QUALIFICATION REVIEW

Pathology Functional Analysis

HumanAbility

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Executive summary

The Australian pathology sector is a vital component of the healthcare system, performing over 500 million tests annually and informing more than 70% of clinical decisions. This report presents the findings of a comprehensive functional analysis aimed at aligning the *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* and *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection* qualifications with current and emerging workforce needs. It identifies key challenges, skills gaps, and opportunities for improvement to ensure training products effectively support workforce development and industry innovation.

Key findings

Workforce challenges:

The sector faces critical issues, including workforce shortages in regional and remote areas, an ageing workforce, and a reliance on unqualified staff. Employers report difficulties in attracting and retaining skilled professionals, particularly in rural locations, where limited training opportunities exacerbate these challenges.

Evolving skill requirements:

Technological advancements, including artificial intelligence (AI), automation, and digital specimen tracking systems, are reshaping workforce competencies. Employers highlight the growing need for digital literacy, technical proficiency, and cross-disciplinary skills to meet these changes.

Demand for specialised skills:

Emerging roles, such as domiciliary phlebotomists and paediatric collectors, require niche competencies. Additionally, patient-centred care and cultural competency are increasingly critical in providing effective and empathetic services to diverse populations.

Training pathway accessibility:

While workplace-based training remains popular, restrictions on traineeships in some states (for example Victoria) limit accessibility. Flexible learning pathways, including online modules, blended delivery, and simulated training, are essential to addressing these gaps.

This report highlights the need for targeted updates to pathology qualifications to meet the demands of a dynamic healthcare environment. By aligning training products with current and future industry requirements, these recommendations aim to address workforce shortages, enhance skills development, and support the growth of a sustainable, adaptable and future-ready pathology workforce.

The findings and recommendations presented here provide a roadmap for stakeholders, including government, industry, and training providers, to collaborate in strengthening the Australian pathology workforce and ensuring its readiness for future challenges.

1 Introduction

Since the last review of *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection* and *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* in 2015, the pathology collection industry has experienced transformations driven by changes in service delivery models, increasingly diverse client base, increased demand for streams related to specialist environments, and digital technology.

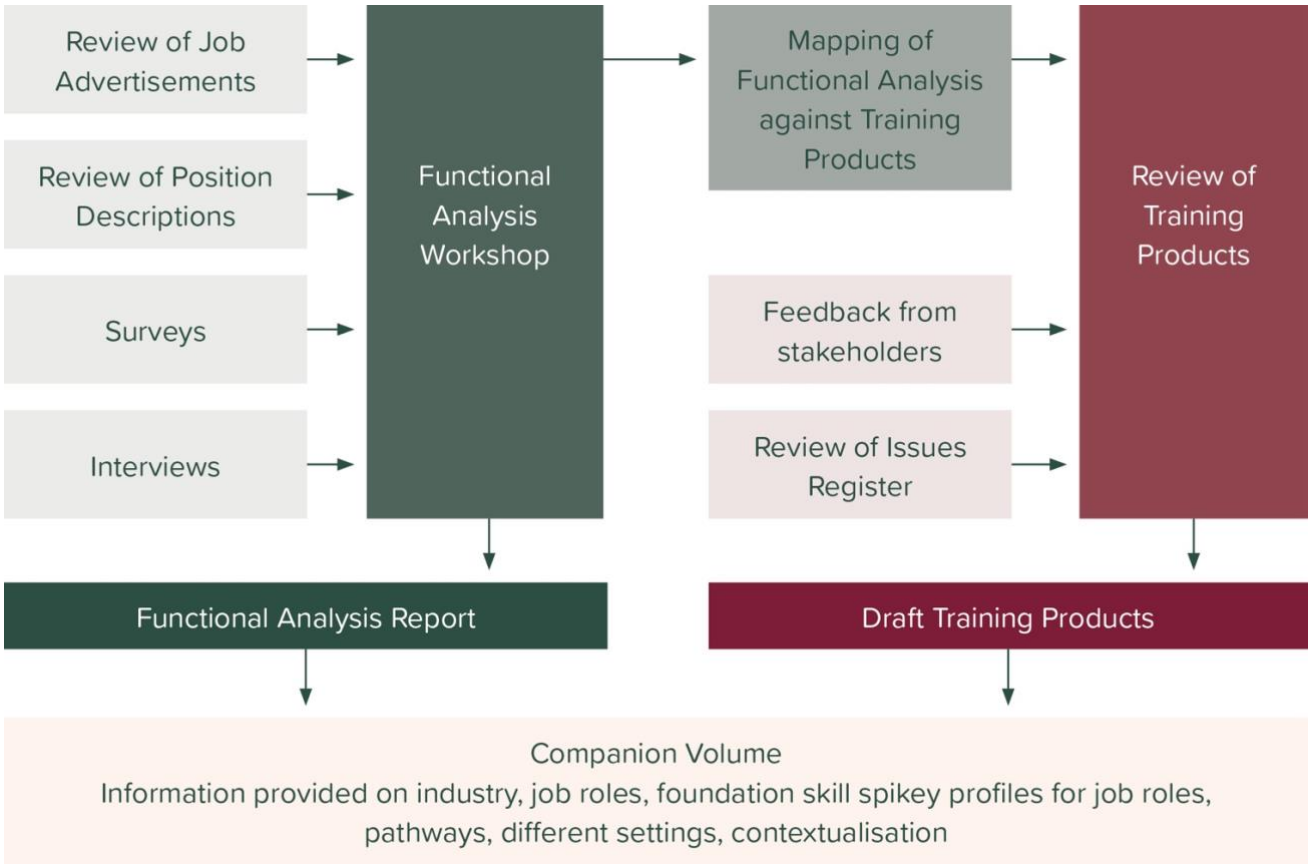
A comprehensive functional analysis has been undertaken to critically review and modernise *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection* and *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* qualifications with the aim of:

