

Improving quality, protecting patients

Standards of proficiency for Anatomical Pathology Technologists

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Academy for Healthcare Science's Standards of Proficiency for Anatomical Pathology Technologists, which came into effect in September 2014 following the transfer of the Register of Anatomical Pathology Technologists from its previous registration body (the Voluntary Registration Council).

These standards were developed by the profession, professional bodies and the previous registration body, the Voluntary Registration Council. The standards were developed to be consistent with the requirements that Healthcare Science Practitioners currently regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council have to meet. The standards have been in place for a number of years and are represented here without any changes. Anyone who is currently registered as an Anatomical Pathology Technologist has demonstrated that they met and continue to meet the standards set out here. Individuals who apply for registration as an Anatomical Pathology Technologist with the Academy for Healthcare Science will also need to demonstrate that they meet these standards.

One of the Academy for Healthcare Science's key tasks is to uphold professional standards across Healthcare Science, providing assurance for the public and commissioners of services. Our continuing ambition is to see statutory regulation put in place across the entire Healthcare Science profession. However, we believe it is vital to establish an appropriate and effective system for the registration and regulation of Healthcare Science Practitioners (including Anatomical Pathology Technologists) who are not currently regulated by law through the Health and Care Professions Council.

I am confident that these standards are fit for purpose and reflect safe and effective professional practice for Anatomical Pathology Technologists.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Monkman', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Janet Monkman, CEO & Registrar

The standards

These *Standards of Proficiency* set out the minimum standard that a person must meet in order to register with the Academy for Healthcare Science (the Academy) for the first time. The standards are used to approve education and training programmes and to assess whether a person is competent to practise as a Anatomical Pathology Technologist (that is, we undertake a formal assessment, which – when successfully completed – results in a Certificate of Competence being awarded by the Academy).

Our *Standards of Proficiency* cover three areas:

1. Professional autonomy and accountability
2. Skills required for practice as a Anatomical Pathology Technologist
3. Knowledge of Healthcare Science.

These standards are not the same as a person's 'scope of practice'. We define 'scope of practice' as the area or areas of a registrant's profession in which they have the knowledge, skills and experience to practise lawfully, safely and effectively, in a way that meets our standards and does not pose any danger to the public or to them.

We recognise that the practice of experienced registrants often becomes more focused and specialised. This might be because of specialisation in a particular area of practice or with a particular group, or a movement into roles in management, education or research. As a registrant's scope of practice changes, they may not be able to demonstrate that they meet each and every standard required in the *Standards of Proficiency*. This is not a problem, as long as they make sure that they are practising safely and effectively within their given scope of practice and do not practise in the areas where they are not proficient to do.

Standards of Proficiency

Professional autonomy and accountability

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

1a: Professional autonomy and accountability

- 1a.1 be able to practise within the legal and ethical boundaries of your profession
- understand what is required of you by the Academy for Healthcare Science
 - understand the need to respect, and so far as possible uphold, the rights, dignity and autonomy of every patient, client and user including their role in the diagnostic and therapeutic process
 - be aware of the legal and regulatory rules and guidelines that govern and affect anatomical pathology, post-mortem examination and mortuary practice
- 1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner
- be able to identify the differing requirements of various bereaved groups
- 1a.3 be able to maintain confidentiality and obtain informed consent
- be able to obtain and/or review consent in accordance with applicable legislation, protocols and guidelines
- 1a.4 be able to exercise a professional duty of care

- 1a.5 know the limits of your practice and when to seek advice
- be able to assess a situation, determine the nature and severity of the problem and call upon the required knowledge and experience to deal with the problem
 - be able to initiate resolution of problems and are able to exercise personal initiative
- 1a.6 recognise the need for effective self-management of workload and be able to practise accordingly
- 1a.7 understand the obligation to maintain fitness to practise
- understand the importance of caring for yourself, including maintaining your health
 - be able to maintain a high standard of professional effectiveness by adopting strategies for physical and psychological self-care, critical self-awareness, and by being able to maintain a safe working environment
- 1a.8 understand the need for career-long self-directed learning

1b: Professional relationships

- 1b.1 know the professional and personal scope of your practice and be able to make referrals
- understand the range and limitations of operational relationships between anatomical pathology technologists, pathologists, other health care professionals, police service employees and HM Coroner or Procurator Fiscal
- 1b.2 be able to work, where appropriate, in partnership with other professionals, support staff, patients, clients and users, and their relatives and carers

