

# CODE OF COMPETENCIES AND STANDARDS FOR THE PRACTICE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

**MAINTAINING HIGH PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS:  
MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENTISTS AND TECHNICIANS WILL PRACTISE IN A RESPECTFUL,  
INCLUSIVE, HONEST AND TRUSTWORTHY MANNER**

COMPETENCY	Practise as a Professional	Practise as a scientist/technician	Safe Practice	Communication	Culturally competent practice
OUTCOME	Act in accordance with ethical, legal, professional and regulatory requirements	Practise by integrating medical laboratory science knowledge and skills within area of competence and scope of practice	Ensure personal, patient/client, colleague and public safety	Communicate effectively with patients/clients, colleagues, other health professionals and the public	Practise taking into account the socio-cultural values of others
STANDARD	1.1 Comply with the HPCA Act 1.2 Comply with other relevant legislation and codes 1.3 Demonstrate honest and trustworthy practice 1.4 Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of patients/clients 1.5 Apply the protocols of informed consent 1.6 Apply the principles of Quality Assurance and Improvement 1.7 Manage workload and resources 1.8 Demonstrate problem solving skills 1.9 Work collaboratively 1.10 Demonstrate accountability 1.11 Take responsibility for the training, direction and/or supervision of others 1.12 <b>MLS:</b> Continue to develop knowledge and skills	2.1 Demonstrate the correct safe operation of laboratory equipment 2.2 Demonstrate practical competence in laboratory analytical techniques 2.3 Analyse specimens using the prescribed protocols of the workplace 2.4 Report and interpret laboratory results 2.5 Demonstrate competence in the application and use of relevant information technology 2.6 Demonstrate knowledge of the normal and pathological states of human anatomy and physiology of the major organ systems in health and disease 2.7 Demonstrate an understanding of current knowledge and practical competence in one or more of the MLSB approved health service categories 2.8 <b>MLS:</b> Be able to apply appropriate research methods	3.1 Practise safely in accordance with health and safety legislation and workplace safety policies and procedures 3.2 Identify and manage laboratory hazards 3.3 Handle, store, transport and dispose of hazardous chemical and biological material appropriately	4.1 Demonstrate competence in written and oral English 4.2 Accurately record and report results in a clear, timely and appropriate format for interpretation 4.3 Use a range of communication skills to convey information and instructions	5.1 Recognise own beliefs, values and prejudices and the impact these may have on patients/clients and colleagues 5.2 Recognise cultural diversity as it relates to ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, migrant experience or disability 5.3 Apply the Treaty of Waitangi principle of partnership by making informed decisions through consultation 5.4 Demonstrate culturally competent practice



# Code of Competencies and Standards

Medical Laboratory Science Board

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## CODE OF COMPETENCIES AND STANDARDS FOR THE PRACTICE OF MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCE

Protecting the health and safety of members of the public is the purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act, under which the Medical Laboratory Science Board operates.

*Medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians will protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring they are competent and fit to practise medical laboratory science to the level expected within their scope of practice.*

Section 118 of the Act makes it a function of the Board "to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct to be observed by members of the profession".

This Code contains the clinical (technical), cultural and ethical competencies and standards that medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians are expected to maintain and practise.

The Code includes the attitudes and values that all registrants need, to perform to acceptable ethical, cultural, legal and regulatory standards. However, it is accepted that the knowledge and skills required by individuals will vary according to their scope of practice and the tasks they are authorised to perform in the workplace.

For example –

It is accepted that a scientist/technician working in microbiology would be expected to maintain their knowledge and skill to isolate and identify micro-organisms and operate a microscope whereas a person working in clinical biochemistry would not. A technician would not be expected to have the same level of knowledge as a scientist under whose direction they practice.

Page 4 of the Code is a table of the competencies and standards. Pages 2 and 3 of the Code provide descriptive and explanatory material on the competencies and standards, but are not intended as an exhaustive list of all the skills, knowledge and attitudes that apply to the competencies and standards.

This Code will:

- Inform the public of New Zealand of the standards that medical laboratory scientists and medical laboratory technicians will observe
- Be used as a basis for assessment of applications for registration
- Act as a resource for institutions offering the BMLSc degree or examinations for medical laboratory technicians
- Provide the standard when carrying out any reviews of professional competence.

## 1.0 Practise as a Professional Act in accordance with ethical, legal, professional and regulatory requirements

- 1.1 Comply with the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003
  - Understand requirements for registration and practice as a health practitioner in New Zealand
  - Practise within scope of practice and within any conditions set, and hold a current practising certificate
- 1.2 Comply with other relevant legislation and codes, including
  - Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights
  - Health Information Privacy Code
  - NZS/ISO Standards for Medical Laboratory Testing
  - Human Tissue Act

