

**MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE BOARD (from 18 Sept 2004)**  
**Definition of the profession of Medical Laboratory Science**  
**Policy statement adopted May 2004**

Reference: Section 11 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

Medical laboratory science is the performance of laboratory investigations on the human body or specimens taken from the human body for the purpose of supporting the diagnosis, management, treatment and prevention of disease by other health practitioners.

The practice of Medical Laboratory Science includes any of the following:

- Collection of samples from the human body for laboratory investigations
- Analysis of the sample using appropriate laboratory techniques
- Performance of quality assurance procedures
- Evaluation and interpretation of laboratory results
- Communication of laboratory results
- Ancillary tasks **directly** associated with the performance of laboratory investigations:
  - teaching
  - management
  - health & safety
  - quality

**Notes**

1) Two scopes of practice have been recognised within this health profession:

- a) Medical Laboratory Scientist (MLS)
- b) Medical Laboratory Technician (MLT)

A separate scope of practice for scientific officers is now under consideration.

2) A MLS or MLT may practise only within his or her area of competence, in a health service that forms part of the medical laboratory science profession.

3) In the medical laboratory science field, some tasks may be performed by laboratory assistants who do not qualify for registration. The Board considers that Section 7 of the HPCA Act will not require registration on the part of those involved exclusively in specimen collection or handling (other than phlebotomy) for example.

4) A MLS may practise independently and a MLT may practise under the direction of a MLS or under the direction of another registered health practitioner with an appropriate scope of practice, other than a MLT.

- a) Direction is the active process of management, control or guidance that influences the outcome of an individual's practice
- b) Direction may be provided directly or indirectly, dependent on the laboratory procedure being performed and the level of competence of the health practitioner
- c) For direction to be provided indirectly, provision must be made for reasonable access to whomever is providing the direction
- d) A registered health practitioner, in accordance with the Act, must only practice in their area of competence

5) Medical laboratory science health service categories:

- a) Clinical Biochemistry
- b) Haematology
- c) Transfusion Science
- d) Histology
- e) Microbiology
- f) Cytology
- g) Cytogenetics
- h) Immunology
- i) Virology
- j) Molecular Pathology
- k) Mortuary
- l) Electron Microscopy
- m) Phlebotomy