- understand the team and discipline approach to the provision of mortuary services
 - be aware of the general working of a hospital and/or local authority
 - understand the need to build and sustain professional relationships as both an independent practitioner and collaboratively as a member of a team
 - understand the need to engage relatives and carers in planning and evaluating care and interventions to meet their needs
 - recognise the principles and practices of other health care professionals and how they interact with the role of an anatomical pathology technologist
- 1b.3 be able to contribute effectively to work undertaken as part of a multi-disciplinary team
- 1b.4 be able to demonstrate effective and appropriate skills in communicating information, advice, instruction and professional opinion to colleagues, patients, clients, users, their relatives and carers
- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 6.5
 - understand how communication skills affect the assessment of patients, clients and users, and how the means of communication should be modified to address and take account of factors such as age, physical and learning disability
 - understand the behaviour of people undergoing the bereavement process
 - be able to identify anxiety and stress in bereaved relatives, carers and others, and recognise the potential impact on communication
 - be able to select, move between and use appropriate forms of verbal and non-verbal communication with patients, clients, users and others
 - be aware of the characteristics and consequences of non-verbal communication and how this can be affected by culture, age, ethnicity, gender, religious beliefs and socio-economic status
- understand the need to provide bereaved relatives (or people acting on their behalf), clients and users with the information necessary to enable them to make informed decisions
 - understand the need to use an appropriate interpreter to assist patients whose first language is not English, wherever possible
 - recognise that relationships with relatives, clients and users should be based on mutual respect and trust, and be able to maintain high standards of care even in situations of personal incompatibility
 - be able to inform colleagues and other relevant members of the clinical team of outcomes of anatomical pathology procedures to unambiguous standards
- 1b.5 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the patient, client or user
- be aware of the need to empower relatives, carers or people acting on behalf of the deceased to participate in the decision-making processes related to the post-mortem examination or any aspect of after-death care or tissue donation
 - recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of relatives, carers or people acting on behalf of the deceased
 - be able to use effective communication skills in the reception and identification of patients, and transfer of patients to the care of others

Skills required for practice as an Anatomical Pathology Technologist

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

2a: Identification and assessment of health and social care needs

- 2a.1 be able to gather appropriate information
- be able to effectively to gather information relevant to the care or examination of deceased patients from a range of sources and from people in a range of emotional states
 - be able to select suitable specimens and procedures relevant to pathologists' needs, including collection and preparation of specimens as and when appropriate
- 2a.2 be able to use appropriate assessment techniques
- be able to undertake and record a thorough, sensitive and detailed assessment, using appropriate techniques and equipment
 - be able to demonstrate practical skills in the essentials of measurement, data generation and analysis
 - be able to conduct a thorough and detailed physical examination of the patient using observations and palpation, and other assessment skills to inform post-mortem investigation across all age ranges, including calling for specialist help where necessary
 - be able to assess, monitor and care for the deceased before, during and after any

post-mortem examination or procedure

- be able to establish safe environments for clinical practice, which minimises risks to patients, clients, users, others, including the use of risk assessment and hazard control

2a.3 be able to undertake or arrange clinical investigations as appropriate

2a.4 be able to analyse and evaluate the information collected

- be able to interrogate and process data and information gathered accurately in order to conduct the evisceration and reconstruction methods most appropriate to the patient's circumstances

2b: Formulation and delivery of plans and strategies for meeting health and social care needs

2b.1 be able to use research, reasoning and problem solving skills

- recognise the value of research to the systematic evaluation of practice
- be able to conduct evidence-based practice, evaluate practice systematically, and participate in audit procedures
- be aware of methods commonly used in health care research
- be able to demonstrate a logical and systematic approach to problem solving
- be able to evaluate research and other evidence to inform your practice
- be able to adapt and apply problem-solving skills when dealing with unusual or unforeseen circumstances

2b.2 be able to draw on appropriate knowledge and skills in order to make professional judgements

- be able to change your practice as needed to take account of new developments

- be able to demonstrate a level of skill in the use of information technology appropriate to your profession
- be able to recognise signs and interpret clinical information, of infection hazards and take appropriate action to minimise the effects to others

2b.3 be able to formulate specific and appropriate management plans including the setting of timescales

- understand the requirement to adapt practice to meet the needs of different client groups distinguished by, for example, physical, psychological, environmental, cultural or socio-economic factors
- be able to identify the cause of mortuary procedural anomalies and implement remedies

2b.4 be able to conduct appropriate diagnostic or monitoring procedures, treatment, therapy or other actions safely and skilfully

- understand the need to maintain the safety of both patients, clients and users, and those involved in their care
- understand the specific local context of practice, including the socio-cultural diversity of the community
- be able to undertake appropriate evisceration, reconstruction and intervention relevant to deceased patient care and the post-mortem diagnostic procedure
- be able to modify and adapt practice to emergency situations
- be able to promote and comply with measures designed to control infection risk

