

A CAREER STRUCTURE FOR MEDICAL SCIENTISTS - A Discussion Document for Feedback

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The basic structure involves six distinct career phases; trainee scientist, scientist, pre-specialist training, specialist scientist, clinical scientist and laboratory manager. I am not fixated on titles, but the phases of career are important.

Overall Aim

The aim of the Career Framework for Medical Scientists is to:

- Introduce a career framework encompassing all disciplines and employment groups within the workforce based on roles and function and linked to transferable skills and competences
- Clearly identify pathways for progression, supported by learning and development
- Provide national flexibility to support local service delivery, the expansion and extension of current roles
- Provision of improved opportunities for learning and professional development will be provided supporting recruitment and retention into healthcare science disciplines, removing the barriers to career progression
- An education and training framework will be developed based on a range of academic, vocational and professional qualifications/awards to recognise underpinning knowledge and skill acquisition relevant to functions being undertaken, based on equivalence within each career framework stage irrespective of initial entry point
- The science base within the profession will be preserved such that career progression will not only be on the basis of increased management and financial responsibilities but also on specialised scientific service provision and research and development roles

There would need to be a transition phase for all those currently in the profession. Because of the multiple industrial instruments in different jurisdictions and enterprises it would be necessary for all of these organisations to voluntarily adopt this career structure. There is no tying of pay rates to these classifications, only a desire to make career advancement and transfer easier for scientist and their employers.

Personal development plans will help individuals who are not from academic backgrounds to identify needs and develop the skills and competences required for working at more senior levels. There will be a number of different kinds of learning programmes to help fill gaps.

The focus on skills and competences related to the service function to be delivered is absolutely fundamental to the success of the proposal. Educational and professional requirements will continue to be important in the design, delivery and assessment of programmes. These will need to be

created and administered by the professional associations covering the various disciplines. It is expected that there be two levels of professional qualification offered, a specialist discipline Membership and a specialist Fellowship. These contributions will be enhanced by added flexibilities so that the skills required to deliver patient and public focused services are able to transcend traditional professional boundaries.

Registration and Regulation

Registration is currently not available for medical scientists but a component of the successful implementation of this career structure would be the Registration and ongoing certification of medical scientists. It is envisaged that Registration would mark the end of the 'trainee' phase. An applicant would be required to show that they had been trained in an appropriate facility by suitably trained senior staff. There would need to be a syllabus and evidence of satisfactory achievement against this syllabus. Registration would be an annual event and would require the applicant to show ongoing CPD and include some data collection on current duties, role, location and future intentions. The Registration authority would be central and liaise with organisations such as NATA and NPAAC as well as the professions.

This would be to provide improved workforce planning capabilities into the future and potentially provide added protection for the public.

The Career Pathway

There are probably four broad categories of scientist working in Australian clinical laboratories.

1. NPAAC defined Medical Scientists with a limited scope of practice in a particular specialty will usually have been awarded a basic degree in science or applied science
2. NPAAC defined Medical Scientists who perform a broad range of clinical, technical or scientific procedures will usually have been awarded a first degree (vocational) or equivalent (multi-skilled scientists)
3. Medical Scientists who provide a range of specialist services will usually have been awarded a post graduate qualification and equivalent to Masters level who would be described as scientific 'experts' in their field
4. NPAAC defined Clinical Scientists, that is, scientists with a Fellowship or a relevant PhD and ten years experience

There will be a need in the future to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of all of these medical scientists working in appropriate geographical areas and disciplines to maintain the current, or better, levels of service provision. To facilitate this, the professional associations

through their respective examination systems could administer traineeships in specific subdisciplines in geographical areas, for example in toxicology or paediatric biochemistry, say two internships in each in area in the east and west. The internships would be designed to meet future workforce needs.