NSRMLS
Nova Scotia Regulator of
Medical Laboratory Sciences

A Guide for Medical Laboratory Professionals

Practising Under or Providing Supervision or Direction

Introduction

The mandate of the Nova Scotia Regulator of Medical Laboratory Sciences (NSRMLS) is to ensure that medical laboratory professionals provide safe and competent care. Appropriate direction and supervision help to ensure that professionals follow safety protocols and do not pose a risk to the public. This guideline outlines the level of oversight required in these settings. Following clear guidelines is essential to maintaining safe and effective client care and meeting legal requirements. Medical Laboratory Professionals(MLP) are regulated health care professionals and must adhere to the Legislative requirements of the Regulated Health Professionals Act, Profession Specific Regulations and Bylaws and NSMRLS policies.

The document Practicing Under and Providing Supervision and Direction is a guideline for Medical Laboratory professionals who are working under a provisional license or are providing supervision to a registrant working under a provisional license.

The Manager or Director is responsible for oversight of the supervision or direction however the person providing the supervision or direction is someone who have current expertise and training in the tasks being performed.

The Acknowledgment of Supervision form must be submitted prior to the applicant receiving a provisional license and before beginning any orientation and training.

A copy of the form is available on the NSRMLS website , a link to the form is provided below:

Acknowledgment of Supervision form

What is Supervision and Direction

Supervision and Direction are formal processes that are required to protect the health and safety of the public. It provides professional support and learning to enable the individual to build on their knowledge, skills and professional attributes, and to progressively assume responsibility for their own practice.

Supervision shall be required when:

- A Medical Laboratory Professional (MLP) holds a license with conditions or limitations of required supervision
- A MLP is re-entering active practice
- MLP candidates
- Mandated by the NSRMLS registrar

All MLPs require a license to practice in Medical Laboratory Technology in Nova Scotia. The registrants license will include a condition of supervision when supervision and or direction is required. This is a formal agreement and requires the submission of an Acknowledgment of Supervision form to be submitted to the NSRMLS prior to training and orientation beginning.

MLPs holding a license with the requirement of supervision must receive direction from a licensed MLP who has relevant expertise and knowledge in the field of medical laboratory technology where the MLP is practicing.

The definition of supervisor for the purpose of Supervision and Direction is an MLP who has been notified of their responsibility to actively guide, monitor and direct another individual who requires supervision. This does not have to be someone hired as a supervisor and more than one MLP may provide supervision. All MLPs providing supervision must be aware of the requirements of supervision and direction.

A Supervisor who is providing **direction** is telling someone *what* to do and *how* to do it, focusing on instructions, training, and setting goals.

Supervision for Medical Laboratory Professional practice requires a MLP who is responsible to actively guide, monitor and direct another individual to ensure safe and high quality laboratory services. Supervision may be direct or indirect and requires the supervisor to evaluate the activities performed by another.

Supervision will evolve during the training process as the MLP under supervision meets the training requirements to safely perform the procedures in a manner that ensures patient safety.

Direction is provided ***directly*** when the MLP is actually present and observes, works with and directs the training of the MLP under direct supervision. The supervisor is accessible in case of difficulty or needed intervention.

Direction is provided ***indirectly*** when the MLP works in the same facility as someone under supervision, but does not constantly observe the MLP's activities. The supervisor occasionally monitors performance. The supervised person will seek assistance as required. The MLP must be available through reasonable access to intervene or assist as required.

Who can provide Supervision

Supervision ***must*** be provided by a MLP who possesses current relevant expertise and knowledge in the field of medical laboratory technology where the MLP is practising.

All MLPs including those under supervision, are expected to adhere to the standards, instructions, guidelines, and protocols provided by MLPs when performing their tasks.

The approval to and responsibility for engaging in a direct supervision arrangement must be by a Medical Laboratory Technologist in a supervisory role. A Manager or Director must complete the Acknowledgment of Supervision form and notify the supervisor(s) of their role and expectations of supervision.

PRE-REQUISITES for MLPs PROVIDING DIRECTION	RESPONSIBILITIES: MLP PROVIDING DIRECTION	RESPONSIBILITIES: MLP WORKING UNDER DIRECTION
Have Full Active Registration without any conditions or restrictions for supervised practice. Or have been granted a license under a grandfather clause.	Ensure the health and safety of clients is protected through the practice of the MLP under direction and the range of procedures/tasks they perform.	Take responsibility for their own practice. Recognize when to contact an MLP for assistance
Be actively engaged in continuing education and have met all Career Span Competence Program Deadlines.	Ensure suitable support is available to the MLP.	Recognize their professional limits and practice within their own scope of practice and the scope of their profession.
	Notify NSRMLS if there are concerns regarding the competence, conduct, or health of the MLP.	Advise the MLP providing direction of any issues and all clinical incidents.