2b.5 be able to maintain records appropriately

- be able to keep accurate, legible records and recognise the need to handle these records and all other clinical information in accordance with applicable legislation,

protocols and guidelines

- understand the need to use only accepted terminology (which includes abbreviations) in making clinical records
- be able to use systems for the accurate and correct identification of patients and laboratory specimens
- understand the need to adhere to protocols of specimen identification, including bar coding and electronic tag systems

2c: Critical evaluation of the impact of, or response to, the registrant's actions

2c.1 be able to monitor and review the ongoing effectiveness of planned activity and modify it accordingly

- be able to gather information, including qualitative and quantitative data, that help to evaluate the responses of deceased patients, relatives and carers
- recognise the need to monitor and evaluate the quality of practice and the value of contributing to the generation of data for quality assurance and improvement programmes
- be able to make reasoned decisions to initiate, continue, modify or cease operations or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately
- be able to select and apply quality and process control measures that have a statistical or measurable output
- be able to identify and respond appropriately to abnormal outcomes from quality indicators

2c.2 be able to audit, reflect on and review practice

- understand the principles of quality control and quality assurance
- be aware of the role of audit and review

in quality management, including quality control, quality assurance and the use of appropriate outcome measures

- be able to maintain an effective audit trail and work towards continual improvement
- participate in quality assurance programmes, where appropriate
- understand the value of reflection on clinical practice and the need to record the outcome of such reflection
- recognise the value of case conferences and other methods of review

Knowledge of Healthcare Science

To be registered and continue your registration with us, you must:

3a.1 know the key concepts of the biological, physical, social, psychological and clinical sciences which are relevant to your profession-specific practice

- understand the structure and function of the human body, relevant to your practice, together with a knowledge of health, disease, disorder and dysfunction
- be aware of the principles and applications of scientific enquiry
- recognise the role of other professions in health, social care and forensic investigation
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- understand the normal process of grief and basic counselling skills
- understand normal and altered anatomy and physiology throughout the human life-span, sufficient to understand the nature and effects of injury or illness

- understand the basic structure, classification, and control of pathogenic agents
- understand the immune response in health and disease
- understand the techniques and associated instrumentation used in the practice of anatomical pathology:
 - be able to conduct evisceration, dissection and reconstruction in order to assist with post-mortem diagnosis, research, clinical investigations, tissue donation and deceased patient care
 - understand factors affecting choice of methods, techniques, equipment, type of incision, sequence of evisceration and progress of the post-mortem examination
 - be able to recognise disease and trauma processes, and know how to apply this knowledge to the planning of post-mortem examination and deceased patient care process
 - understand the methods and techniques required to ensure that deceased patients are handled safely, effectively and with dignity to ensure the safety and wellbeing of those involved in the process
 - understand the principles for receiving, identifying, transferring and positioning patients for diagnostic and care procedures
- understand the principles underpinning the safe and effective utilisation of equipment that is used for diagnostic and care purposes in the mortuary
- be able to establish and maintain safe working environments, which minimise risk to patients, clients, users and other service users, including the use of risk assessment and hazard control

- understand the principles and practices of the management of major incidents
- know the role of the mortuary in the diagnosis and monitoring of specific disease conditions
- understand the role of morbid anatomy and cellular pathology in the diagnosis and treatment of disease

3a.2 know how professional principles are expressed and translated into action through a number of different diagnostic, monitoring, treatment and management approaches and how to select or modify approaches to meet the needs of an individual

- understand how mortuary practices are developed to meet the requirements of various service users e.g. the bereaved, the local community, hospitals, HM Coroner or Procurator Fiscal and police services

3a.3 understand the need to establish and maintain a safe practice environment

- be aware of applicable health and safety legislation, and any relevant safety policies and procedures in force at the workplace, such as incident reporting, and be able to act in accordance with these
- be able to work safely, including being able to select appropriate hazard control and risk management, reduction or elimination techniques in a safe manner

in accordance with health and safety legislation

- be able to select appropriate personal protective equipment and use it correctly
- be able to establish safe environments for clinical practice, which minimise risks to patients, clients and users, those treating them, and others, including the use of hazard control and particularly infection control
- understand sources of hazard in the workplace, including specimens, raw materials, clinical waste and equipment
- know and be able to apply appropriate moving and handling techniques
- be aware of immunisation requirements and the role of occupational health
- know the correct principles and applications of disinfectants, methods for sterilisation and dealing with waste and spillages correctly
- know the use and application of engineering controls e.g. mechanical ventilation systems such as fume cupboards or down draft tables and isolation rooms
- understand the application of principles of good mortuary practice relevant to health and safety