



**Te Kaunihera Rau
o Aotearoa**

Medical Council
of New Zealand

Section 3: Supervision of PAs - Consultation on regulation of physician associates/ assistants (PAs)

Closes 16 February 2026

Overview

PAs are trained to practise under the supervision of a doctor. This means a supervising registered doctor must always be available for the PA to seek advice and guidance. The Council has developed a draft supervision framework explaining the roles and responsibilities of PAs, their supervisors and their employers.

We are proposing that supervision requirements will differ between the two scopes of practice.

Provisional PA scope of practice

Council proposes to have greater oversight of PAs registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice. The supervisor, the supervision plan, and the place(s) of work will need to be approved by Council for the provisional period of registration.

As part of the registration application, the employer will need to provide a job offer, an identified supervisor and a proposed supervision plan for the PA (signed by the PA and the supervisor), to Council for approval. The employer will also have responsibilities for ensuring that the PA is supervised, and is provided orientation and induction to working in Aotearoa New Zealand and at that particular workplace. Council will require regular quarterly reports from the supervisor.

General PA scope of practice

Once the requirements of the provisional period have been completed, the PA will become eligible to apply for registration in the General PA scope of practice. When registered in the General PA scope of practice, they will continue to be required to work under supervision, however Council will no longer approve the supervisor or practice location. Instead, their employer will be responsible for ensuring ongoing supervision requirements are met.

Satisfying supervision requirements

Decisions on whether a PA can be employed in a particular role must take into account the ability of each party (i.e. the employer, the supervisor and the PA) to satisfy the requirements in the supervision framework.

Supervision framework for PAs

Preamble

PAs must always practise under the supervision of a vocationally registered doctor. This means that they must not be rostered to practise solo in any healthcare setting. Onsite supervision must always be available (as described in this framework).

This framework sets out the Council's supervision requirements for all PAs registered in the:

- Provisional PA scope of practice
- General PA scope of practice.

Supervision arrangements will differ depending on the scope of practice the PA is registered in. They are described in separate sections below.

Regardless of the supervision arrangements in place, overall clinical responsibility for any PA employed or contracted to work, will sit with **the employer or contracting organisation**. Depending on the setting, one of the following will hold clinical responsibility for the PA:

- Chief Medical Officer;
- Clinical Director (PHO); or
- Clinical Lead (general practice or urgent care).

Supervision capacity

The Council has not set a limit on the number of PAs an individual doctor may supervise. However, for a PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice, the primary supervisor, supervision plan and place of work for each PA must be approved by the Council, and Council will consider the proposed supervisor's clinical responsibilities and existing supervision load.

The employer has a responsibility to ensure a proposed primary supervisor has capacity and capability to meet their supervision obligations for each PA that they supervise.

The proposed supervisor should only accept the supervisory role if they have capability and capacity to meet their obligations under this framework.

Supervision of PAs registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice

Purpose

Effective and efficient supervision is a crucial part of the regulatory framework for PAs registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice as they commence regulated practice in New Zealand.

During this initial period, the PA will be adjusting to a new practice environment and health system. They will also be developing working relationships with their supervisor(s), multidisciplinary team and other colleagues.

Any application for registration in the Provisional PA scope of practice must include a job offer, proposed primary supervisor, and proposed supervision plan from the employer. These will be considered by Council as part of the application and will only be approved if they meet requirements.

Period of supervision

Registration pathways 1 and 2

- 12 months of satisfactory supervised practice.

Registration pathway 3 (New Zealand experiential)

- 6 months of satisfactory supervised practice.

Primary supervisor specifications

A PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice must have a **Council-approved primary supervisor** who is vocationally registered in a scope of practice relevant to the PA's area of practice.

The Council-approved primary supervisor and place of work will be recorded as an endorsement on the practising certificate of the PA.

The primary supervisor for a PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice must provide **onsite supervision** to the PA. They may delegate onsite supervision to one or more vocationally registered doctors if this is required to ensure that appropriate access to supervision and collegial support is always available to the PA when they are practising.

Onsite supervision requires that the primary supervisor (or any doctor that they delegate onsite supervision responsibilities to, within this framework) is available on a day-to-day basis to provide medical input, guidance, and advice to the PA. To achieve this, they must:

- work in the same facility as the PA
- be readily contactable on a day-to-day basis
- be available to attend the facility promptly, if required.

The Council-approved primary supervisor retains overall supervision responsibilities as set out below.

If the primary supervisor is also a sole employer, a vocationally registered **secondary offsite supervisor** is also required. Their role is to ensure a PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice has appropriate support if the primary supervisor is unavailable, or if there is a relationship breakdown with the primary supervisor, and to mitigate potential conflicts of interest.