The Supervising MLT/MLA/CLXT

Supervision is provided by a fully licensed **MLT/MLA/CLXT with a minimum of 2 years experience** and **who** has in-dept knowledge and practice of the competencies required in the relevant scope of practice. The supervisor's license must not be subject to any conditions or restrictions for their licensed area of practice.

The designated supervisor shall be chosen by the employer and have proven leadership and mentoring skills. Prior to assuming supervisor responsibilities, the supervisor must disclose any potential conflicts of interest with the medical laboratory professional who requires supervision.

NOTE: A licensed MLA, including those who are licensed under the grandfather clause, may provide supervision within their scope of practice.

The supervisor must maintain a professional relationship with the supervised medical laboratory professional. They must take appropriate steps to ensure client safety, observe the medical laboratory professionals' performance and provide constructive feedback. The supervisor will be readily available to the medical laboratory professional and will conduct regular reviews and promptly address

any identified issues. The supervisor will communicate any concerns to their supervisor, Manager or Director. The Manager or Director will notify the NSRMLS if there are concerns regarding the conduct, health, or compliance of the medical laboratory professional.

The supervisor has accountability for their own work and the work provided by the supervised medical laboratory professional until competencies are met and signed-off. The supervisor may be required to provide the NSRMLS with written confirmation that all the competencies required for the scope of practice were met. Competencies must be signed off by the trainer, the MLP under supervision and the Manager/Director.

The Supervisor Shall

- Be clearly identified and assigned to directly observe the Provisional License MLT/MLA/CLXT.
- Be a fully licensed **MLT/MLA/CLXT with a minimum of 2 years experience.**
- Ensure their own professional expertise and abilities are adequate for the responsibilities they are taking on.
- Possess the appropriate skills and experience in the relevant clinical area to provide guidance and expertise.
- Provide knowledge and demonstrate the work to be done, as per relevant standard procedures.
- Be in direct eye contact of the MLP under supervision whenever they are performing work until assessed as competent.
- Review all work performed by the MLP under supervision until assessed as competent.
- Assess and document workplace competency of the MLP under supervision under constant direct supervision.
- Document completed competencies which are signed by the MLP under supervision and supervisor.
- At no time allow the MLP under supervision work alone.
- Continually monitor the performance of the MLP under supervision to ensure quality standards and best practices are upheld.
- On an ongoing basis, observe, review and evaluate the competence of the MLP under supervision and the level of supervision required.
- Intervene and provide immediate feedback on critical incidents and suggest steps to be taken to improve.
- Document and discuss any concerns regarding the MLP under supervision performance with the Manager or Director as soon as possible to take corrective action.
- Notify Manager/Director of any concerns regarding the competency, skills, knowledge of the MLP under supervision.

The Manager/Director shall:

- Review the policy on Acknowledgment of Supervision and Supervision Guideline prior to initiating a Supervision agreement with the NSRMLS.
- Designate appropriate staff to provide supervision to a MLP requiring supervision.
- Require the designated supervisor(s) to review the Supervision Guidelines document PGL.010 prior to beginning supervision for the MLP requiring supervision.
- Confirm only qualified MLPs are identified as supervisors for training and oversight.

- Complete the Acknowledgment of Supervision form with the MLP requiring supervision.
- Meet with MLPs to review progress and address concerns during supervision period.
- Provide required documents to the NSRMLS.
- Notify the NSRMLS of any concerns in regards to Supervision and Direction of an MLP.

The Expectation of a MLP Under Supervision

Any medical laboratory professional under supervision must maintain a professional relationship with their supervisor. Tasks to be performed by the medical laboratory professional must be within their scope of practice and be consistent with workplace procedures and clearly communicated. The MLP must recognize their professional limitations and work within those limitations including identified areas of practice needing improvements. They must promptly inform their supervisor of any issues and all clinical incidents.