- Ensuring that they are aligned with current industry needs and regulatory requirements
- Facilitating clear and sustainable career pathways / specialisations to support existing and future growth in the industry
- Enhancing the relevance and applicability of qualifications, thereby increasing the industry's capacity to meet growing demand and evolving challenges.

1.1 Methodology

The methodology for this functional analysis was designed to provide a comprehensive, evidence-based understanding of the roles, functions, and workforce needs within the pathology sector. It employed a multi-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis to ensure a holistic view of industry practices, skills gaps, and alignment with training products.

Figure 1: Functional analysis methodology and process



To ensure that training and assessment in the field of pathology collection and assisting aligns with industry requirements, this analysis will form the basis for reviewing the following:

1.2 Intended audience

This report is designed to inform a broad range of industry stakeholders of the current and emerging skills requirements within the pathology collection industry. It delivers evidence-based insights to support strategic training development, workforce planning, and policy formulation, ensuring the industry remains responsive, competitive and future-ready. The intended audience includes, but is not limited to:

- HumanAbility to build on evidence-based practices and contribute to broader workforce research and training package review
- peak bodies, industry associations and professional networks to support advocacy, professional standards, and sector-wide co-ordination
- industry stakeholders and employers to ensure workforce development initiatives are aligned with real-world occupational needs and future directions
- registered training organisations (RTOs) and vocational education and training (VET) professionals, to assist in developing and delivering training programs that are relevant, up to date, and outcomes focused
- skills ministers and relevant government representatives, to support informed decision-making on workforce development priorities and training policy
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR), to contribute to national skills strategies and program design.

By engaging this diverse stakeholder group, the report aims to foster a shared understanding of workforce challenges and opportunities, and to ensure that training solutions are industry-relevant, practical, and aligned with real-world demands.

2 Methodology applied

This functional analysis draws on diverse data sources and input from stakeholders across the pathology sector. It focuses on identifying current and emerging job roles, qualification requirements, and skills expectations to guide workforce development and inform future revisions of the Certificate III in Pathology Collection and Certificate III in Pathology Assistance. The methodology involved:

- reviewing publicly available job advertisements to determine workforce skills in demand
- analysing position descriptions and organisational structures from employer websites and industry sources
- identifying trends and gaps in knowledge and practice based on desktop research and stakeholder input
- capturing employer insights through employers' interviews.

