



MEDICAL REGISTRATION IN NEW ZEALAND

This booklet contains important information.
Please keep it for future reference.

Medical Council of New Zealand

Protecting the public, promoting good medical practice

Te tiaki i te iwi whānui me te whakatairanga pai i te mahi e pā ana ki te taha rongoā

The primary purpose of the Medical Council of New Zealand is to promote and protect public health and safety through the registration of appropriately trained doctors and the maintenance of medical competence.

The Council ensures competence of doctors in New Zealand through such processes as:

- the accreditation of New Zealand and Australian medical schools
- examination of overseas qualifications
- accreditation of postgraduate training and continuing professional development programmes.

The Council has also established supervision processes for newly registered doctors, and recertification processes for those who renew their practising certificates annually.

Maintenance of standards also requires identification and assistance for those doctors who, for health or other reasons, are not practising at an adequate standard.

The Council works with the public and the profession to achieve this.

Complaints investigation is done by the Health and Disability Commissioner, while discipline matters are considered by Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.

Medical registration in New Zealand

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Background information

Legislation

1. Medical practice in New Zealand is governed by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA).
2. The Medical Council of New Zealand (the Council) is the registration authority responsible for implementing this legislation.
3. The principal purpose of the HPCAA is to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring doctors are competent and fit to practise medicine.

Practice of medicine

4. To practise medicine in New Zealand all doctors must:
 - be registered, and
 - hold an annual practising certificate (APC).
5. The Medical Council defines the practice of medicine as:
 - advertising, holding out to the public, or representing in any manner that one is authorised to practise medicine in New Zealand
 - signing any medical certificate required for statutory purposes, such as death and cremation certificates
 - prescribing medicines whose sale or supply is legally restricted to prescription by medical practitioners
 - assessing, diagnosing, treating, reporting, or giving advice in a medical capacity, using the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence initially attained for the MB ChB degree (or equivalent) and built upon in postgraduate and continuing medical education, wherever there could be an issue of public safety.

“Practice” in this context extends beyond clinical medicine to include teaching, research, medical or health management. This may be in hospitals, clinics, general practices and community or institutional contexts, whether paid or voluntary.

Fitness for registration

6. The Council may register a doctor only if the applicant:
 - has satisfied the Council that he or she is able to communicate effectively and comprehend English
 - has not been convicted by any court of an offence punishable by imprisonment for three months or longer, and the offence does not affect the doctor's fitness to practise
 - does not suffer from a physical or mental disorder that may affect his or her ability to practise medicine
 - is not under investigation or the subject of professional disciplinary proceedings in New Zealand or in another country, and any investigation does not affect his or her fitness to practise
 - is not subject to an order of a professional disciplinary tribunal (in New Zealand or overseas), or of an accredited educational institution, or of an authority or of a similar body in another country; unless any order in existence does not affect his or her fitness to practise
 - is not a danger to the health or safety of the public.

Scopes of practice

7. Once you complete the registration process you will be registered within a “scope of practice”.
8. Your scope of practice will depend on your qualifications, your experience, and the purpose and duration of your employment or appointment in New Zealand.
9. For 12 months, and in some cases significantly longer, certain conditions will be included in your scope of practice such as where you may work, who your supervisor is, and the duration of your appointment. There may also be requirements you must fulfil before you can change to a different scope. (See Appendix B for details.)

Working in New Zealand

Induction to medical practice in New Zealand

16. Your employer is required to provide you with a full induction and orientation programme to help you learn about medical practice in New Zealand. Your induction will include information about cultural awareness of the patient groups you will be working with and the community you will be working in. Individual doctors are reminded to be aware about the cultural needs of their patients, colleagues and communities, and to ensure they learn about the culture of their working environment.

Supervision

17. Council requires you to work under supervision for a specified period, and your employer is required to ensure you have appropriate supervision for as long as the Council requires.
18. Doctors registered within either a provisional general or provisional vocational scope of practice must satisfy certain requirements before supervision will be lifted.

10. You may work only within those conditions. If your employment situation changes you must apply to change those conditions. If all policy requirements are satisfied a new APC showing those changes will be issued.
11. To apply for a change to your APC conditions, follow the instructions on paragraphs 32–34.
12. Doctors who want to become permanently registered are usually required to work under supervision for at least 12 months in either a:
- provisional general scope, or
 - provisional vocational scope.
13. Doctors visiting New Zealand for a special purpose as defined by Council will be registered within a special purpose scope of practice, for a specified period of time.
14. The scopes of practice are defined in Appendix A. To apply for a change to your scope, follow the instructions in paragraphs 35–38. All supervision reports must be received before Council will authorise a change of scope.
15. Working outside your scope of practice may be considered a disciplinary matter. You may be referred to a Professional Conduct Committee to determine whether any action is required.

