

Improving quality,
protecting patients

Standards of Proficiency for Genetic Technologists

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Foreword

I am pleased to present the Academy for Healthcare Science's Standards of Proficiency for Genetic Technologists, which came into effect in September 2014 following the transfer of the Register of Genetic 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 a Genetic Technologist has demonstrated that they met and continue to meet the standards set out here. Individuals who apply for registration as a Genetic 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 Genetic 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 Genetic Technologists.



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 Genetic 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 Genetic 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

1a.2 be able to practise in a non-discriminatory manner

1a.3 be able to maintain confidentiality and obtain informed consent

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

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

- be able to recognise the limits of personal practice and know when to seek advice

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 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 patients, clients, users and carers in planning and evaluating care
- be able to respond appropriately to enquiries regarding the service provided

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
- 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 patients, clients and users (or people acting on their behalf) 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 patients, 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 communicate with a range of other professionals as appropriate

1b.5 understand the need for effective communication throughout the care of the patient, client or user

- recognise the need to use interpersonal skills to encourage the active participation of patients, clients and users
- be able to communicate the outcome of problem solving and research and development activities
- be able to communicate technical material, and contribute to the communication of scientific material

Skills required for practice as a Genetic 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

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

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

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

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 (and, in the case of clinical scientists, conduct fundamental research)

- 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 and social 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 interpret data
- be able to obtain knowledge from relevant sources
- be able to read, collate and appraise information
- be able to support the aims and objectives associated with a project
- be able to follow an experimental protocol to meet the aims and objectives in a way that provides reliable and robust data (i.e. free of bias)
- be able to perform the required experimental work
- be able to communicate technical material, and contribute to the communication of scientific material
- be able to accurately collate and present experimental results – both spoken and written

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

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 implement an investigation strategy

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
- be able to perform a range of techniques employed in the modality
- understand the need to conform to standard operating procedures and conditions
- understand the need to work with accuracy and precision
- be able to solve problems that may arise during the routine application of techniques (troubleshooting)

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

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 patients, clients and users to their care
- be able to evaluate management plans against treatment milestones using recognised health outcome measures and revise the plans as necessary in conjunction with the patient, client or user
- 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 treatment or the use of techniques or procedures, and record the decisions and reasoning appropriately

- understand that outcomes may not always conform to expectations but may still meet the needs of patients, clients or users
- be able to make judgements on the effectiveness of procedures
- be able to use quality control and quality assurance techniques, including restorative action when performance deteriorates

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
- understand the principles of clinical governance including clinical audit, accreditation requirements relevant to the modality and the importance of confidentiality, informed consent and data security
- understand the importance of participating in accreditation systems related to the modality
- recognise the need to be aware of emerging technologies and new developments

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, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy and the research process
- recognise the role of other professions in health and social care
- understand the theoretical basis of, and the variety of approaches to, assessment and intervention
- understand the relevant aspects of the science that underpins the specialty (modality)
- understand the clinical situation relevant to the patient samples referred to your specialty

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

- be able to apply the knowledge base to the specialty (modality) and to the range of procedures/investigations available
- understand the clinical applications of his/her specialty and the consequences that may result from investigations
- be aware of the evidence base that underpins the use of the procedures employed by the service
- understand the principles associated with a range of techniques employed in the modality
- know the standards of practice expected from these techniques

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
- 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.