2.1 Desktop research

Research was conducted using a desktop analysis methodology, with a focus on examining publicly available online sources. Desktop research involved reviewing 35 job advertisements that were publicly available during a 2-week period in September 2024, along with position descriptions and organisational structures. ***(Appendix A: Job Advertisements Analysis Spreadsheet).*** The aim was to identify common qualifications, workforce skills requirements, and job role structures within the pathology sector. This approach supports evidence-based workforce planning and informs the potential development or revision of Certificate III in Pathology Collection and Certificate III in Pathology Assistance.

The analysis focused on:

- reviewing position descriptions for roles related to pathology collection
- analysing job advertisements to identify recurring technical, interpersonal, and foundational skills in demand
- examining organisational structures and team hierarchies as presented on company websites and industry publications
- identifying emerging trends, future-facing job requirements, and potential gaps in workforce capabilities
- synthesising findings to provide actionable insights for qualification development and sector-specific skills planning.

Job Boards and Advertisements

- Seek and Indeed were used to gather a wide sample of job advertisements for roles across the pathology collecting and assisting workforce.
- Job descriptions were reviewed to extract details on required qualifications, certifications, technical competencies, soft skills, and experience levels.

2.2 Employer interviews

Fifteen semi-structured interviews were conducted with employers representing a cross-section of the pathology sector, including metropolitan hospitals, regional clinics, and specialised laboratories. Employers were invited to participate via formal email invitations, with sessions conducted via Microsoft Teams.

Topics explored during the interviews included current job roles including entry-level and advanced role expectations, day-to-day responsibilities, skills gaps, career progression pathways and the specific competencies they prioritise when recruiting and developing staff such as digital competency, infection control, and patient communication *(Appendix B Employer interview questionnaire)*. Interviews also captured insights on the unique requirements for regional and remote settings, including cultural competency and multi-functional roles.

Employers were grouped into categories—public hospitals, private laboratories, regional services, and mobile pathology providers—to capture a diverse range of perspectives.

The qualitative data gathered through these interviews helped clarify the real-world expectations of employers and shed light on the practical application of skills in diverse workplace contexts. The insights were instrumental in defining the core and supporting functions of pathology collection and assisting roles, and in shaping a more accurate understanding of how the workforce operates at different levels.

Importantly, the findings from these interviews aim to inform workforce development and training strategies, ensuring that qualifications and skill sets are designed in alignment with current and future industry needs. The outcomes contribute directly to the functional analysis process and support evidence-based recommendations for updates to the Certificate III in Pathology Collection, Certificate III in Pathology Assistance and other training products in this sector.

2.3 Functional mapping

A structured functional mapping exercise was conducted to break down key roles into functions and subfunctions. Functional mapping drew from desktop research, employer interviews, and job descriptions provided by participating organisations.

Preliminary functional maps were presented to stakeholders, including representatives from Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), regulatory bodies, and industry associations. Feedback from validation workshops informed final adjustments.

3 Functional analysis outcomes: Key findings

The desktop research phase provided insights into workforce skills requirements, organisational structures, and trends within the pathology sector. A thematic analysis of job advertisements for roles such as pathology collectors and assistants revealed key qualifications, skills, and attributes prioritised by employers. These findings highlighted the evolving nature of job responsibilities, with a growing demand for multi-skilled professionals capable of adapting to diverse settings.

Strong communication abilities, technical proficiency in pathology workflows, and effective teamwork capabilities were commonly sought-after skills. These trends reflect the changing expectations of employers in the sector and underscore the need for training products that equip learners with the skills required to thrive in contemporary healthcare environments.

3.1 Industry overview

The pathology sector is a cornerstone of the healthcare system and is responsible for conducting approximately 500 million pathology tests annually in Australia.[1] These tests inform over 70% of clinical decisions, significantly impacting patient care and outcomes.[2]

Pathology services operate under the broader Health and Social Assistance industry, specifically within the sub-sector of Technical Support Services. They encompass a diverse range of settings, including hospitals, outpatient clinics, aged and disability care facilities, alcohol and other drug (AOD) services, blood bank collection centres, and specialised environments such as emergency departments and paediatric wards.

