

# Certification scheme for the medical laboratory science profession to become a reality by 1 July 2020

*Australasian Association of Clinical Biochemists (AACB) and The Australian Institute of Medical Scientists (AIMS)*

After two years of information gathering, discussion and reflection (and two to three decades of debate), the medical laboratory science profession in Australia will soon have its own national professional certification scheme. Representatives from AIMS, AACB, ASM, HGSA, ASC, ANZSBT, ASCIA, FSA, THANZ, ACS, the RCPA Faculty of Science, and representatives from the histology discipline have all worked together to design a model of medical laboratory science certification for professionals, no matter their chosen discipline.

It is our intention for the proposed scheme to be officially launched from 1 July 2020 and it will provide our profession with a mechanism for assuring a commitment to professional standards of service that contribute to safe and ethical health care. The first stage of implementation will start with certification for the scientist and technical officer professional groupings. Other professional groupings will be included once the scheme is established. The proposed post-nominals for certified professionals in these professional levels will be MLS (Medical Laboratory Scientist) and MLT (Medical Laboratory Technician). It is intended that these will become protected titles in accordance with the practices followed by other Australian self-regulated professions.

At the core of the proposed certification scheme is the current Competency-Based Standards (CBS) framework. Consultations and discussions for the development of the certification model confirmed that the current CBS was a useful guide for competent professional practice, although there is also scope for it to continue to develop and evolve over time. In keeping with 21st century health profession regulation (and self-regulation) practice, the proposed certification scheme will include elements of competency assessment and promote professional development activities that support competent professional practice.

The initial establishment phase (which has recently commenced) has been led by a small working group of representatives from AIMS and AACB. The governance structure for the certification body will allow all incorporated professional associations with eligible members to participate formally in the ongoing guidance and operation of the scheme. We are pleased to report we have confirmation that AIMS, AACB, HGSA, ASM, ASC, ANZSBT, ASCIA, and FSA will all be founding members of the new company. Scope has also been included for the scheme to actively liaise with organisations and agencies who share an interest in the quality of laboratory practice, such as employer peak organisations, consumer groups, and standards-setting bodies and accreditation assessment agencies.

The project consultants, Human Capital Alliance, have provided the working group with a draft Implementation Plan to guide activity as the final details of the scheme are bedded down. Our initial timeline proved to be somewhat ambitious and a revised version has been appended to the plan; however, we are still confident of starting the scheme in 2020. The implementation plan and revised timeline can be accessed at <https://www.aacb.asn.au/professionaldevelopment/certification>, along with the original Discussion Paper and the Position Paper that explored the relevant issues and options for formulating the structure of the certification scheme. The working group intends to commence piloting of the scheme and its operation in the early part of 2020. Eligible professionals are strongly encouraged to participate in the pilot process to assist with trialling the scheme so that it will be fully functional by 1 July 2020.

Congratulations to those individuals who committed significant time and effort in the negotiations that have led to this important turning point in our profession's development – it is a major achievement for all of us, given the scope of what needed to be canvassed. Stay tuned for regular updates on implementation progress in coming months.

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