

Chinese Medicine Council (Scopes of Practice and Prescribed Qualifications) Notice 2026

Commencement

This notice is given pursuant to section 14 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“HPCA Act”), replaces the Chinese Medicine Council (Scopes of Practice and Prescribed Qualifications) Notice 2025 published in the [New Zealand Gazette, 17 September 2025, Notice No. 2025-sl5192](#), and comes into effect on 13 March 2026.

Introduction

The Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (“Council”) is responsible under the HPCA Act for the registration of Chinese medicine practitioners. Defining and regulating the scopes of practice for Chinese medicine services is a statutory responsibility of the Council.

Background and Definition of the Practice of Chinese Medicine

Chinese medicine is a system of primary health care, encompassing a range of therapeutic interventions (or treatment modalities). Chinese medicine practitioners provide an evidence-informed service, using Chinese medicine to assess and diagnose, improve, protect, and manage the physical and/or mental health and well-being of tangata whai ora. In this document the term ‘tangata whai ora’ (‘a person/s seeking health’) has been used instead of patient/client/health consumer/service user, to include persons engaging with Chinese medicine in clinical and/or non-clinical settings.

An evidence-informed approach to practice can be defined as “the integration of research evidence, alongside practitioner expertise and clinical experience, and the experience of the tangata whai ora who are using the health care service”¹. This type of approach allows for innovation and adaptation based upon factors and context at individual, organisational, and service levels, while reducing inherent biases.

Chinese medicine (CM) practitioners predominantly work in the private sector and also practice with other healthcare professionals in multidisciplinary centres. The nature of Chinese medicine practice may change as health workforce roles evolve and new roles emerge. Chinese medicine practice is when a CM practitioner uses their skills and knowledge and is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care (such as using professional knowledge in a direct non-clinical relationship with the public; working in management; administration; education; research; advisory; regulatory or policy development roles; and any other roles that impact on the safe delivery of Chinese medicine).

Scopes of Practice and Prescribed Qualifications

The HPCA Act requires the Council to “specify scopes of practice” (section 11(1), (2)) and define Chinese medicine modalities and specialties that constitute the practice of Chinese medicine services in New Zealand. Under the HPCA Act, every CM practitioner is registered within one or more scopes of practice. The service/s a CM practitioner can perform in New Zealand are defined by their registered scope/s of practice.

The Council identifies the tasks each scope of practice covers and prescribes the qualifications for every scope of practice (section 12(1)). This means CM practitioners are registered within one or more defined scopes of practice with the Council.

Regardless of seniority, all individuals applying to be registered as a Chinese medicine practitioner must:

- hold a prescribed qualification for registration in the relevant scope of practice
- be considered fit for registration; and
- be competent to practise in their designated scope of practice (clinically, ethically, and culturally).

Under section 11 of the HPCA Act, the Council has specified the following scopes of practice for Chinese medicine services:

- Scope of practice - Chinese medicine practitioner (acupuncturist)
- Scope of practice - Chinese herbal medicine practitioner
- Scope of practice - Chinese massage (tuina) practitioner
- Scope of practice - Chinese medicine specialist
- Scope of practice - Chinese medicine special purpose

The content of each scope of practice is set out below.

Scope of Practice - Chinese Medicine Practitioner (Acupuncturist)

Chinese medicine practitioners have majored in acupuncture and associated techniques. They possess the knowledge, skills, and attributes required of a competent registered practitioner to practise acupuncture and associated techniques effectively.

Practitioners integrate principles and theories of Chinese medicine with their knowledge of pathology, anatomy,

physiology, and other core biomedical sciences, including the appropriate use of physical examinations and interpretation of imaging and laboratory testing relevant to human health and function, within the context of Chinese medicine.

They use this integrated knowledge to take a comprehensive history, diagnose, and treat. They provide a variety of services to individuals and populations to develop, maintain, restore, and optimise health and function throughout their lifespan, including those compromised by ageing, injury (including mental injury), disease, or environmental factors.

A Chinese medicine practitioner provides tangata whai ora with a range of preventive and intervention methods using the principles of evidence-informed practice and empirical research. Chinese medicine supports quality of life and health promotion through illness and disease prevention and treatment/intervention, encompassing physical, psychological, emotional, and social well-being.