Pathology collectors and assistants play critical roles in this sector. Collectors focus on venous blood collection and client interaction, while assistants handle specimen reception, preparation, and dispatch. Both roles are essential to ensuring the accuracy and efficiency of diagnostic services. Employers in the industry range from small, rural healthcare providers to large, urban pathology services, collectively

[1] Department of Health. (2024). Pathology services in Australia: A statistical overview. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government
[2] Ibid

supporting nearly 24,000 employees nationwide. Approximately 9,000 workers are employed as pathology collectors.[3]

The industry faces various challenges, including workforce shortages, particularly in rural and remote areas, where smaller service outlets operate with limited hours. Approximately 53% of pathology staff work part-time, reflecting the industry's reliance on flexibility to meet demand. Additionally, industry stakeholders report a significant number of unqualified staff being employed and trained in-house due to the pressing need for skilled workers.

3.2 Industry demand and growth areas

The pathology sector is poised for significant growth. Growth projections indicate that the pathology sector will expand by approximately 11.8% over the next 5 years.[4] This growth is driven by factors such as an ageing population, increased demand for diagnostic testing, and advancements in medical technologies.

One of the most notable growth areas is the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) and automation in diagnostics. These technologies streamline processes, enhance accuracy, and enable faster turnaround times for test results. However, their integration requires a workforce proficient in managing and operating these advanced systems, highlighting a need for specialised training in AI-driven diagnostic tools.

Mobile pathology services represent another burgeoning area, particularly as healthcare providers seek to improve access for rural and homebound patients. This growth area demands a workforce skilled in logistics, independent decision-making, and patient interaction in non-traditional settings. Training programs must evolve to incorporate modules addressing these unique competencies.

Point-of-care testing (POCT) is also expanding, with an increasing number of pathology professionals required to perform tests directly at the patient's location, such as in clinics or community settings. This shift necessitates additional training in handling portable diagnostic equipment, interpreting results in real time, and maintaining rigorous quality control standards outside traditional laboratory environments.

Employers have identified specific specialisations as emerging areas of demand, including paediatric collections, geriatric care, and managing high-risk specimens. These niche roles require tailored training modules to ensure professionals are equipped to handle the complexities of these patient groups and specimen types.

Workforce shortages in rural and remote areas further highlight the importance of targeted initiatives to attract and retain professionals in these regions. Incentives such as government-supported traineeships and relocation packages are seen as critical to addressing these challenges.

[3] National Skills Commission. (2024). Pathology sector workforce analysis. Canberra, ACT: Australian Government.

[4] [Pathology Collector Career Path- Education Training and Employment Australia (etea.edu.au) accessed 17 April 2024

3.3 Workforce demographics

The pathology sector workforce reflects a diverse yet evolving demographic profile that highlights several key trends and challenges.

Women represent a significant majority of the workforce, with estimates suggesting that over 90% of pathology professionals are female. This trend underscores the need to support gender diversity and equity, including through flexible working arrangements that accommodate caregiving responsibilities.

The average age of pathology workers is 44 years, indicating a workforce that is approaching retirement age in large numbers. Employers and training organisations are increasingly recognising the importance of attracting younger workers to the sector to ensure sustainability. Initiatives such as traineeships and school-based programs are seen as critical to building a pipeline of skilled professionals.

Part-time work is a notable characteristic of the sector, with approximately 53% of workers employed on a part-time basis. This reflects the flexibility offered within the industry, particularly for those balancing work with other commitments. However, it also presents challenges for workforce planning and continuity.

Geographic distribution further influences workforce demographics. Urban areas host the majority of pathology services, but rural and remote regions face persistent workforce shortages. These disparities are partly due to limited training opportunities and less appealing working conditions in non-metropolitan areas. Employers in these regions often report difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff, particularly for roles requiring specialised skills.

