



**Te Kaunihera Rata
o Aotearoa**

Medical Council
of New Zealand

Policy, process and guidelines for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | Medical Council of New Zealand

Policy on recognition of vocational scopes of practice

Introduction

Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa | The Medical Council of New Zealand (Council) is responsible for the registration of doctors in Aotearoa New Zealand under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA). The HPCAA requires the Council to prescribe the scopes of practice within which doctors are registered and permitted to practise. For each scope of practice prescribed by the Council, the Council must prescribe one or more qualifications.

Council has prescribed three types of scopes of practice – general, vocational and special purpose. It has recognised 36 vocational scopes of practice. Within vocational scopes of practice, the specialist develops significant expertise within a specific domain or branch of medical practice and research. The legal definition of each vocational scope of practice provides a framework within which the Council is able to ensure that doctors are qualified and competent to practise within a specialised field of medicine.

This document provides information on the whole recognition process.

Criteria for recognition

To recognise a vocational scope of practice, the application must meet the Council's standards for [recognition of a vocational scope](#).

The application must be from an organisation that intends to deliver the vocational training programme that leads to registration in the prospective vocational scope, and the recertification (CPD) programme that will be undertaken by doctors registered and practising in the prospective vocational scope.

The recognition standards help to assess whether ongoing developments and innovations in medical care warrant formal recognition of a discipline as a distinct specialty within the context of the Aotearoa New Zealand health system and medical education sector. The standards have also been designed to distinguish between a distinct medical specialty and what might better be regarded as a 'special clinical interest'.

A guiding principle of the recognition process is that the Aotearoa New Zealand community and health system are better served by avoiding unnecessary fragmentation of medical knowledge, skills and medical care. As is clear from the standards, the onus is placed on the applicant to demonstrate that the benefits of specialisation (including sustainability of proposed scopes, clarity for the public and public health and safety) in a particular field of medicine outweigh the potential costs, and present evidence to this effect.

Recognition must be in the public interest and enhance public safety and health outcomes. It is not about the status or prestige of the organisation or practitioners seeking recognition.

The process for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice is lengthy. If you have any questions, please contact the Council's Education team at education@mcnz.org.nz.

If the applicant is also seeking recognition in Australia, we encourage the applicant to complete recognition in one jurisdiction first.

Recognition stages

The recognition process comprises four stages. For a new vocational scope to be recognised, stages 1-3 must be successful. If at the end of any stage, Council's decision is that the applicant has not met the standards, the process ends.

The stages are:

Stage 1: application for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice and initial review

Stage 2: consideration by assessment panel of application for recognition of a new vocational scope

Stage 3: accreditation as a training provider for vocational medical training and recertification

Stage 4: formal recognition.

Fees

Stages 1-3 each have a non-refundable fee which is payable at the beginning of each stage¹.

Stage 1 – Applying for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice and initial review

In stage 1, the applicant makes a formal application for recognition of the intended scope of practice against the Council's standards for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice.

As part of the application, the applicant must set out the intended name of the vocational scope and a brief description of the scope, as well as the intended qualification that leads to registration within this vocational scope.

Council's Te Rōpū Mātauranga | Education Committee (Education Committee) will consider the application and make a recommendation to Council on whether the application demonstrates that there is a case in principle for recognising a new vocational scope.

Successfully demonstrating there is a case in principle for recognition means that Council:

- considers recognition *may* be in the public interest, *may* enhance public safety and health outcomes and it is possible that other options may not achieve the same benefit
- has no current reason to believe the three recognition standards will not be met at the conclusion of the process.

Stage 2 – Consideration by assessment panel of application for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice

In stage 2, the application is assessed by an assessment panel appointed by the Council.

Council then considers, on the basis of this assessment, whether recognition is in the public interest, that recognition would enhance patient safety and health outcomes, and that other options would not achieve the same benefit; and the three recognition standards are met.

If Council does conclude this, then a formal consultation takes place to test this consideration with stakeholders, before a provisional decision is taken to recognise the scope. The provisional recognition will be time limited.

¹ Please refer to [Council's website for more information on the fees](#)

Stage 3 – Applying for accreditation as a training provider for vocational medical training and recertification

In stage 3 the applicant provider's potential training and recertification programme is assessed against the accreditation standards for vocational medical training and recertification programmes.

The capacity of the professional organisation representing the discipline to fill the role of setting and assessing standards in the discipline, and overseeing a postgraduate programme of training, education and assessment is considered to be central to a successful application.

As part of the process of assessing the training provider, including the proposed qualification, the Council will be guided by the following principles (see section 13 of the HPCAA):

- the proposed qualification must be necessary to protect members of the public
- the proposed qualification may not unnecessarily restrict the registration of persons as medical practitioners in this scope of practice
- the proposed qualification may not impose undue costs on health practitioners or on the public.

If the applicant provider is seeking recognition in Australia (as an Australasian training provider), or if the scope is already recognised in Australia, stage 3 will be led by the Australian Medical Council (AMC), with Council making a decision based on the AMC's assessment.

The accreditation standards and process are available [via the Council's website](#).

Stage 4 – Formal recognition

If the application is approved by Council, the Council will publish, by notice in the *New Zealand Gazette*, the name of the scope of practice, a brief description of it, and the qualification or qualifications for that scope of practice. Individual medical practitioners can then apply for registration in this new vocational scope of practice.

Recognition process and guidance

Detail of the Stage 1 process

Application

Applications must be made by the organisation planning to seek accreditation as the training provider for the qualification that is prescribed. The application should address the three standards and associated criteria, include evidence and identify the name and proposed definition of the new vocational scope of practice and the proposed prescribed qualification.