	Minimum supervision requirement	Registration pathway
General scope	12 months	■ New Zealand and Australian interns ■ NZREX graduates ■ UK/Irish graduates
	24 months	■ Doctors who have worked in a comparable health system
Vocational scope	12 months	■ Overseas doctors eligible for registration in a vocational scope after 12 months supervised practice
	12-18 months	■ Overseas doctors who must work under assessment to confirm eligibility for registration in a vocational scope

19. If doctors do not meet all the requirements during the usual timeframe, their provisional scope may be extended. If the conditions are not satisfied within 24 months the Registrar will refer a subsequent application for an annual practising certificate (APC) to Council to decide whether a further APC will be issued.
20. When you are registered you will be sent Council's *Induction and supervision for newly registered doctors*. This booklet explains what supervision is required. You can also read this on our website.
21. Your supervisor is required to report to Council on your performance every three months, or as requested by Council.
27. You will be considered to hold an APC once your application has been received in the Council office until the new certificate has been issued, or until you are notified by the Registrar that an APC will not be issued for any reason.
28. Please allow at least 20 working days for your APC to be processed.
29. If it appears that you have not complied with the CPD requirements, or if there are any issues that may affect the health and safety of your patients we will contact you. Information about Council's processes for dealing with doctors' competence and health issues is on our website.

Your responsibilities

Annual practising certificates, competence and fitness to practise

22. You may only practise medicine in New Zealand if you are registered and hold a current APC.
23. The APC is Council's assurance to the public that you are competent to practise.
24. Your first practising certificate will be issued to cover either the duration of your appointment or until you start your APC cycle (determined by your birthdate).
25. Full details of APC cycles are explained on the Council's website.
26. To apply for a new APC you must complete an application form which will ask you:
 - for details of your continuing professional development (CPD) activities
 - to disclose any issues about your fitness to practise or competence that have arisen during the previous 12 months.

IMPORTANT REMINDER

- Giving incorrect information on your application form is an offence. So is practising without an APC. On summary conviction, this carries a fine of up to \$10,000.
- Your patients maybe disadvantaged if you practise without an APC. They may not qualify for payments from ACC, or for reimbursement from their medical insurance that they would otherwise have received.
- Your medical indemnity insurance may not be valid if you practise without a current APC.
- APCs will not be backdated to cover work done without a current certificate.
- Make sure you apply for your new APC as soon as you receive your renewal notice as we will not backdate them.

Changing employment or supervision arrangements

30. Your practising certificate will show your authorised scope of practice and any conditions included in your scope, such as where you are employed, who your supervisor is, and the dates of your employment.
31. If you change your employment or supervision arrangements while you are registered within a provisional scope, you must apply for a new APC.
32. You need to send in an application form, supervision report, documentation and fee as indicated on the application form, together with your most recent APC. This must all be received in the Council office before your new arrangements start, so that your application can be processed.
33. Your application must satisfy Council policy, and a new APC will be issued only if employment in an accredited or an approved position has been arranged. Your employer will usually organise the application. However, you are responsible for having a valid practising certificate before you start work.
34. Please allow a minimum of 15 working days to process your application.

What happens at the end of the period of supervision?

35. When you have completed your supervision time you may apply to change to either a general or vocational scope. You must complete the appropriate form and send it to the Council office with a supervision report, documentation, and fee, as indicated on the application form.
36. Use one of these forms (which you can download from the Council website) to apply for registration within a general or vocational scope:

- COS3 From provisional general to general (interns and NZREX graduates)
- COS4 From provisional general to general (other)
- COS5 From provisional vocational to vocational.

37. Doctors registered within a provisional general scope who are participating in the RNZCGP vocational education programme should contact their registration administrator or email registration@mcnz.org.nz for advice.

38. Please allow 15 working days to process your application.

Changing address

39. You are legally required to provide Council with three addresses:
 - postal address
 - residential address
 - work address.
40. Your postal address may be your residential or work address, or it may be a different address (eg, a P O Box number).
41. Your postal address will be used to send routine mail (eg, APC application forms, newsletters).
42. You will be asked to nominate one address as your registered address for the medical register. This may be different to your postal address. Only your registered address will be published in the medical register and made available to the public.
43. If you don't want your registered address to be published on the medical register you must write to the Council.
44. If any of your addresses change, you are legally required to advise us. We acknowledge all change of address notifications in writing.

