



National Laboratory Engagement Group

Technician Bridging Work Stream Recommendations

Desired Future State:

Interest – Affordable solutions

Both parties recognise that decisions on funding and resource allocation:

- Need to be sustainable and balanced in the use of available resources; and
- Recognise the importance in striving for efficiency and the need to balance increasing demands on the medical laboratory workforce with incentives that the workforce values.

The parties recognise that the ability and opportunity to provide access to technician bridging varies considerably amongst employers due to a range of factors including:

- Available funding – budget allocation for education programmes.
- Skill mix within the discipline – current or future staffing ratios.
- Ability to release staff from rosters to attend required lectures etc.
- DHB's to give MLT's time to visit other disciplines to complete their log book

This paper proposes some recommended guidelines for organisations when considering support for technicians undertaking bridging programmes to RMLS qualifications.

Recommendations

Workforce Planning

It is recommended that employers, when considering applications for bridging, have a clear understanding of their future workforce requirements and actively plan to integrate the bridging graduates into their workforce as scientists once registered. Whilst education and development for its own sake is laudable it does seem manifestly unfair to support employees to gain qualifications and then refuse to acknowledge them financially. Due to the length of time that may be taken to complete courses (especially if QMLT to BMLS) it may not be possible to reserve a scientists position for graduates. In these cases an agreement could be made to appoint to the next available suitable QMLS position that becomes available in their laboratory.

Length of Tenure

It is recommended that generally technicians need to work a minimum of 24 months in their chosen discipline before becoming eligible for support. There may be occasions when previous experience or organisation imperatives could shorten this time frame, but it is believed that two year practical experience provides a solid foundation in a discipline which will improve the candidates' chance of successfully completing their course of study.



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Recommendation

Financial Support

It is recommended that employers determine, via workforce planning, the number of employees they may support through bridging. Provision should be made in their annual budget for educational support payments.

A clear statement should be published outlining how many positions, the levels of potential support available and the application process.

Applications should be endorsed by the employees' manager with a commitment to support with rostering, leave planning etc.

Applications should be considered by an unbiased panel.

Background

1. Workforce Planning

Inconsistencies exist between organisations involving the ability to transition to QMLT positions post registration once the bridging course is completed.

To assist in decision making employers should review and consider information including but not limited to:

- The age profile of current employees. The laboratory workforce is aging and in some cases the opportunity to provide bridging assistance would help to replace from within as baby boomers retire.
- Future projected workload. What are the business development plans for the laboratory, what technological or scientific changes are on the horizon, should effort be placed into developing skills from within rather than employing from outside.
- Desired laboratory skill mix. QMLT to QMLS ration within the individual laboratory, supervision requirements, scopes of practice.
- Staff turnover.
- Employee satisfaction, development, motivation and retention strategies.

2. Calibre of employee

The goal of supporting employees through the bridging process should be to attract and motivate potential excellent scientists, which will be of value to their peers and workplace. To this extent the process of gaining support should challenge their commitment and help to assure that the best people get the support.

3. Length of tenure:

Registration pre-requisites GradDipSC

Universities require a minimum of one years experience in an appropriate ISO15180 accredited laboratory either within NZ or overseas plus a relevant BSc.



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A further two years of practical experience, can be concurrent with the course of study, is required for registration as a QMLS.

4. **Entry qualification:**

Graduate Diploma:

Additional pre-requisite is a letter of support from the employer giving approval for all required laboratory work for the entirety of the course.

AUT BMLS Part Time Study

Does not require a relevant degree; however there is the opportunity to cross credit relevant papers.

5. **Financial Support:**

Support for bridging programmes may consist of:

- Paid study leave to attend lectures and/or exams.
- Partial payment e.g. 25%, 50%, 75% of fees.
- Full payment of fees.
- Payment can be made at enrolment or may be reimbursed on successful completion of the papers/course.

The employers' ability to support will be dependant on financial viability, a prescriptive approach in the current financial climate is likely to gain little support from the DHBs/NZBS. Generally it is acknowledged by employers that developing and supporting known employees and encouraging them to gain further qualifications are highly beneficial both for morale and performance.

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