Cultural diversity within the workforce is increasing, aligning with broader demographic trends across Australia. However, there remains a need for greater emphasis on cultural competency and inclusion, particularly in regions with significant Indigenous populations. Employers have highlighted the importance of fostering inclusive workplaces that respect and value cultural differences.

Understanding these demographic trends is essential for designing targeted strategies to address workforce challenges, ensure equity, and support the growth and sustainability of the pathology sector.

3.4 Licensing and regulatory requirements

The pathology sector in Australia does not require mandatory licensing for individual professionals, such as pathology collectors or assistants. This flexibility allows for diverse entry pathways into the sector, including on-the-job training.

Collection centres are required to meet authorisation standards. Still, there are no overarching legislative or regulatory requirements specific to the qualifications under review, such as the Certificate III in Pathology Collection or the Certificate III in Pathology Assistance. Stakeholders have indicated that while the absence of licensing reduces barriers to workforce entry, it may also affect public perceptions of professionalism and trust in the sector.

While the sector currently relies on voluntary adherence to best practices, there is growing support for introducing formal accreditation processes to standardise competencies and ensure workforce readiness. Further collaboration with regulatory bodies, such as the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra), could establish benchmarks that align with industry needs while maintaining flexibility in workforce pathways.

3.5 Analysis of job advertisements

A comprehensive analysis of 35 job advertisements from across Australian states and territories *(Appendix A)* provided valuable insights into the qualifications, skills, and attributes sought by employers in the pathology sector. The findings highlight significant trends in job requirements, regional variations, and emerging opportunities for workforce development.

Qualifications:

- A Certificate III in Pathology Collection was listed as required or preferred in 18% of advertisements.
- Experience in pathology-related roles was frequently emphasised, with some employers willing to offer traineeships for entry-level candidates.
- Advanced qualifications, such as a Diploma of Nursing, were occasionally highlighted for specific roles requiring broader competencies.

Skills:

- Technical skills such as venepuncture, specimen handling, and infection control were critical across most roles.
- Soft skills, including strong communication, customer service, and teamwork, were essential for patient-facing positions.
- Digital literacy, particularly proficiency in data entry and laboratory software, was increasingly important but often underemphasised in advertisements.

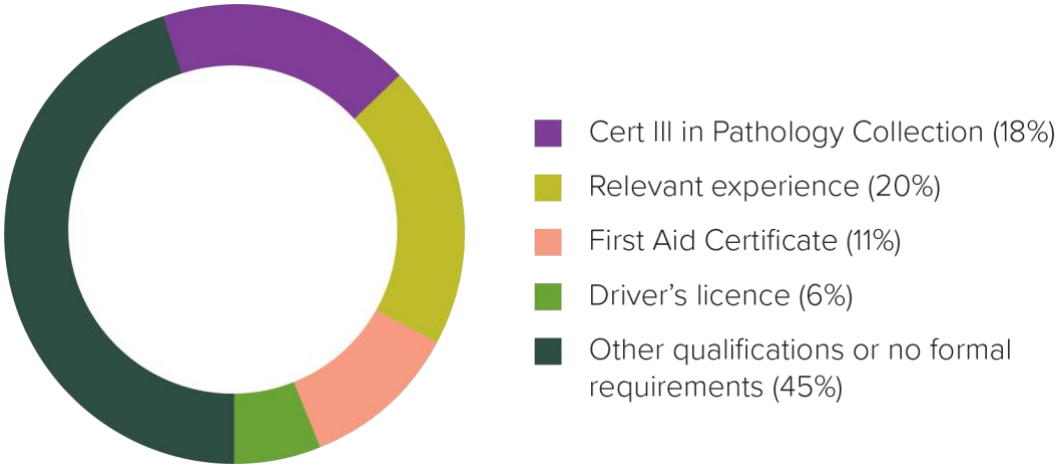
Regional variations:

- Urban employers tended to prioritise candidates with prior experience and specialised skills.
- Regional and remote employers were more likely to offer traineeships and accept less experienced candidates, reflecting workforce shortages in these areas.