45. If we send mail to you and you do not reply, or if the mail is returned to us, we will then write to you by registered post. If you still do not reply, your registration will be cancelled and you will have to reapply to continue or resume practising medicine in New Zealand.

Continuing professional development (CPD) and recertification

46. CPD is continuing medical education, peer review and clinical audit. Participation in CPD ensures you are clinically and culturally competent to practise medicine as required in the HPCAA.

47. Before Council issues your APC you must be able to show clearly that you are participating in CPD. When your APC is issued, this means you are recertified.

48. Details of CPD requirements are in Council's booklet *Continuing professional development and recertification*, which is on our website.

49. "Cultural competence" is a new requirement, and the Council is clarifying how this is to be assessed. The following is Council's definition of cultural competence:

"Cultural competence requires an awareness of cultural diversity and the ability to function effectively, and respectfully, when working with and treating people of different cultural backgrounds. Cultural competence means a doctor has the attitudes, skills and knowledge needed to achieve this. A culturally competent doctor will acknowledge:

- *That New Zealand has a culturally diverse population.*
- *That a doctor's culture and belief systems influence his or her interactions with patients and accepts this may impact on the doctor-patient relationship.*
- *That a positive patient outcome is achieved when a doctor and patient have mutual respect and understanding".*

50. Cultural mores identified by the Council are not restricted to ethnicity, but also include (and are not limited to) those related to gender, spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, lifestyle, beliefs, age, social status or perceived economic worth.

51. The Council emphasises that doctors need to be able to recognise and respect differing cultural perspectives of patients, for the purpose of effective clinical functioning in order to improve health outcomes for patients.

Health, discipline and competence review

52. When you are registered the Council will send you its publication *Cole's Medical practice in New Zealand*. This book is also on Council's website.

53. It is important to familiarise yourself with these sections:

- *Good medical practice* (Cole's — Appendix C)
This section outlines the duties and responsibilities of a doctor registered in New Zealand, and is used as the basis for the standard of practice in this country
- Doctors' health
- Discipline
- Performance assessments.

Communication

Doctors' communication with the Council office

54. Office hours are 8.30am—5.00pm. You can contact staff by email, phone, fax or mail. Please make an appointment if you wish to visit the Council office.

55. Each doctor is assigned a registration administrator, who is the first point of contact for registration queries.

56. Other Council staff are here to help you with enquiries about health and rehabilitation, prevocational and vocational education, complaints, performance, and Council statements and policies.

57. You should contact the Council Registrar for advice about professional standards issues. Council meets every two months to discuss registration matters that fall outside registration policy, among other issues.

Council's communication with doctors

58. Full details of Council's policies, statements and resources are available on our website.
59. A set of Council statements, which are reviewed regularly, are available without charge by emailing info@mcnz.org.nz.
60. The Council publishes a newsletter three times a year. These newsletters are sent to all registered doctors and we recommend you keep them for future reference.
61. Highlights of the Council's achievements over a year are sent to every registered doctor annually. The Council also publishes an annual report each year, which can be viewed on-line or obtained from the Council office.

Further information

Public information

62. The Council is required to maintain a register listing all registered doctors' details. The Council does not publish a hard copy of the register, but it is available electronically. You can also search an online version of the register at www.mcnz.org.nz.
63. The medical register is a public document, and these details are available to any member of the public:
- Your name
 - Your registered address*
 - Your registered medical qualifications
 - Your registered scope(s) of practice
 - Your registration dates

- Whether you hold an APC
- Any conditions on your scope(s) of practice
- Suspension from the register (if applicable).

*Addresses are not published on the online register.

*If you have objected in writing, your address will not appear in the medical register or be made available to the public.

Personal information

64. All information provided on the application for medical registration is personal information in terms of the Privacy Act 1993. You may ask at any time to see it, and correct it if necessary.

Health Practitioners Index

65. The Health Practitioners Index (HPI) is a national database that will hold information about all health practitioners, non-practitioners (eg, hospital admission clerks, medical centre practice managers), healthcare organisations and health delivery facilities.
66. The HPI will uniquely identify health providers and organisations, so providers can transfer, access and manage health information electronically and securely.
67. The Council provides public register information about all registered doctors, as well as their date of birth and sex (for identification) to the Ministry of Health, under a Data Provision Agreement for the purposes of the HPI.
68. Full details about the HPI are available at www.nzhis.govt.nz/hpi/

Cancellation of registration

69. If you are no longer practising medicine, you may apply to Council to have your registration cancelled at any time. Your registration will also be cancelled if we cannot locate you, or once your employment ceases, if you are registered within a special purpose scope.
70. Cancellation will not affect your liability for any act done or default made before the date your registration is cancelled.

