply to have their practising certificate renewed before their current practising certificate expires.
13. All practising certificates issued by the Council are valid for a maximum period of 12 months between 1 April and 31 March of the following calendar year.
14. The Council manages an APC renewal process in February and March of each year, during which time all practitioners who intend to continue practising in Aotearoa New Zealand from 1 April of that year, are expected to make an online application and pay the required fee to have their APC renewed. This permits them to continue practising legally.
15. While the Council alerts all practitioners who hold a current practising certificate of the need to renew their certificate, it is each practitioner's responsibility to ensure they complete their application (inclusive of the fee payment) prior to 31 March.

Late renewal applications

16. The Council will consider renewal applications up to one week after the close of the current renewal period – that is, until 7 April – without any possible disciplinary action for the applicant.
17. Applicants who submit their renewal application after 7 April and for whom there is no valid explanation are deemed to have been practising without a current practising certificate and the Council will need to give more consideration to their application.

Completed application and “deemed to hold”

18. The Council cannot consider incomplete applications. For an application to be considered as complete, it must be received through the online application portal on the Council's website. The applicant must answer all questions inclusive of statutory declarations and pay the required application fee. Individual practitioners will be contacted by the Council if any additional information is required.
19. If a practitioner has completed their renewal application and paid the required fee before their current practising certificate expires, they are deemed to hold a practising certificate for the new practising year.
20. This means that even if the processing of their application is delayed, they can continue to work from 1 April. This remains in effect from the date the completed application and fee payment was received until the date the new certificate is issued, or the applicant is notified a certificate will not be issued.

Practising without a current certificate

21. Practising without a current practising certificate is an offence under the Act and can result in the practitioner being referred to a professional conduct committee with the consequence that charges may be laid at the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.
22. Practising without a practising certificate is a breach of a practitioner's ethical and professional obligations.

Declining an application

23. The Registrar or the Council may propose to decline to issue a practising certificate if satisfied that any information contained in the application is false or misleading. In this instance the applicant must be given full details of the reasons for the decision, and an opportunity to make a written submission to be heard on the matter before a final decision is made (Section 27[4]).
24. Should the applicant have any unpaid fines, costs, or expenses as ordered by the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, the Registrar may decline to issue a practising certificate until the outstanding fine, costs, or expenses are paid in full. The applicant may request the

Council to review such a decision ([Sections 26](#) [4] and [5]).

Interim practising certificates

25. If the Council declines to issue a practising certificate under Section 29 of the Act, it may instead issue an interim practising certificate for a specified period, but not exceeding 12 months ([Section 31](#)).
26. The Council may cancel an interim practising certificate if at any time during the applicant holding the certificate:
 - a. They cease to be registered with the Council; or
 - b. An annual practising certificate is issued to the holder of the interim practising certificate.