A non-refundable fee of is payable with the submission of the application.

Applications should include the following:

- The name and brief description of the proposed vocational scope of practice².
- The intended qualification that will lead to registration in the vocational scope, accompanied by the graduate outcomes and details about the training programme and assessment structure³.
- A self-assessment including evidence against the standards.
- A detailed explanation of why the proposed new vocational scope is in the public interest and why recognition would enhance patient safety and health outcomes, including an assessment of the shortfalls of any alternatives that have been explored, and a comparison of the advantages and disadvantages of:
 - the existing arrangements (no change)
 - creating a new vocational scope
 - any other relevant options, such as:
 - extension to an existing scope of practice
 - credentialling
 - voluntary agreement between bodies, recognising the qualification⁴.
- A description of the process for determining who will be Foundation Fellows/members of the training provider based on the qualification (or equivalent), training and experience to those graduates of the programme once accredited.
- Structures and governance arrangements of the training provider.
- Identification and consultation with stakeholder groups likely to be affected by the recognition of the speciality including other vocational medical training providers, other health professions and service providers, health consumers, Māori, Pacific, disabled and other groups who currently have poorer outcomes.
- Whether other professionals working in this, or related fields agree that the scope should be recognised.

Applications must be robust and methodical in addressing the standards and need sufficient information for the Education Committee to consider in its initial review.

² A scope of practice can be described in one or more of the following ways (HPCAA section 11) by reference to:

- a name or form of words that is commonly understood by persons who work in the health sector
- an area of science or learning
- tasks commonly performed
- illnesses or conditions to be diagnosed, treated, or managed.

³ It is the Council's preference that the qualification is a formal qualification awarded by the applicant body at the end of a period of specialist training to those who have been assessed as meeting the training programme's graduate outcomes.

⁴ Bodies could be other medical training organisations, government departments, agencies, non-governmental organisations or employers.

The Education Committee will review the application and then make a recommendation to Council that:

- the applicant has demonstrated that there is a case for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice; **OR**
- the applicant has not demonstrated that there is a case for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice.

Council will then make a decision having considered the application and the advice of the Education Committee.

Successfully demonstrating there is a case in principle for recognition means that Council:

- considers recognition *may* be in the public interest, *may* enhance public safety and health outcomes and it is possible that other options may not achieve the same benefit
- has no current reason to believe the three recognition standards will not be met at the conclusion of the process.

If the applicant has demonstrated that there is a case for recognition of a new vocational scope of practice, Council will advise the applicant of the outcome, provide any feedback from Council's consideration and invite the applicant to proceed to stage 2. The applicant will have up to 12 months to proceed to stage 2.

If Council decides that the applicant has not demonstrated that there is a case for recognition, the proposal will not proceed to stage 2. Council will advise the applicant of the outcome and will provide any reasons why the application was unsuccessful. The applicant will be advised of any stand-down period before the applicant can reapply.

In considering whether there is a case for recognition, the Council will focus on how likely it will be that the three recognition standards will be met at the conclusion of the process.

Detail of the Stage 2 process

In stage 2, an assessment panel will be appointed. The application and any feedback provided by the Education Committee and/or Council will be provided to the assessment panel. The applicant will be invited to provide further documentation for the panel to consider.

The assessment panel will be looking for evidence to confirm the commentary provided in the initial application and supplementary documentation.

A non-refundable fee is payable with the submission of the application.

Assessment

An assessment panel (appointed by the Council) will undertake an assessment of the application and seek further information if required. Comments or additional information may be sought from, and discussions held with, the Ministry of Health | Manatū Hauora, Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora, medical schools, other vocational training providers, professional bodies and trade unions.

The panel will develop a report for consideration by the Council's Education Committee.

The applicant will have an opportunity to view the report to check for omissions or errors of fact prior to it being considered by the Education Committee.

The Education Committee will then make a recommendation to Council that:

- the applicant has met all the standards to consider recognition of a new vocational scope of practice; **OR**
- the applicant has not met the standards.

Council will then make a decision having considered the application, the assessment made by the panel, and the advice of the Education Committee. If Council's decision is that the standards are met, it will proceed to consult on a proposal to recognise the new scope.

If Council's decision is that the applicant has not met the standards, the process ends. Council will advise the applicant of the outcome and will provide any reasons why the application was unsuccessful. The applicant will be advised of any stand-down period before the applicant can reapply.

Consultation

Section 14 of the HPCAA requires Council to consult with health practitioners and organisations who may be affected by the proposal to recognise a new vocational scope. Therefore, if Council proposes to recognise the new vocational scope of practice, Council will undertake a consultation process. Council will consult on the new vocational scope, including its description, as well as the intended qualification that leads to registration within this vocational scope.

A consultation request will be sent to:

- any organisation or provider who Council considers will be affected by the proposal
- any organisation whose members could be affected by the proposal.

This consultation will be open for two months.

Council decision

The consultation submissions will be anonymised (where requested by the submitter) and provided to the applicant for a final submission having considered the feedback. The consultation submissions will then be analysed by Council staff who will summarise the information, consider any final submission from the applicant and provide to the Committee and Council options for consideration.

Council will then determine whether to:

- provisionally recognise the new vocational scope of practice and the prescribed qualification for a specified period, subject to successful assessment of the proposed qualification and the training provider against the accreditation standards in stage 3, **OR**
- not recognise the proposed vocational scope of practice or the prescribed qualification.

The applicant will be informed of Council's decision.

If Council's decision is to not recognise the proposed vocational scope of practice or the prescribed qualification, the process ends. Council will advise the applicant of any reasons why the application was unsuccessful. The applicant will be advised of any stand-down period before the applicant can reapply.