The MLP Under Supervision Shall

- Understand their expectations to meet the NSRMLS standards of practice and code of ethics.
- Document compliance with established conditions and restrictions through completion of the Acknowledgment of Supervision form.
- Engage in an orientation plan with the designated supervising MLT/MLA/CLXT.
- Reflect on areas they may need to develop including applying learned concepts into practice.
- Have access to the designated supervising MLT/MLA/CLXT at all times who will provide practice and clinical mentorship, assistance, and consultation.
- At no time work alone.
- Be responsible and accountable for their own practice at all times. This includes knowing when, and how to access mentorship and guidance.
- Bring concerns to the Supervisor or Manager/Director.

Documentation and Assessment

An "Acknowledgment of Supervision Form" (REG.12.F1) shall be reviewed and signed by the Manager/ Director and the MLP requiring supervision. This form clearly states the requirement for direct supervision of the MLP requiring supervision.

The signatures on the form is acknowledgement of the requirement for direct supervision and their intention to adhere to the requirement. This document shall be returned to the NSRMLS office before a provisional license will be issued. It is recommended that the Manager/Director and the MLP requiring supervision retain a copy of this form for their records.

Note: Professionals who are returning to practice after a period of absence, may have a supervision restriction for a period of time placed on their licence. For re-entry to practice Provisional License MLT/MLA/CLXT: The employer must submit verification of successful supervised practice hours and Return to Practice Competencies (RTP) documents to info@nscmlt.org before an active practising license with requirement for supervision is issued. Refer to REG.006 Reinstatement - Lapsed License.

Levels of Supervision

Levels of supervision refer to the degree of oversight and involvement that a supervising individual MLT/MLA/CLXT has over another medical laboratory professional performing tasks or procedures. These levels are often classified based on the complexity of the task, the experience and training of the individual performing the task, and the risk involved.

The degree of supervision provided can be reduced over time when the medical laboratory professional under supervision demonstrates competence in a particular task and both the supervisor and medical laboratory professional document and sign that the competency has been met. The appropriate level of supervision helps ensure client safety, the quality of care, and the development of medical laboratory professionals competence.

Supervision can be provided by a MLT, MLA or CLXT depending on if it is within their scope of practice meet the requirements of this document and if they possess relevant expertise and knowledge in the competencies being assessed.

The Level of Supervision is Based on the Following Criteria

LEVEL 1 SUPERVISION

Direct Supervision is necessary for high-risk testing, complex activities, MLPs first demonstrating a competency or learning situations.

The supervisor (MLT/MLA/CLXT), who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge in the competencies being assessed or performed must be physically present and within visual contact with the medical laboratory professional in the same room. They closely monitor the professional's actions, providing immediate feedback or intervention as necessary. Additionally, the supervisor offers guidance when required. This helps ensure client safety and supports the professional development of the medical laboratory professional. Direct supervision is required when the medical laboratory professional being supervised is performing procedures/tasks for which competence sign-off has not been achieved.

Medical laboratory professionals who require direct supervision are individuals that the Employer or NSRMLS deems necessary.

LEVEL 2 SUPERVISION

Indirect Supervision allows for more autonomy but still maintains oversight.

The supervisor (MLT/MLA/CLXT), who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge in the competencies being assessed or performed is onsite and available for consultation, guidance, support, or in case an incident requires immediate attention. The medical laboratory professional performing the task can work independently, but under the overall responsibility and oversight of the supervisor. This is appropriate for tasks where the individual has some degree of competence and is trusted to perform procedures independently, but where the risk or complexity still requires supervision. The medical laboratory professional under supervision has been signed-off as competent in the procedures/tasks they are performing by the supervisor and themselves.

LEVEL 3 SUPERVISION

Minimal Supervision involves a high degree of independence but retains accountability.

The supervisor a MLT/MLA/CLXT, who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge in the competencies being assessed or performed may not be involved unless there is an issue or concern

that arises. The medical laboratory professional, under supervision has been deemed competent to perform a range of procedures and tasks within their established scope of practice. However, certain procedures and tasks may still require additional sign-off to ensure compliance with the medical laboratory professional's full scope of practice.

The supervising medical laboratory professional must be available on-site.

Example of Levels of Supervisions

MLP Training in Phlebotomy or Phlebotomists

LEVEL 1 Direct Supervision - is provided while they attain all educational and clinical competencies.

