

AUT

A FUTURE IN
**PERIOPERATIVE
PRACTICE**





WHAT IS PERIOPERATIVE PRACTICE?

Supporting a person through a potentially intimidating or life changing health or surgical experience is the daily experience of an anaesthetic technician.

This can be anything from a planned (elective) surgical procedure such as a hernia repair, through to emergency (acute) surgery or episodes of care from trauma caused in a road traffic accident.

Anaesthesia is a medically induced state of controlled and temporary loss of sensation or awareness. It is used to enable the health specialist to perform the required procedure or surgery efficiently and safely.

An essential member of any operating theatre or perioperative department, anaesthetic technicians help with procedures or surgery that requires an anaesthetic intervention. This can involve placing tubes in patients' arms (intravenous cannulation), placing breathing tubes into the trachea (airway intubation support), airway management, patient monitoring such as ECG (monitoring the electrical activity of the heart) and resuscitation.

There are currently between 800 and 1,000 anaesthetic technicians (ATs) in New Zealand working in public and private operating theatres across the country. A significant proportion of this workforce is close to retirement, according to the NZ Anaesthetic Technicians Association. This aging workforce, coupled with increased demand for perioperative services, opens many future opportunities for skilled anaesthetic technicians.

Are you keen on a hands-on clinical role within the health sector? Does the care of surgical patients interest you? Would you like to become part of an operating department team? Do you want to help provide compassionate care throughout a patient's operating room experience? Then a career as an anaesthetic technician, through the Perioperative Practice major pathway, may open great career options for you.

OUTLOOK AND TRENDS

Demand on health services – New Zealand's population continues to increase. We are also living longer. These two factors are placing increasing demand on New Zealand's health services because growing patient presentations with multiple pre-existing diseases and conditions (comorbidities) require complex surgery and care.

There is increased demand for operating theatre space and staff, including anaesthetic technicians, with many DHBs and private hospitals advertising for staff. The Northern region, for example, requires an additional 40 operating theatres over the next 20 years.

Consistency of training – Prior to the establishment of a degree in perioperative practice, hospitals were responsible for the training of anaesthetic technicians. However, this proved costly and training experiences were inconsistent and inequitable. This degree takes the pressure of training away from hospital operating theatre staff and elevates the skillset of the anaesthetic technician profession in supporting safe and efficient operating room care. This ensures higher skilled health professionals are entering the anaesthetic technician workforce.

Responsibilities expanding – The demands placed on perioperative services are growing. In recent years, the scopes of practice for anaesthetic technicians have expanded to help support service providers to deliver efficient patient care. This includes work in the Post Anaesthetic Care Unit (PACU), where patients recover from anaesthesia and surgery, or inserting peripherally inserted central catheters (PICC) to give intravenous fluids, blood transfusions, chemotherapy, and other drugs. This opens opportunities for graduates that are competent in these expanded scopes of practice.

Less known but expanding career path – Opportunities differ across employers, determined by the nature of the role and requirements performed in each hospital. For example, not all hospitals use anaesthetic technicians to insert PICC lines. This degree is expected to create more diverse opportunities for anaesthetic technicians to support care across New Zealand's health services.

WORK SETTINGS

Anaesthetic technicians (ATs) usually work in operating theatres in public or private hospitals. They may also provide care in the Post Anaesthetic Care Unit (PACU) to support patients after surgery and anaesthesia, in radiology departments when MRI and X-ray patients need anaesthesia, or in emergency departments and intensive care units.

Anaesthetic technicians typically work a variety of shifts, which may include afternoons, evenings and night shifts, with overtime and penal rates included. They can also work as a locum for an agency that places them where their skills are needed across the country.

Because anaesthetic technicians work predominantly in operating theatres, they usually need to base themselves close to main centres such as Auckland, Christchurch and Wellington or regional hospitals such as Whangarei, Timaru or Whanganui.

CAREER ROLE EXAMPLES

Anaesthetic technician – responsible for set up and preparation of the anaesthetic equipment and environment; following patient, anaesthesia and surgical protocols. Includes supporting the anaesthetist with the placement of breathing tubes and intravenous lines, maintaining a sterile and safe operating room environment and adequate supply of necessary equipment. May include monitoring and records patient vital signs during and after surgery.

Charge anaesthetic technician/Anaesthetic technician manager – manages and co-ordinates the delivery of the anaesthetic technician service at the hospital. Demonstrates high standard of advanced clinical expertise and a commitment to quality and consistency. Ensures staff are trained appropriately and teams adhere to best practice guidelines.

Provides leadership, direction and mentoring.

Note: May require a minimum of five years' recent clinical experience or similar.

Clinical educator – ensures the delivery of clinical orientation, mandatory training and ongoing professional development for all anaesthetic support staff. Develops and implements a structured education, orientation and coaching programme based on evidence-based best practice. Trains teams in professional and legal requirements, including life support, liaising closely with clinical specialists and coaches. Facilitates and demonstrates commitment to continuous quality improvement activities etc.

Note: Typically, 2-3 years' experience, but there is no minimum requirement.



Simulation lead – co-ordinates hands-on training of health professionals through high fidelity simulated scenarios. Clinical simulation is not just about resuscitation skills but also requires multidisciplinary teamwork, process and implementation testing, and evaluation of the deteriorating patient. Requires anticipation, adaption and improvisation to solve complex problems.

Professional lead – maintains professional standards and provides clinical governance to staff. Supports quality professional practice through credentialling, quality improvement, clinical education, research and professional development. Provides strong clinical leadership, influencing workforce planning and development, research activity and the delivery of safe, high quality clinical services.

Note: Enter this role through merit, academic background, experience etc.

