



New Zealand
**Medical Radiation
Technologists Board**
Te Poari Ringa Hangarua Iraruke

CONSULTATION DOCUMENT: PROPOSED CHANGES TO QUALIFICATIONS PRESCRIBED FOR THE PURPOSE OF REGISTRATION

The Medical Radiation Technologists Board is proposing to make changes to some of the qualifications it prescribes for the purpose of registration in the profession of medical imaging and radiation therapy. This document sets out the proposed changes on which the Board is seeking feedback from the profession and other interested stakeholders

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Consultation on Proposed Changes to the Prescribed Qualifications for Registration as a Medical Imaging or Radiation Therapy Practitioner

The Medical Radiation Technologists Board (the Board) is seeking feedback on some proposed changes to the qualifications prescribed for registration under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 in respect of the profession of medical imaging and radiation therapy.

The changes relate specifically to three of the scopes of practice:

- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) Technologist
- Nuclear Medicine Technologist
- Sonographer

The Proposed Changes

- The Board has reviewed the qualifications for registration in three of the scopes of practice defined for the profession of medical imaging and radiation therapy:
 - o MRI Technologist
 - o Nuclear Medicine Technologist
 - o Sonographer
- The proposal would allow for four distinct qualification pathways for each of the scopes of practice (rather than just the current three pathways). The additional qualification pathway proposal will allow for overseas-trained practitioners who have an underpinning degree in medical imaging and/or radiation therapy, and who have been practising MRI/nuclear medicine/ultrasound for a considerable period of time but do not necessarily hold a formal academic qualification in the relevant area of practice.

The proposed change for each of the scopes are highlighted in red:

Prescribed Qualifications for a Magnetic Resonance Imaging Technologist

The practitioner must satisfy one of the following:

- A relevant undergraduate health science qualification and a postgraduate diploma in MRI from a New Zealand tertiary education institution that is accredited and monitored by the Board, combined with appropriate MRI practice.
- A qualification in MRI approved by the Board combined with appropriate MRI practice.
- A MRI qualification and a pass in a Board examination combined with appropriate MRI practice.
- **An undergraduate qualification in medical imaging or radiation therapy and a minimum of 2½ years equivalent fulltime appropriate MRI practice in the immediate preceding 5-year period and a pass in a Board examination.**

Prescribed Qualifications for a Nuclear Medicine Technologist

The practitioner must satisfy one of the following:

- A relevant undergraduate health science qualification and a postgraduate diploma in nuclear medicine from a New Zealand tertiary education institution that is accredited and monitored by the Board, combined with appropriate nuclear medicine practice.
- A qualification in nuclear medicine approved by the Board combined with appropriate nuclear medicine practice.
- A nuclear medicine qualification and a pass in a Board examination combined with appropriate nuclear medicine practice.
- **An undergraduate qualification in medical imaging or radiation therapy and a minimum of 2½ years equivalent fulltime appropriate nuclear medicine practice in the immediate preceding 5-year period and a pass in a Board examination.**

Prescribed Qualifications for a Sonographer

The practitioner must satisfy one of the following:

- A relevant undergraduate health science qualification and a postgraduate diploma in ultrasound from a New Zealand tertiary education institution that is accredited and monitored by the Board, combined with appropriate ultrasound practice.
- A qualification in ultrasound approved by the Board combined with appropriate ultrasound practice.
- An ultrasound qualification and a pass in a Board examination combined with appropriate ultrasound practice.
- **An undergraduate qualification in medical imaging or radiation therapy and a minimum of 2½ years equivalent fulltime appropriate ultrasound practice in the immediate preceding 5-year period and a pass in a Board examination.**

Subsequent Issue of a Practising Certificate

The Board may impose a period of supervised practice as a condition on a registrant's practising certificate to ensure they are satisfied the practitioner is safe to practise within the New Zealand health environment.

Legislative Context of the Changes

The Medical Radiation Technologists Board is established under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) and has a duty to protect the health and safety of the public through setting the standards for good medical imaging and radiation therapy practice. The Board is responsible for the registration of practitioners and this includes prescribing the qualifications required for registration in accordance sections 12 and 13 of the Act.

As a responsible authority the Board must hold a period of consultation if proposing to amend, revoke or replace any prescribed qualifications as per section 14 of the Act.

Assisting Health Workforces While Maintaining a Focus on Public Protection

The Board has been advised of workforce shortages in at least some parts of the country which have been ongoing for some time, particularly for the practice of MRI and sonography. With these modalities overseas either not being regulated as a separate scope, or not regulated under a legislative framework similar to New Zealand, helping to narrow these shortages through the recruitment of overseas-trained practitioners has been difficult for some employers.

The imminent launch of online exams in both of these scopes of practice offers more flexibility for overseas-trained practitioners to demonstrate their clinical competence in the relevant scope of practice.

The proposed changes to the prescribed qualifications for the three scopes of practice in MRI, ultrasound, and nuclear medicine will enable more registration options for overseas-trained practitioners while still ensuring the protection of public health and safety remains at the forefront of the Board's regulatory framework.

A Shorter-Term Measure Pending a Bigger-Picture Scopes Review

The Board is planning to undertake a bigger-picture strategic review of all the scopes of practice defined for the medical imaging and radiation therapy profession.

One of the focal considerations of this review is to look at how the Board can work collaboratively with stakeholders to facilitate more flexibility in respect of the future regulation of a workforce whose practice parameters are being constantly challenged by fast changing and evolving technology. This work will support the recommendations of the 2020 Health Systems Review (commonly referred to as "The Simpson Report") commissioned by the government. With global shortages for many health workforces forecast to increase, the New Zealand health system has a workforce under pressure and the Simpson Report signals that the current workforce model is not sustainable.

This bigger-picture scopes of practice review will look at how to better future-proof the regulation of the profession to ensure better workforce flexibility and responsiveness to changing community health needs and demands. It is expected the Board will commence engaging with key stakeholder groups in early 2021.

As an intermediate step, the proposed changes to the qualification pathways prescribed for registration in the MRI, sonography, and nuclear medicine scopes of practice, will go some way to helping to ensure the current qualifications requirements for New Zealand registration are not unnecessarily restrictive while maintaining the bar in respect of practitioners' entry level competence at the time of registration. The protection of the health and safety of the public remains the Board's primary concern.

Submitting Your Consultation Feedback

You have an opportunity to provide your feedback on the proposed changes to the gazette notice for the three scopes of practice (MRI, NM, US) by completing an online questionnaire that is available on the Board's website at www.mrtboard.org.nz (News and Media).

The consultation will be open for



**6
weeks**

The online questionnaire will close on **Friday 6th November 2020**
