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Definition of a Mortuary Technician

The Qualified Mortuary Technician plays a vital role in assisting the pathologist during the post-mortem procedure and in the management and operational requirements of the mortuary facility and the post-mortem suite.

The qualification is designed for Trainee Mortuary Technicians who usually work in a mortuary.

The aim of this examination is to assess the competence of the Trainee Mortuary Technicians to give safe and practical assistance to the pathologist in the post-mortem suite, ensure the smooth operation of the Mortuary, understand the legislative, legal and cultural requirements under which a post-mortem is performed, and to maintain the mortuary in a hygienic and efficient manner.

The QMLT candidate has two syllabi to study:

- The **Common Syllabus** which is common to all NZIMLS technician qualifications
- The **Discipline Specific Syllabus** which is common only to the discipline in which the candidate is sitting the QMLT exam.

The Common Syllabus and Discipline Specific Syllabus are assessed by one examination only.

Logbook – Mortuary

The Mortuary Special Interest Group (Mort SIG) has prepared both a syllabus and logbook for use by Trainee Mortuary Technicians preparing for the NZIMLS QMLT examinations.

The logbook is **compulsory** and is an aid to candidates preparing for the QMLT examinations and to be a record of training or practical competency, accomplished by mastery assessment.

**NOTE** - The logbook is required to be presented as part of the examination process.

The Mortuary Technician Special Interest Group (Mort SIG) has taken a significant step in this review to scope the theoretical knowledge required. That it is sufficient to perform all procedures in the mortuary suite and to understand the importance of documentation and the required process for the correct management and legal requirements of the deceased referred by the coronial service and all other users of a post-mortem examination.

It must be understood that role and tasks of the Qualified Mortuary Technician are not just confined to mortuary practices and processes, but must enveloped within the recognised principles and quality standards of good medical laboratory practice.

**This does not preclude employers training their trainee technicians for their own needs**
Summary of Outcomes

To achieve this qualification a candidate must:

- Demonstrate a BASIC knowledge of human anatomy and physiology.
- Apply appropriate techniques including Photography in post-mortem examinations.
- Identify potential hazards to health within the mortuary and take measures to minimize or eliminate these risks in the mortuary.
- Demonstrate knowledge of the New Zealand laws and codes of practice relating to the mortuary and implement legal requirements in relation to the dead.
- Demonstrate appropriate administrative procedures and deal correctly with visitors to the mortuary and post-mortem suite.

Each of these aims is expanded into objectives in the content section below. Please note that objectives indicated for Practical Assessment may also be assessed through the written examination.

Assessment

The assessment for the awarding of the qualification is made up of two parts: A Practical Assessment Work Log Book and a three hour written examination both of which test knowledge and understanding of the whole syllabus.

- The Practical Assessment Work Logbook prescribes the practical tasks that must be undertaken by the candidate and authorized by the Supervising Pathologist or Technical Head, providing a continual assessment of practical performance of the candidate.

- These tasks must be completed in order for the candidate to be eligible to take the written examination.

- The written examination consists of one paper of three hours’ duration and may comprises any of the following sections, short answer questions, all of which must be attempted, one section of fill in gaps, one section of diagram identification, one section of calculations, one section of longer structured questions requiring an essay style answer or other questions as set by the Examiner.

The maximum number of marks attainable in the written examination is 100 marks. Candidates must gain an overall mark of 50% in order to be awarded a pass.
1. Role of the Mortuary Technician and Medical Laboratory Science within the health system

**Learning outcome:** The candidate will describe the scope and function of a Mortuary Technician and the role, principles and profession of Medical Laboratory Science within the New Zealand health system.

- Refer to Common syllabus

2. Have a basic knowledge of human anatomy and physiology, by being able to

2.1 Use and understand relevant basic medical terminology in the:

a) Musculo-skeletal system: identify and name the main parts of the skeleton.

b) Central Nervous system: Identify and name the external features of the brain and it’s membranes.

c) Cardio-vascular system: identify and name the heart chambers, valves. Explain the functions of the circulatory system.

d) Respiratory system: Identify, name and describe the main parts and explain the functions of the respiratory tract and muscle of respiration.

e) Alimentary system: Identify and name the main parts and explain the functions of the digestive tract.

f) Urinary system: Identify and name the main parts and explain the functions of the urinary tract.

g) Genital system: Identify, name and describe the main parts and the functions of the male genital tract and the female genital tract.

h) Endocrine system: identify and name the main parts. Explain the functions of the endocrine organs.

i) Immune system: Identify and name the main parts and explain the functions of the spleen and lymphoid tissues.

j) Special senses: Identify, name and explain the main functions of the eye and ear.
3. **Have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of how to apply appropriate techniques in post-mortem examinations (Refer to the Qualified Mortuary Technician Examination Practical Logbook 2014) by being able to:**

3.1 Carry out assignments 1-11 from the Qualified Mortuary Technicians Practical Logbook 2014

3.2 Describe how to prepare a body for post-mortem examination according to instructions from the pathologist

3.3 Describe the evisceration techniques of Lettular and Ghon and be able to explain the differences between the techniques and advantages and disadvantages of each.

3.4 Describe how to and the need for techniques such as opening the skull, removing the brain and pituitary gland, stripping the dura mater, removing a neck block, removing the spinal cord using both anterior and posterior approaches.

3.5 Describe what pathological findings you might find during evisceration and what you would do if you found an abnormality.

3.6 Describe the measurements and weights to be recorded in adult autopsies

3.7 Describe the how to and the need for reconstruction after a post-mortem examination and to a standard suitable for viewing and release to a funeral director.

3.8 Describe the principles of tissue fixation and name various fluids used in preserving and storing tissue in this way.

