

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): ASA Scope of Practice Project

We have provided answers to key questions below. However, if this FAQ does not address your questions, please contact us at policy@sonographers.org.

ABOUT THE PROJECT

1. What is a Scope of Practice (SOP)?

A Scope of Practice describes what health professionals are educated, trained, and authorised to do in their roles. It forms the foundation for delivering safe, effective, and high-quality care.

For sonographers, it outlines their skills, responsibilities, and contributions to patient care, providing clarity for practitioners and confidence for the public.

An individual's scope of practice evolves over time and is defined by the roles, functions, responsibilities, activities and decision-making capacity allowed based on the individual's education, knowledge and skills.

2. What is an “entry-level” Scope of Practice?

The entry-level Scope of Practice will define the core skills and responsibilities expected of a newly qualified sonographer in Australia – that is, a sonographer who has completed a course accredited by the Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry.

It will also align closely with the Scope of Practice for sonographers in New Zealand, developed by the Medical Radiation Technologists Board.

3. Why develop a Scope of Practice?

Defining entry level Scope of Practice will have many benefits including:

- Improving recognition of the core sonographer skills in the health and wider community
- Creating clarity of expected minimum standards so that student sonographers receive the experience and support they need to be job-ready when they graduate and enter the workplace
- Enabling clearer communication and advocacy with governments about policy, regulation, funding and other legislative arrangements that affect sonographers now and into the future
- Paving the way for developing a more advanced Scope of Practice for sonographers

4. What is the difference between Scope of Practice and Competency Standards?

The Scope of Practice describes the “what” of sonography – the professional tasks and responsibilities sonographers are trained and authorised to perform.

Competency Standards focus on the “how” – the knowledge, skills, and behaviours required to perform those tasks effectively and safely. The Scope of Practice is intended to align with the core knowledge outlined in the Professional Competency Framework for Sonographers.

Together, these frameworks will provide a clear understanding of expectations for safe, consistent, and professional sonography practice.

5. How will this project contribute to advanced or extended sonographer scope of practice?

While the main focus is on entry-level practice, the project will also include tools, such as a decision tree, to support sonographers in adapting, expanding, or advancing their Scope of Practice throughout their careers.

The entry level scope of practice document will also serve as the basis for future development of advanced scope of practice documents.

6. Who developed the scope of practice?

The project was led by Anita Hobson-Powell from Advancia Consulting. Anita has extensive experience working in health professions, with associations and establishing quality assurance frameworks for self-regulated health professions.

An expert Working Group was established to provide advice throughout the project. This included representatives from:

- The Australasian Sonographers Association
- The Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy
- The Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry
- The Australasian Society for Ultrasound in Medicine
- Professionals in Cardiac Sciences Australia
- A consumer representative

This group reflects a broad range of expertise and perspectives to ensure the project meets the needs of the profession and the healthcare community.

An Expert Panel was also established to provide feedback via 3 rounds of a Delphi Process. This Panel included a diverse group of over 80 sonographers from across Australia and New Zealand. They brought together expertise in a variety of sonographer clinical and non-clinical roles, range of specialities and years of experience and reflect and represent the needs and experience of the broader sonographer profession.

7. How will the Scope of Practice be relevant to New Zealand?

In New Zealand, the legislative requirements for sonographer practice are determined by the Medical Radiation Technologists Board.

The SOP is not intended to replace or refine these requirements. Instead, it is intended to provide a complementary framework that supports shared professional development and strengthen collaboration between the two countries.