LEVEL 2 Indirect Supervision - when competencies have been met the MLP can work independently on-site or off-site. They can collect samples on hospital floors or offsite at sample collection sites **only if there is another MLA/MLT/CLXT on-site that meets the competencies begin performed.** The supervisor is responsible to ensure that all competencies have been met and the proper documentation indicate in writing that the minimum clinical competencies are met. (The Manager/ Director who signed the Acknowledgment of Supervision form does not need to be onsite but the designated Supervising MLP professional must be on-site).

Level 3 Minimal Supervision - would be required when the provisional license holder has demonstrated competence and has sufficient experience to work independently. They must demonstrate an understanding of when to request support from the supervisor. They must only perform tasks when their is another MLA/MLT/CLXT on-site that meets the competencies being performed.

Medical Laboratory Assistant Candidate (previously MLA in Training)

LEVEL 1 Direct Supervision - supervision of Medical laboratory assistant candidates is required until initial assessment of competency is complete. The MLA candidates must demonstrate knowledge and clinical competencies in the assigned duties.

LEVEL 2 Indirect Supervision - following determination as competent in a procedure/task and the documentation and sign off is complete, the medical laboratory professional must be monitored. A medical laboratory assistant candidate shall never be in a situation where they do not have the ability to consult a licensed MLT/MLA/CLXT who possesses relevant expertise, knowledge and competence in the area where they are practising.

The MLA Candidate must only work on shifts where there is a licensed MLT/MLA/CLXT who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge in the field the MLA in training is performing such as phlebotomy.

Under indirect supervision a MLA Candidate may collect samples throughout the hospital or at another location, provided there is a licensed MLT, MLA, or CLXT on-site who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge in the field the MLA candidate is performing, such as phlebotomy.

MLA candidates are **prohibited** from working independently or solely with another MLA candidate in the specimen processing or phlebotomy areas. In such instances, it is imperative that a licensed MLTMLA, or CLXT who possesses relevant expertise and knowledge be present and provide the necessary supervision and expertise.

Point of Care Testing (POCT) Supervision

A licensed MLT with current and relevant expertise and knowledge in point-of-care testing (POCT) shall provide supervision for all POCT training until the assessment of competency is complete. MLAs

may only record results under direct supervision until the competencies are met for POCT. All MLAs who have completed the training on performance of Point of Care testing must complete the NSRMLS Point of care exam. An additional designation will be added to their License indicating approval to perform POCT.

New Graduates Or Those Awaiting to Write the National Entry to Practice Exam Or Await Results

Tasks to be performed by the MLP Candidate License MLT/MLA/CLXT are determined by the clinical supervisor or manager and shall be clearly communicated. A MLP Candidate shall never be in a situation where they do not have the ability to consult with the designated supervisor for assistance in the workplace.

A MLP Candidate License (MLT/MLA/CLXT) may work to their scope of practice, but the designated supervisor must be mindful of their limited experience of practicing in Nova Scotia.

LEVEL 1 Direct Supervision - A MLP Candidate License (MLT/MLA/CLXT) initially require Level 1 supervision until initial assessment of competency is complete.

LEVEL 2 Indirect Supervision - Following signed documentation that the competency in a procedure/ task has been met the MLP Candidate must be monitored. A MLP Candidate (MLT/MLA/CLXT) shall never be in a situation where they do not have the ability to consult a licensed MLT/MLA/CLXT who possesses relevant expertise, knowledge and competence in the area where they are practising.

Level 3 Minimal Supervision - When the MLP Candidate (MLT/MLA/CLXT) is found to be competent, their performance shall be monitored continually but does not require constant direct supervision. The supervisor shall be in close physical proximity to the MLP Candidate to maintain oversight of work and be readily accessible for assistance or needed intervention.

The MLP Candidate (MLT/CLXT) may report results once documented competence is complete, but still requires the supervisor to be in close proximity. The supervisor is not required to co-sign reporting of results after competency to the process is signed off unless required by the employer.

At no point should the medical laboratory professional work alone if under supervision.

NOTE: Medical Laboratory Assistants Working under Direction As Per By-Law 29

As per by-law 29.1 under the direction of a medical laboratory technologist does not imply that MLAs are incapable of performing their scope of practice independently, but rather that they possess the ability to seek assistance from an MLT when necessary. The MLT must be available, but does not need to be present at all times.

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Change History

Date:	Version #	Change Summary
February 24, 2026	2	Updated with NSRMLS and clarify supervision of MLA in training - provisional license
2026 June	3	Updated branding and clarification on supervision by grandfathered license holders