Chinese medicine practitioners work within the limits of their own professional expertise and competence and ensure that all the health services they provide are consistent with their education and skill level.

Scope of Practice - Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner

Chinese herbal medicine practitioners have majored in herbal medicine and possess the knowledge, skills and attributes required of a competent registered practitioner to practise Chinese herbal medicine effectively.

Practitioners integrate principles and theories of Chinese medicine with their knowledge of pathology, anatomy, physiology, and other core biomedical sciences, including the appropriate use of physical examinations and interpretation of imaging and laboratory testing relevant to human health and function, within the context of Chinese medicine.

They use this integrated knowledge to take a comprehensive history, diagnose, and treat by prescribing, compounding or formulating, dispensing, and administering individualised Chinese herbal formulae or medicines. This includes the ability and authority to diagnose and differentiate conditions relevant to herbal medicine practice using both Chinese medicine and, where appropriate, biomedical frameworks.

A Chinese herbal medicine practitioner provides tangata whai ora with a range of preventive and intervention methods using the principles of evidence-informed practice and empirical research.

Chinese medicine practitioners work within the limits of their own professional expertise and competence and ensure that all health services they provide are consistent with their education and skill level.

Scope of Practice - Chinese Massage (Tuina) Practitioner

Chinese massage practitioners have majored in tuina and possess the knowledge, skills and attributes required of a competent registered practitioner to practise tuina effectively.

Practitioners integrate principles and theories of Chinese medicine with their knowledge of anatomy, physiology, pathology, and other core biomedical sciences, including the appropriate use of physical examinations and interpretation of imaging and laboratory testing relevant to musculoskeletal and other conditions, within the context of Chinese medicine.

They use this integrated knowledge to take a comprehensive history, diagnose, and treat conditions in order to optimise health and function for tangata whai ora.

Tuina is an external treatment method suitable for use on people of all ages and includes the practice of specific Chinese medical manipulations and bone setting techniques. Practitioners performing Chinese medical manipulation and bone setting techniques must work within the limits of their own professional expertise and competence and are accountable for ensuring that all health services they provide are consistent with their education and skill level.

Scope of Practice - Chinese Medicine Practitioner - Specialist

Specialist registration is an additional registration held in conjunction with another CM scope. It recognises CM practitioners with Council approved post-graduate qualifications, or clinical expertise, in a specific practice area recognised as a specialty area by the Council. The practitioner will demonstrate competence in a relevant area of academic achievement and/or clinical practice above the level of an undergraduate qualification and is recognised as a specialist in their designated field of expertise. The Council currently recognises several specialist areas of Chinese medicine practice. The list of these approved specialist areas can be found on the Council's website.

The Council uses its discretion on a case-by-case basis if an applicant wants to apply to be a Chinese medicine specialist in a defined field of practice that is not already on the Council's approved list.

A practitioner registered in the specialist scope of practice will have their recognised specialty area(s) recorded in their scope of practice (e.g., "Chinese Medicine Practitioner - Specialist (women's health)").

Scope of Practice - Chinese Medicine Special Purpose

Special purpose registration is a time-limited registration for a specific purpose approved by the Council. Temporary time-limited registration for a specific purpose may include short term teaching contracts; clinical supervision; post-graduate training; research; short term locum work; or working in an emergency or other short-term situation to provide essential Chinese medicine services e.g., pandemic, or national disaster.

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The purpose of this scope is to create a mechanism to allow competent Chinese medicine practitioners and academics to carry out specific tasks without requiring full registration with the Council. This scope does not apply to visiting presenters whose training is aimed at registered practitioners. Special purpose registration will restrict the activities of the applicant solely to those activities defined and approved by the Council. The approved activities, and the time-limit on the special purpose registration, will be recorded in each special purpose practitioner's scope of practice.

Special purpose practitioners cannot practise outside of their approved activities and must inform the Council as soon as practicable if their special purpose activities cease or change in any way.

Special purpose registration is **not** a pathway to permanent general or specialist registration. Entry on the Register is cancelled after the fixed time-period determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis.

Prescribed Qualifications

The Council is responsible for prescribing the qualifications required for registration in the scopes of practice within the Chinese medicine profession.

One of the Council's functions includes accrediting and monitoring degrees, courses of studies, or programmes and the educational institutions that provide them (section 118(a) of the HPCA Act).