Sources: NZAT, Indeed, kiwihealthjobs, Careers NZ

SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

- Applied knowledge of pathology, anatomy, physiology, pathophysiology, pharmacology, anaesthetic technology and equipment for a variety of populations and perioperative settings
- Practice in a manner responsive to the rights and culture of patients, whānau and other professionals within legal and ethical frameworks, in accordance with Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Can confidently demonstrate safe and competent patient care informed by clinical reasoning in the context of perioperative practice
- Able to work in partnership with patients, whānau and others through inclusive and collaborative approaches within legal, ethical and professional frameworks
- Values the perspectives and roles of others in the interprofessional environment
- Utilises a range of communication methods to facilitate sharing of relevant information and education of clients, whānau and others
- Well informed by evidence-based practice and applies critical analysis, problem solving and innovation to practice.

PERSONAL QUALITIES

- Capable of relating to a diverse range of people
- Self-assured, confident, trustworthy and ethical
- An effective communicator
- Physically fit and able to deal with long shifts
- Motivated, resilient and practical

SALARY GUIDE

Overtime and penal rates will be paid on top of these salaries. This salary table is based on District Health Board (DHB) rates. Private hospitals may pay higher rates.

	Salary (per year)
Anaesthetic technician	\$54,000 (graduate) \$81,500+ (7 years' experience & depends on merit agreements)
Charge anaesthetic technician	\$86,000-\$110,000
Clinical educator	\$83,500+ (depending on merit agreements)

Sources: APEX DHB Anaesthetic Technicians Multi-Employer Collective Agreement (MECA), Careers NZ.

Salary range is indicative of the New Zealand job market at the time of publication (May 2022) and should only be used as a guideline.

AUT APPROACH

AUT is the only New Zealand education provider offering a major in Perioperative Practice that provides eligibility to apply to register as an anaesthetic technician.

Students do 1,100 hours of placement in hospitals throughout New Zealand. These clinical placements make up approximately one third of the degree.

FURTHER STUDY

Students may be eligible to complete a Master of Health Science – Standard pathway. Postgraduate study isn't currently required for any particular anaesthetic technician related role but is advantageous for future career progression.

PROFESSIONAL REGISTRATION

It is compulsory for anaesthetic technicians to be registered with the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand and gain an Annual Practising Certificate to be able to work in New Zealand. This needs to be updated annually.

<https://www.msccouncil.org.nz/already-registered/annual-practising-certificates-apc/>



WHITNEY BLAIR

Ngāti Maniapoto/Ngāti Rārua

Registered Anaesthetic Technician

Diploma in Applied Science (Anaesthetic Technician)*

"I've been working in Christchurch for the Canterbury District Health Board as a registered Anaesthetic Technician since 2020. I was one of the last cohorts to graduate from AUT with a Diploma in Applied Science before the degree was implemented.

We are the first responders for any airway management needed around the hospital. We work under a specialised group of doctors called anaesthetists, supporting procedures or operations where anaesthesia is needed and responding to emergency resuscitation events.

Shift work is very common in the job. I can work anywhere from 8, 10 or 12 hours and might be expected to work nights, weekends or afternoons.

What I enjoy most about being an anaesthetic technician is that every day is different. We are required to work across different theatre environments and specialties. We work with paediatrics or children, including newborn babies.

We work with older adults and women during labour who might require a caesarean section or have complications from giving birth. We are in radiology when patients might need diagnostic scans such as X-rays or MRI. We can also get called to the emergency department to support resuscitation teams or help support ICU staff with patient transfers or airway management.

As an anaesthetic technician you must be quick on your feet. Some days can be challenging especially if plans change but the skills and teaching you learn helps you to prepare for any situation."

*The Anaesthetic Technician pathway in the Diploma in Applied Science is no longer available. Instead, you can enrol in the Bachelor of Health Science in Perioperative Practice.

EMPLOYER COMMENT

"Anaesthetic technicians use a multitude of equipment and latest technology that requires them to be very practical and hands-on. Whitney's practical skills, along with her professionalism, ability to multitask and to plan ahead are of great benefit to someone working in this high pressured and varied role.

Things can change rapidly in our work. You can go quickly from being in a calm situation where everything is going well in theatre, to having to deal with an emergency trauma. Whitney is very adaptable and works through anything that comes her way.

Her warm friendly manner is perfect for patient interactions, putting them at ease during what is a very stressful time for the patients. She also works well in theatre working with the anaesthetist and the rest of the multi-disciplinary team."

Cathie Hepworth

Charge Anaesthetic Technician,
Canterbury District Health Board

USEFUL WEBSITES

New Zealand Anaesthetic Technicians' Society
www.nzats.co.nz

Health Navigator
www.healthnavigator.org.nz

Kiwi Health Jobs
www.kiwihealthjobs.com

Medical Sciences Council of NZ (annual practising regulatory body)
<https://www.msccouncil.org.nz/already-registered/annual-practising-certificates-apc/>

FURTHER INFORMATION

For the most up-to-date information visit
www.aut.ac.nz/perioperative-practice

For other Future Career Sheets visit:
www.aut.ac.nz/careersheets


EMPLOYABILITY & CAREERS

For employability and career support, AUT students can book an appointment through
<https://elab.aut.ac.nz/>

 @AUTEmployabilityandCareers

FUTURE STUDENTS

Contact the Future Student Advisory team for more information: www.aut.ac.nz/enquire
futurestudents@aut.ac.nz

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CURRENT AUT STUDENTS

Contact the Student Hub Advisors team for more information: 0800 AUT UNI (0800 288 864)

www.aut.ac.nz/enquire
studenthub@aut.ac.nz

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The information contained in this career sheet is correct at time of printing, May 2022.

