



**Te Kaunihera Rata
o Aotearoa**

Medical Council
of New Zealand

Section 2: Qualifications for registration and to change scope of practice - Consultation on regulation of physician associates/assistants (PAs)

Closes 16 February 2026

Overview

To be eligible for registration under the Act an applicant must satisfy three elements. They must satisfy Council that they are 'fit for registration' and that they are 'competent to practise in the relevant scope of practice'. Importantly, they must also hold the required qualifications (known as the 'prescribed qualifications') for registration. This section deals with the qualifications for registration that Council proposes to prescribe for the PA scopes of practice.

Under the Act, Council has a broad ability to decide what constitutes a 'prescribed qualification'. It may comprise a degree or a diploma but may also include other elements – such as a pass in an examination or assessment specified by Council, registration with an overseas authority recognised by the Council, and/or experience in providing a specified health service.

Currently, there is no training programme for PAs in Aotearoa New Zealand. When considering registration from PAs who have completed training overseas, Council will consider a PA's training, qualifications and experience (as outlined in the draft prescribed qualifications).

Provisional PA scope of practice

All PAs will initially need to register in the Provisional PA scope of practice. They will be required to hold a combination of qualifications, training and experience outlined in one of the registration pathways in the grey box below.

General PA scope of practice

To be eligible for registration in the General PA scope of practice, the PA must complete a minimum period of satisfactory supervised practice in the Provisional PA scope of practice. They must also hold a current advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certificate (or an alternative certificate approved by Council), and satisfy additional prescribed requirements, which will vary depending on how they initially satisfied the requirements for registration in the provisional scope of practice, as laid out below.¹

Proposed prescribed qualifications

The proposed requirements – the 'prescribed qualifications' – for registration are shown on the next page.

¹ The ACLS requirement is consistent with what is required for doctors moving from provisional general registration to general registration.

Proposed prescribed qualifications for registration in the Provisional PA scope of practice

Registration Pathway 1 (United Kingdom trained)

The applicant must:

- Hold a qualification approved by the General Medical Council for registration as a physician associate/assistant and have successfully completed the Physician Associate Registration Assessment (PARA) or the Physician Associate National Examination (PANE).
- Hold current full registration as a physician associate/assistant with the General Medical Council and/or with a state regulatory/licensing authority for physician assistants in the United States of America.
- Have practised clinically for at least 36 months (working at 0.5 FTE or more) during the 5 years immediately prior to application. This work must have been undertaken in the United Kingdom and/or United States of America, in the same or similar area of clinical practice to the proposed position in New Zealand.
- Provide evidence of satisfactory completion of a Council-approved knowledge-based programme in cultural safety for health practice in New Zealand within 12 months prior to applying for registration.

Registration Pathway 2 (United States trained)

The applicant must:

- Hold a qualification accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) for state licensure as a physician associate/assistant in the United States of America and have successfully completed the Physician Assistants National Certification Examination (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA); and maintained current certification with the NCCPA.
- Hold current full licensure as a physician associate/assistant with a state regulatory/licensing authority in the United States of America and/or with the General Medical Council in the United Kingdom.
- Have practised clinically for at least 36 months (working at 0.5 FTE or more) during the 5 years immediately prior to application. This work must have been undertaken in the United Kingdom and/or United States of America, in the same or similar area of clinical practice to the proposed position in New Zealand.
- Provide evidence of satisfactory completion of a Council-approved knowledge-based programme in cultural safety for health practice in New Zealand within 12 months prior to applying for registration.

Registration Pathway 3 (interim New Zealand experiential)

This option is a time-limited transitional pathway and will expire 12 months from the date of commencement.

The applicant must:

- Hold either:
 - a qualification approved by the General Medical Council for registration as a physician associate/assistant and have successfully completed the Physician Associate Registration Assessment (PARA) or the Physician Associate National Examination (PANE); and hold current full registration as a physician associate/assistant with the General Medical Council; or
 - a qualification accredited by the Accreditation Review Commission on Education for the Physician Assistant (ARC-PA) for state licensure as a physician associate/assistant in the United States of America and have successfully completed the Physician Assistants National Certification

Examination (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA); and maintained current certification with the NCCPA.

- Have practised clinically for at least 36 months (working at 0.5 FTE or more) during the last 5 years in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and/or the United States of America, including at least 24 months' practice in New Zealand immediately prior to application. This work must have been undertaken in the same or similar area of clinical practice to the proposed position in New Zealand.
- Provide evidence of satisfactory completion of a Council-approved knowledge-based programme in cultural safety for health practice in New Zealand within 12 months prior to applying for registration.

Proposed prescribed qualifications for registration in the General PA scope of practice

Pathway 1 (United Kingdom trained)

The applicant must be registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice and satisfy the following requirements:

- complete 12 months (full-time equivalent) working within the Provisional PA scope of practice
- receive satisfactory supervision reports for the 9 months of practice completed immediately prior to applying for registration within the General PA scope of practice
- hold current advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certification less than 12 months old at the standard of New Zealand Resuscitation Council CORE Advanced for PAs working in hospital-based practice; or CORE Immediate for PAs working in general practice (or an alternative certificate approved by Council)
- been recommended for registration within the General PA scope of practice by their supervisor, who has been the PA's supervisor for at least 3 months immediately prior to the application.

Pathway 2 (United States trained)

The applicant must be registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice and satisfy the following requirements:

- complete 12 months (full-time equivalent) working within the Provisional PA scope of practice
- receive satisfactory supervision reports for the 9 months of practice completed immediately prior to applying for registration within the General PA scope of practice
- hold current advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certification less than 12 months old at the standard of New Zealand Resuscitation Council CORE Advanced for PAs working in hospital-based practice; or CORE Immediate for PAs working in general practice (or an alternative certificate approved by Council)
- been recommended for registration within the General PA scope of practice by their supervisor, who has been the PA's supervisor for at least 3 months immediately prior to the application.

Pathway 3 (Interim New Zealand experiential pathway)

The applicant must be registered in the Provisional PA scope of practice and satisfy the following requirements:

- complete 6 months (full-time equivalent) working within the Provisional PA scope of practice
- receive satisfactory supervision reports for the 6 months of practice completed immediately prior to applying for registration within the General PA scope of practice
- hold current advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certification less than 12 months old at the standard of New Zealand Resuscitation Council CORE Advanced for PAs working in hospital-based practice; or CORE Immediate for PAs working in general practice (or an alternative certificate approved by Council)
- been recommended for registration within the General PA scope of practice by their supervisor, who has been the PA's supervisor for at least 3 months immediately prior to the application.