3.9 Describe the various collection techniques, labelling, documentation and tracking requirements of tissue and body fluids obtained during the post-mortem for processing and analysis.

3.10 Describe the differences between an adult and a paediatric post mortem.

3.11 Describe what the major differences are between an adult and a paediatric reconstruction following a post mortem.
4. Have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of potential hazards to health and measures to minimise or eliminate risks in the mortuary, by being able to:

4.1 Describe the nature of infective agents, including bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa and parasites and how they spread and gain access to the body.

4.2 Describe the purposes and principles of refrigeration.

4.3 Describe the basic principles of disinfection by autoclaving and by using chemicals. List the main disinfectants required in the post-mortem room, their uses and concentrations in the sterilization of instruments and other equipment.

4.4 List the items of protective clothing needed for a post-mortem examination, including the special requirements in high-risk and infectious cases.

4.5 Explain how good personal hygiene contributes to the prevention of infection and apply the main principles of personal hygiene.

4.6 Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the main infective diseases that can be contacted in the post-mortem room. State the specific precautions taken against them, including immunization, precautions with potentially infective bodies, special clothing and special disinfection procedures.

4.7 Describe how irradiation can affect health and the precautions needed during x-ray and CT examinations and scanning.

4.8 Demonstrate the practical procedures for the safe disposal of all types of waste including infective, toxic and radioactive. **Practical Assessment**

4.9 Demonstrate ability to perform First aid, including care of wounds and artificial respiration. **Practical Assessment**

4.10 Demonstrate knowledge of the Health and Safety Acts and the OSH Regulations as they apply to the mortuary, including procedure in cases of spillage of harmful fluids.
5. Have a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of practice relating to the mortuary and implementing legal requirements in relation to the dead, by being able to:

5.1 Describe the requirements of the Code of Practice for safety in the mortuary. Refer “Managing Health and Safety Risks in New Zealand Mortuaries 2000” Copy in the reference section below.

5.2 Describe the legal requirements and written authority necessary for a hospital and a Coroner directed post-mortem. Demonstrate a basic knowledge of the types of death about which a Coroner must be informed. Refer “Coroners Act 2006” and local DHB policy documents.

5.3 State the Laws in respect of death certification.

5.4 Describe the legal requirements and documents necessary for cremation and explain the necessity for removal of cardiac pacemakers and radioactive implants.

5.5 Describe the procedure for reporting occupational illness and injury.

5.6 Describe the importance of medical confidentiality.
6. **Have the ability and cultural competence to carry out the appropriate administrative procedures for body receipt and release from the mortuary and deal correctly with visitors to the post-mortem suite, by being able to:**

6.1 State the requirements and procedures for the identification of bodies arriving in the mortuary and for releasing bodies to funeral directors or authorized persons.

6.2 Carry out the correct procedures for registration of bodies whilst in the mortuary, including the mortuary register, autopsy register and register of property from the deceased. **Practical Assessment**

6.3 State the arrangements for safeguarding of valuables and other property of the deceased.

6.4 Make provisions for all visitors to the post-mortem suite and ensure that they wear the correct protective clothing and follow correct procedures.

6.5 In relation to a mortuary service, describe the role of the New Zealand Police including the Police photographer and members of the serious crash unit, the Coroner, the Coronial Service and NIIO, the funeral director, the coronial transport provider and tissue donation coordinator.

6.6 Describe the requirements of tissue collection and documentation, tracking, return, storage and disposal as described and required in the Coroners Act 2006 and the Human Tissue Act 2008.

6.7 Deal sympathetically with, and offer advice to, relatives and other bereaved persons who may visit the mortuary for identification or viewing.

6.8 State the situations in which access should be facilitated for ministers or religion and the procedures to be followed.

6.9 Describe the requirements of ethnic minorities with regard to death.

6.10 Describe the role and need for the whanau / family room associated with a New Zealand mortuary and the cultural protocols and requirements for its use, especially for Maori and Polynesian families.

6.11 Describe what you understand to be culturally competent and what cultural considerations especially to Maori should be made in relation to post-mortem and the respective protocols associated with death. **(Please note: These are usual found in the respective District Health Board Policy Documents “Tikanga Recommended Best Practice” of the DHB managing the mortuary services. If unavailable, a copy of Auckland District Health Board document is embedded at the reference section of this syllabus.)**
7 Have the ability to carry out the appropriate day to day administration and management duties within a Mortuary facility, by being able to:

7.1 Demonstrate the correct procedure for checking stock and equipment and explain the hygienic precautions necessary for the disinfection, care, storage and maintenance of instruments. **Practical Assessment**

7.2 Describe the need for regular maintenance and servicing of equipment such as microscopes, storage refrigerators, De-Soutter saws, people lifts and trolleys, scales, camera’s, air-filters and air-conditioning units, computers, printers, fume cabinets and other equipment.

7.3 Describe the importance of document control and internal audits within the Mortuary for ISO15189 assessment and accreditation.

7.4 Demonstrate document management by writing a procedure and the subsequent on-going ownership of that controlled document. **Practical Assessment**

7.5 Describe the need for annual competency sign-off, an annual practicing certificate and the role of the Continuing Professional Development programme.

7.6 Describe the need for prevention of psychological harm to self and colleagues and ways in which this workplace hazard can be managed.

7.7 Describe the role the New Zealand Institute of Medical Laboratory Science and that of the Mortuary Technician Special Interest Group.

References:

- Health Practitioners Competency and Assurance Act 2003
- [www.nzimls.org.nz](http://www.nzimls.org.nz)
- Managing Health and Safety Risks in New Zealand Mortuaries 2000