Under section 12 of the HPCA Act, the Council has prescribed the following qualifications for registration in the following scopes of practice:

Chinese Medicine Practitioner (Acupuncturist)

All applicants must:

- a. hold a Bachelor of Health Science majoring in Acupuncture (Level 7) from the New Zealand School of Acupuncture and Traditional Chinese Medicine or the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- b. hold a 4-year Bachelor of Health Science in Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine (Level 7) from the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- c. have their qualification assessed by the Council for persons holding a Chinese medicine qualification gained overseas and, at the Council's discretion, obtain a pass in a competency-based assessment set by the Council.

Chinese Herbal Medicine Practitioner

All applicants must:

- a. hold a 3-year Bachelor of Health Science majoring in Chinese herbal medicine (Level 7) from the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- b. hold a 4-year Bachelor of Health Science in Acupuncture and Chinese Herbal Medicine (Level 7) from the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- c. hold a Master of Chinese Medicine from the New Zealand College of Chinese; or
- d. have their qualification assessed by the Council for persons holding a Chinese medicine qualification gained overseas and, at the Council's discretion, obtain a pass in a competency-based assessment set by the Council.

Chinese Massage (Tuina) Practitioner

All applicants must:

- a. hold a 2-year Diploma in Tuina (Level 7) from the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- b. hold a Graduate Certificate in Chinese Medicine (Tuina Massage) from the New Zealand College of Chinese Medicine; or
- c. have their qualification assessed by the Council for persons holding a Chinese medicine qualification gained overseas and, at the Council's discretion, obtain a pass in a competency-based assessment set by the Council.

Chinese Medicine Practitioner: Specialist

All applicants must hold registration within one or more of the following scopes of practice:

- i. Scope of practice - Chinese medicine practitioner (acupuncturist)
- ii. Scope of practice - Chinese herbal medicine practitioner

iii. Scope of practice – Chinese massage (tuina) practitioner

and

- a. have at least five years of post-qualification clinical and/or research experience with at least three years of experience relevant to the nominated area of specialist Chinese medicine practice; and
- b. hold a Council approved postgraduate qualification in a specific practice area recognised as a specialty area by the Council that is relevant to clinical and/or non-clinical Chinese medicine practice; or
- c. have demonstrated competence and education beyond the level of a general scope Chinese medicine practitioner in a specific practice area recognised as a specialty area by the Council that is relevant to clinical and/or non-clinical Chinese medicine practice.

Chinese Medicine: Special Purpose

All applicants must:

Provide evidence of the special purpose activity (for example an invitation to teach or research proposal with sufficient information to detail the tasks or activities to be performed; where they are to be performed; and the time-frame); and details of any anticipated patient contact, and an appropriate risk assessment and management plan and:

- a. be registered, and in good standing, with an overseas Chinese medicine regulatory authority (where such arrangements are in place); or
- b. hold a Chinese medicine qualification which is assessed by Council to be applicable to the Chinese medicine scopes of practice, and relevant to the special purpose registration application; or
- c. be able to provide evidence assessed by Council to be relevant to the Chinese medicine scopes of practice, of achievements in research/scholarship or teaching either by publication or educational experience.

Explanatory Note

In September 2025, the Council consulted publicly on the changes it proposed to make to the wording of its current scopes of practice with practitioners, practitioner representative bodies, members of the public, and other relevant stakeholders.

Five submissions were received by the consultation deadline of 31 October 2025, from individual practitioners, a representative body, and a Chinese medicine education provider. There was strong support for the changes proposed, with minor suggestions for modifications to the proposed wording provided.

The Council considered submissions and passed a formal motion to approve the changes proposed in the consultation document subject to minor wording adjustments as suggested by submitters. A full summary of the feedback received, the Council's response to the points raised, and the decision reached is available on the Council's website.

Dated at Wellington this 4th day of February 2026.

LINDSEY PINE, Registrar, Chinese Medicine Council.

[1. Australian Institute of Family Studies. What is an evidence-informed approach to practice and why is it important? \[Internet\]. Melbourne: AIFS; \[cited 2025 Sep 18\]. Available from: <http://aifs.gov.au/resources/short-articles/what-evidence-informed-approach-practice-and-why-it-important>.](http://aifs.gov.au/resources/short-articles/what-evidence-informed-approach-practice-and-why-it-important)