**Note:** The Treaty of Waitangi created a partnership between the Crown and Maori that governs the provision of health services by the Crown in New Zealand.
- 1.3 Demonstrate honest and trustworthy practice
- 1.4 Maintain the privacy and confidentiality of patients/clients
- 1.5 Apply the protocols of informed consent, to include
  - Collection of specimens
  - Use of specimens for other than the tests requested
  - Return of specimens to the patient/client
- 1.6 Apply the principles of Quality Assurance and Improvement
  - Adhere to established workplace policies and procedures to meet and improve performance standards
- 1.7 Manage workload and resources, be effective and efficient in:
  - Prioritising workload
  - Responding to urgent requests
  - Timely completion of tasks
- 1.8 Demonstrate problem solving skills
  - **MLS and MLT:** Initiate resolution of problems
  - **MLS:** Evaluate outcomes and modify processes where appropriate

- 1.9 Work collaboratively
  - Demonstrate good working relationships with colleagues and service users
  - Contribute to team objectives
  - Share knowledge and support colleagues
- 1.10 Demonstrate accountability
  - Maintain accuracy
  - Take responsibility for professional decisions and actions
  - Recognise limitations of competence, knowledge and skills and seek assistance when required
  - Recognise limitation of scope of practice
- 1.11 Take responsibility for the training, direction and/or supervision of others
  - **MLS:** Take responsibility for training of staff
  - **MLS:** Take responsibility for direction of medical laboratory technicians
  - **MLS and MLT:** Where appropriate, take responsibility for supervision of unregistered trainees or other staff members who are required to work under supervision
- 1.12 **MLS:** Continue to develop knowledge and skills
  - Participate in a re-certification programme
  - Critically review and evaluate new and existing methods and apply new procedures as appropriate
  - Review effectiveness of practice and modify accordingly

## 2.0 Practise as a scientist/technician Practise by integrating medical laboratory science knowledge and skills within area of competence and scope of practice

- 2.1 Demonstrate the correct safe operation of laboratory equipment to include:
  - calibration
  - maintenance
  - responding appropriately to malfunction and accidents
- 2.2 Demonstrate practical competence in laboratory analytical techniques
- 2.3 Analyse specimens using the prescribed protocols of the workplace, to include:
  - Collection, storage and transportation of samples
  - Selection of appropriate sample and preparation for analysis
  - Performance of the test with accuracy and precision

MLS = Medical Laboratory Scientist  
MLT = Medical Laboratory Technician

- Performance of calibration and quality control checks
- Calculation/determination or interpretation of results
- Recognition of errors and taking appropriate corrective action
- Authorisation and reporting of results

#### 2.4 Report and interpret laboratory results

- **MLS and MLT:** Integrate data/information
- **MLS and MLT:** Recognise and take account of sources of variability in interpretation of data
- **MLS and MLT:** Recognise the relevance and significance of, and the relationship between, laboratory results in pathological conditions
- **MLS and MLT:** Report results
- **MLS:** Interpret and discuss results\*
- **MLS:** Advise what further tests might be relevant\*

\*May be performed by **MLT** if covered by other standards, example NCSP OPQS<sup>1</sup>.

#### 2.5 Demonstrate competence in the application and use of relevant information technology

#### 2.6 Demonstrate knowledge of the normal and pathological states of human anatomy and physiology of the major organ systems in health and disease

- **MLS:** Advanced knowledge
- **MLT:** Sufficient to perform practical work

#### 2.7 Demonstrate an understanding of current knowledge and practical competence in one or more of the health service categories approved by the Medical Laboratory Science Board (MLSB)

- **MLS:** Advanced knowledge
- **MLT:** Sufficient to perform practical work

#### 2.8 **MLS:** Be able to apply appropriate research methods

- Review and evaluate research papers
- Collect, integrate, present and interpret data

### 3.0 Safe Practice

Ensure personal, patient/client, colleague and public safety

#### 3.1 Practise safely in accordance with health and safety legislation and workplace safety policies and procedures

- Take appropriate measures where stress or other mental or physical conditions affect the ability of self or colleagues to function as a health practitioner

#### 3.2 Identify and manage laboratory hazards including fire, electrical, mechanical, biological, chemical, radiation and Occupational Overuse Syndrome

#### 3.3 Handle, store, transport and dispose of hazardous chemical and biological material appropriately

### 4.0 Communication

Communicate effectively with patients /clients, colleagues, other health professionals and the public

#### 4.1 Demonstrate competence in written and oral English

#### 4.2 Accurately record and report results in a clear, timely and appropriate format for interpretation

#### 4.3 Use a range of communication skills to convey information and instructions

- Ensure all communication is clear, concise and accurate
- Communicate in style and format to meet needs of recipients recognising cultural differences that may affect communication

### 5.0 Culturally competent practice

Practise taking into account the socio-cultural values of others

#### 5.1 Recognise own beliefs, values and prejudices and the impact these may have on patients/clients and colleagues

#### 5.2 Recognise cultural diversity as it relates to ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, migrant experience or disability

#### 5.3 Apply the Treaty of Waitangi principle of partnership, by making informed decisions through consultation, both parties to act reasonably, honourably and in good faith

#### 5.4 Demonstrate culturally competent practice

- Recognise and respond to the values, beliefs and cultural practices of patients/clients when collecting, handling, storing or disposing of body fluids, tissue samples and related patient/client information
- Practise in a manner that is respectful of and inclusive of others

<sup>1</sup>NCSP National Cytology Screening Programme, OPQS Operational Policy and Quality Standards