Accountability and responsibility

The employer (via the Chief Medical Officer, Clinical Director (PHO), or Clinical Lead (general practice or urgent care)) is responsible for:

- Nominating a primary supervisor for approval by the Council.
- Providing a job offer and proposed supervision plan to Council, as part of the application for registration, for consideration by Council.
- Using the Ministry of Health credentialling framework to credential the PA to define the specific clinical responsibilities that they are assigned (based on their qualifications, training and experience) in each specific service environment in which they practise (within the Provisional PA scope of practice). This includes undertaking a credentialling review at least annually, or when clinical responsibilities change.
- Ensuring the PA and primary supervisor are provided with credentialling reports of the PA, and any other employer guidelines.
- Ensuring that the primary supervisor provides quarterly reporting to Council for any PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice.
- Ensuring there is protected time for the primary supervisor and the PA to meet.
- Ensuring a system is in place for the primary supervisor to obtain feedback from any onsite supervisor.

The Council-approved primary supervisor is responsible for:

- Monitoring the performance of, and providing feedback to the PA, within:
 - this framework
 - the PA's employer-credentialled clinical responsibilities, and
 - the PA's Provisional PA scope of practice.
- Supporting the PA to meet the requirements of the supervision plan.
- Ensuring onsite supervision is available to the PA if the primary supervisor is not available.
- If delegating onsite supervision under this framework, ensuring the PA and onsite supervisor are provided with credentialling reports of the PA, and any other employer guidelines.
- Providing clinical input to the employer in relation to initial and annual credentialling review of the defined clinical responsibilities of the PA in each workplace.

- Holding regular, scheduled meetings with the PA and providing constructive feedback (incorporating feedback provided by any other onsite supervisor and the wider clinical team).
- Supporting the ongoing professional development of the PA through encouraging their engagement and participation in:
 - multi-disciplinary team meetings
 - peer review of difficult cases
 - grand rounds (if applicable)
 - journal clubs.

Online training will be provided to Council-approved primary supervisors.

The PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice is responsible for:

- engaging in all aspects of the employer-led credentialling process
- promptly raising with their employer and/or primary supervisor any issues relating to the effectiveness, functionality, or logistics of their supervision
- ensuring the ongoing delivery of culturally safe practice
- meeting the requirements of the supervision plan
- follow up to ensure that supervision meetings occurs and supervision reports are furnished.

While registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice, the PA must also meet the expectations of their primary supervisor (or their delegate) and seek their feedback and input both on a day-to-day basis in relation to specific clinical cases, and in terms of their general performance.

Meetings and reporting

Meetings between the primary supervisor and the PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice can be in person or conducted virtually. The approximate frequency of meetings should be:

- Day 1 – first meeting.
- End of weeks 1 and 2.
- End of month 1.
- Thereafter, as required. The frequency will reduce as the primary supervisor determines (e.g., as the PA progresses and acclimatises) but noting reports are to be submitted every quarter.

The primary supervisor must report to Council, using the Council report template, every three months, detailing their assessment of the PA's:

- knowledge and skills
- clinical reasoning
- communication with patients
- communication with the team and teamwork
- professional attitudes and behaviours.

Feedback should be sought by the primary supervisor from the wider multidisciplinary team (including any doctors who have provided onsite supervision within this framework) discussed with the PA, and incorporated into the online supervision report. Feedback from consumers and whānau should also be sought for inclusion in supervision reports.

In addition to the three-monthly reporting, the primary supervisor must also report to the employer and to Council immediately, if they consider the PA's practice may pose a risk to patient safety. The employer and primary supervisor must put in place immediate steps to address any patient safety concerns.

If a PA registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice is reported by the supervisor (whether in the quarterly report or otherwise) to be not meeting the required standards or whose practice may pose a risk to patient safety:

• Council staff will liaise with the primary supervisor to ensure there are no immediate patient safety concerns. • A remediation plan must be implemented by the employer, in liaison with the primary supervisor.
Key learning components (under development by Council Medical Advisers)
Orientation and induction of PAs registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice must include: • Cultural competency and cultural safety training and hauora Māori education. • HDC, ACC, privacy laws, clinical documentation, etc. • Council statements and standards – for example, informed consent, record keeping, treating yourself and those close to you. • IT training. Confirmation must be provided as part of the first quarterly report to Council that the PA has completed appropriate orientation and induction.
Supervision of PAs registered in the <u>General PA</u> scope of practice
Purpose
Once a PA has met the requirements of the provisional scope of practice, and gained registration in the General PA scope of practice, the need for supervision will remain. However, the way in which supervision is delivered can be more flexible. The employer of the PA registered in the General PA scope of practice will be responsible for ensuring effective and appropriate supervision is in place for a PA registered in the General PA scope of practice. The primary supervisor and PA are expected to work together to ensure the PA is supervised in accordance with Council's expectations – as set out below.
Period of supervision
Permanent and ongoing.
Primary supervisor specifications
A PA registered in a General PA scope of practice must practise under employer-approved supervision of their clinical practice. Any <u>employer-approved primary supervisor</u> must be vocationally registered in a scope of practice relevant to the PA's area of practice. The primary supervisor of a PA registered in the General PA scope of practice is required to provide onsite supervision noting that in some circumstances if no onsite primary supervisor is available, then the employer must appoint a secondary supervisor to provide the onsite supervision, and to liaise with the PA and the offsite primary supervisor. Onsite supervision requires that the primary supervisor (or any doctor that they delegate onsite supervision responsibilities to, within this framework) is available on a day-to-day basis to provide medical input, guidance, and advice to the PA. To achieve this, they must: • work in the same facility as the PA • be readily contactable on a day-to-day basis • be available to attend the facility promptly, if required. The employer must assign responsibilities of onsite supervision for a PA registered in the General PA scope of practice to a suitable senior level general medical registrant (a Medical Officer, or a doctor who

has 7 or more years' relevant experience in the area of practice in which the PA is working) to supplement an offsite primary supervisor, if a vocationally registered doctor is not available onsite.

Regardless of whether the primary supervisor is offsite or onsite, they must meet the accountabilities and responsibilities set out below.

Accountability and responsibility

The employer (via the Chief Medical Officer, Clinical Director (PHO), or Clinical Lead (general practice or urgent care)) is responsible for:

- Appointing a primary supervisor and ensuring appropriate supervision is in place, in line with the requirements in this framework.
- Ensuring appropriate reporting from the primary supervisor to the employer is in place.
- Ensuring there is protected time for the primary supervisor and PA to meet.
- Using the Ministry of Health credentialling framework to credential the PA to define the specific clinical responsibilities that they are assigned (based on their qualifications, training and experience) in each specific service environment in which they practise (within the General PA scope of practice). This includes undertaking a credentialling review at least annually, or when clinical responsibilities change.
- Ensuring the PA and primary supervisor are provided with credentialling reports of the PA, and any other employer guidelines.
- Ensuring a system is in place for the primary supervisor to obtain feedback from any onsite supervisor.

The employer-approved primary supervisor is responsible for:

- Monitoring the performance of, and providing feedback to the PA, within:
 - this framework
 - the PA's employer-credentialled clinical responsibilities, and
 - the General PA scope of practice.
- Providing clinical input to the employer in relation to initial and annual credentialling of the defined clinical responsibilities of the PA in each workplace.
- Providing supervision in line with this framework, including ensuring that onsite supervision is available.
- Holding regular, scheduled meetings with the PA and providing constructive feedback (including any feedback reported to them from any other doctors who have provided onsite supervision). Meetings between the primary supervisor and the PA can be in person or conducted virtually.
- Supporting the ongoing professional development of the PA through encouraging their engagement and participation in:
 - multi-disciplinary team meetings
 - peer review of difficult cases
 - grand rounds (if applicable)
 - journal clubs.

The PA registered in the General PA scope of practice is responsible for:

- engaging in all aspects of the employer-led credentialling process
- promptly raising with their employer and/or primary supervisor any issues relating to the effectiveness, functionality, or logistics of their supervision
- ensuring the ongoing delivery of culturally safe practice
- practising consistent with any employer guidelines.

The PA registered in the General PA scope of practice must also meet the expectations of the primary supervisor, and seek their feedback and input both on a day-to-day basis in relation to specific clinical cases, and in terms of their general performance.

Meetings and reporting
Meetings between the primary supervisor and the PA can be in person or conducted virtually. Periodic reporting to Council is not required for PAs registered in the General PA scope of practice. However, documentation of supervision and employer-credentialled activities must be maintained by the employer and may be requested by Council in the event of a notification about the PA to Council. The PA's employer-approved primary supervisor will be required to confirm each year, when the PA applies for a practising certificate, that the PA is complying with their supervision and employer-credentialled requirements. Existing Council processes will apply if a PA is reported by the primary supervisor or employer not to be satisfying the required standards or whose practice may pose a risk to patient safety. That is: • Council staff will liaise with the supervisor to ensure there are no immediate patient safety concerns. • A remediation plan should be implemented by the employer.
Changing employment or area of practice in the General PA scope of practice
When a PA registered in the General PA scope of practice is newly-employed or changes the area of practice in which they are working, the employer must promptly credential the PA to determine and define their clinical responsibilities in each specific service environment in which they practise. The employer must also ensure that appropriate induction and orientation is undertaken, and that supervision is in place in line with this framework. Regular, scheduled meetings should be held between the PA and primary supervisor during the induction period.