71. To be restored to the register, check Council's restoration policies and processes on our website.

Workforce survey

72. When you apply for an APC you will be asked to complete a workforce survey about your current medical work, including location, worktype, level of employment, hours worked per week, employer, and ethnicity. The survey provides statistical information (which does not identify any individual) for workforce planning to the Ministry of Health, training institutions and medical researchers.

Disciplinary Levy

73. The disciplinary levy is part of the APC fee. It funds the costs of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal and the Professional Conduct Committees.

Simon Robb
Registrar
September 2007

Appendices

Appendix A

Scopes of practice

General scope of practice

A doctor who has completed the requirements of a provisional general scope can be registered within a general scope of practice.

Examples are junior doctors who have completed their first postgraduate year and may be in vocational training; doctors who have not started, or have chosen not to do, vocational training; or doctors nearing retirement who are no longer meeting the requirements for registration within a vocational scope of practice.

A doctor registered within the general scope of practice must establish a collegial relationship with another doctor who is registered within the same or related vocational scope, and must participate in appropriate continuing professional development to maintain and improve competence and be recertified each year.

Vocational scope of practice

A doctor who has completed his or her vocational training as a consultant and has appropriate qualifications and experience can be registered within a vocational scope of practice. There are 35 vocational scopes recognised by Council. These vocational scopes are listed on Council's website.

A doctor registered in a vocational scope must participate in an approved continuing professional development programme to maintain competence and be recertified each year.

Provisional general scope

All newly registered doctors must work under supervision for at least 12 months.

During this time they are registered within a provisional general scope of practice and their performance will be assessed by senior colleagues.

They must complete certain requirements to be registered within a general scope.

New Zealand and Australian graduates who have already completed their internship in Australia are exempt from working under supervision for 12 months.

Provisional vocational scope

Doctors who have completed their vocational training and who are not already registered in New Zealand must work under supervision for at least 12 months. They are registered within a provisional vocational scope of practice.

During this time they must complete Council's requirements for registration in a vocational scope. Those requirements may include working in a formal assessment position and/or passing an examination.

Special purpose scope

A doctor who satisfies the registration criteria to visit New Zealand for one of the following defined and specific reasons will be registered within a special purpose scope of practice:

- a visiting expert
- for postgraduate training and/or experience
- a medical researcher
- a locum specialist working in New Zealand for less than six months
- to help in an emergency or for any other reason approved by Council.

These doctors will be required to work under supervision for the duration of their employment or appointment.

This "special purpose" scope of practice is not a pathway to permanent registration.

Appendix B

Registration requirements and changing scopes

Registration pathways

1. New Zealand and NZREX graduates (interns).

Interns will be registered within a provisional general scope of practice for up to two years to work:

- in a New Zealand hospital or general practice accredited by the Council
- under the supervision of a registered doctor approved by the Council
- for a minimum of 46 weeks, during which he or she:
 - completes at least four three-month runs of which at least two are category A runs (one surgical and one medical) and two may be either category A or B runs (medical or surgical)
 - completes three satisfactory runs immediately prior to registration in a general scope of practice, at least two of which must be in different disciplines
 - is certified as competent in basic and advanced cardiac life support.

To qualify for registration in a general scope they must complete the requirements in the Council's publication *Education, training and supervision for interns*, and be recommended for registration by the intern supervisor.

2. Competent authorities (UK and Irish graduates)

Graduates of university medical schools accredited by competent authorities will be registered within a provisional general scope to work:

- in a New Zealand hospital, general practice, educational institution or other organisation approved by the Council

- under the supervision of a registered doctor approved by the Council
- for at least one year full time or equivalent.

To qualify for registration in a general scope they must have:

- completed one year working within a provisional general scope
- received satisfactory reports for the three runs completed (or nine months worked) immediately before applying for registration within a general scope
- been recommended for registration within a general scope of practice by their supervisor.

3. Comparable health systems

Doctors who have worked for 36 of the last 48 months in a country with a comparable health system to New Zealand's and who have full registration in their country will be registered within a provisional general scope of practice to work:

- in a New Zealand hospital or general practice approved by the Council
- under supervision of a registered doctor approved by the Council
- for at least two years full time or equivalent
- in a position for which the doctor has appropriate experience.

To qualify for registration within a general scope they must have:

- completed two years' practice within a provisional general scope of practice
- received satisfactory reports for the three runs completed (or nine months worked) immediately before applying for registration within a general scope
- been recommended for registration within a general scope of practice by their supervisor.

Council may propose to include conditions on a doctor's general scope of practice if it is thought necessary in the interests of public health and safety.



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