Emerging trends:

- Mobile pathology services and domiciliary phlebotomy roles are on the rise, with employers seeking logistical and independent decision-making skills.
- Sustainability and patient-centred care are gaining importance, requiring additional training in cultural competency and specialised collection techniques, for example, in paediatric settings.

Figure 2: Employer requirements in pathology job advertisements



3.6 Training and education

The pathology sector offers structured training and educational pathways to prepare individuals for a wide range of roles. Two key qualifications, *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* and *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection*, serve as foundational credentials for workforce readiness, equipping candidates with the technical and practical skills required to meet industry demands.

There are 38 RTOs and TAFEs that deliver *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection*, and 8 of these deliver *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* across Australia[5].

In 2022, *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection* was one of the top 20 programs by enrolment in the *HLT Health Training Package*, with 8,055 enrolments and 3,470 completions. Growth in enrolments over a 5-year period was approximately 7.4%, with an average completion rate over the 2018-2022 period of almost 49%. [6] [7]

HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection

This qualification focuses on competencies essential for roles such as pathology collector and phlebotomist. Core skills include venepuncture, infection control, specimen handling, and patient interaction. The training places significant emphasis on hands-on practical experience to ensure graduates can confidently perform critical tasks such as collecting and transporting specimens while adhering to healthcare protocols and regulatory requirements.

HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance

Tailored for laboratory support roles including laboratory assistant or specimen receptionist, this qualification prioritises skills in specimen preparation, data entry, and laboratory administration. It is

[5] training.gov.au - Search
[6] NCVER 2023, Total VET students and courses 2022:program enrolments Data Builder.
[7] NCVER Data Builder, enrolments and completions data. Accessed May 2024.

designed to enhance back-of-house operational efficiency, ensuring that candidates are well-prepared to contribute to the smooth functioning of pathology laboratories.

Flexible Learning Pathways

These qualifications are accessible through multiple pathways, including full or part time study and traineeships. Many Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) offer flexible learning options, such as online modules and blended delivery models, to accommodate diverse learner needs. This flexibility is particularly beneficial for candidates in regional and remote areas, where workforce shortages often necessitate innovative training solutions.

The role of traineeships

Traineeships provide a vital bridge between academic learning and practical application. By allowing candidates to gain real-world experience while completing their qualifications, traineeships enhance technical skills and workplace readiness. Employers in the pathology sector often offer traineeships to attract entry-level talent, particularly in regional locations where the recruitment of skilled professionals remains a challenge. However, in some states, such as Victoria, these qualifications cannot be offered as traineeshiwps.[8]

4 Overview of interviews and workshop outcomes

Employer interviews and workshops provided valuable qualitative data, offering a deeper understanding of pathology professionals' practical skills, functions, and challenges. Employers stressed the importance of critical competencies, including client communication, infection control, and specimen management accuracy. Workshops with stakeholders across metropolitan, regional, and remote settings further validated these insights and contributed to refining functional maps.

4.1 Current workforce requirements

Employer interviews highlighted the immediate needs and expectations of pathology professionals. Foundational skills such as infection control, specimen handling, and customer service were critical for maintaining safety standards and operational efficiency. Employers also noted the increasing importance of interpersonal skills in handling diverse patient needs effectively, particularly in high-pressure environments such as hospitals and emergency care settings.

Employers frequently mentioned the need for flexibility and adaptability among staff, particularly in multi-functional roles where individuals may need to perform both collection and administrative tasks. For example, smaller facilities often require pathology collectors to manage patient records and reception duties alongside specimen collection. This highlights a demand for cross-trained professionals who can seamlessly transition between tasks.

[8] Determination of approved training schemes, (vrqa.vic.gov.au)

Another key requirement was experience with technology, including familiarity with electronic patient management systems and laboratory software. Employers identified digital literacy as a growing competency gap, with many staff needing additional training to adapt to advancements in specimen tracking and data entry systems. This reliance on technology underscores the need for training to incorporate digital skills.

Employers also expressed the need for employees to work independently and autonomously, using organisational and problem solving skills to get the job done.

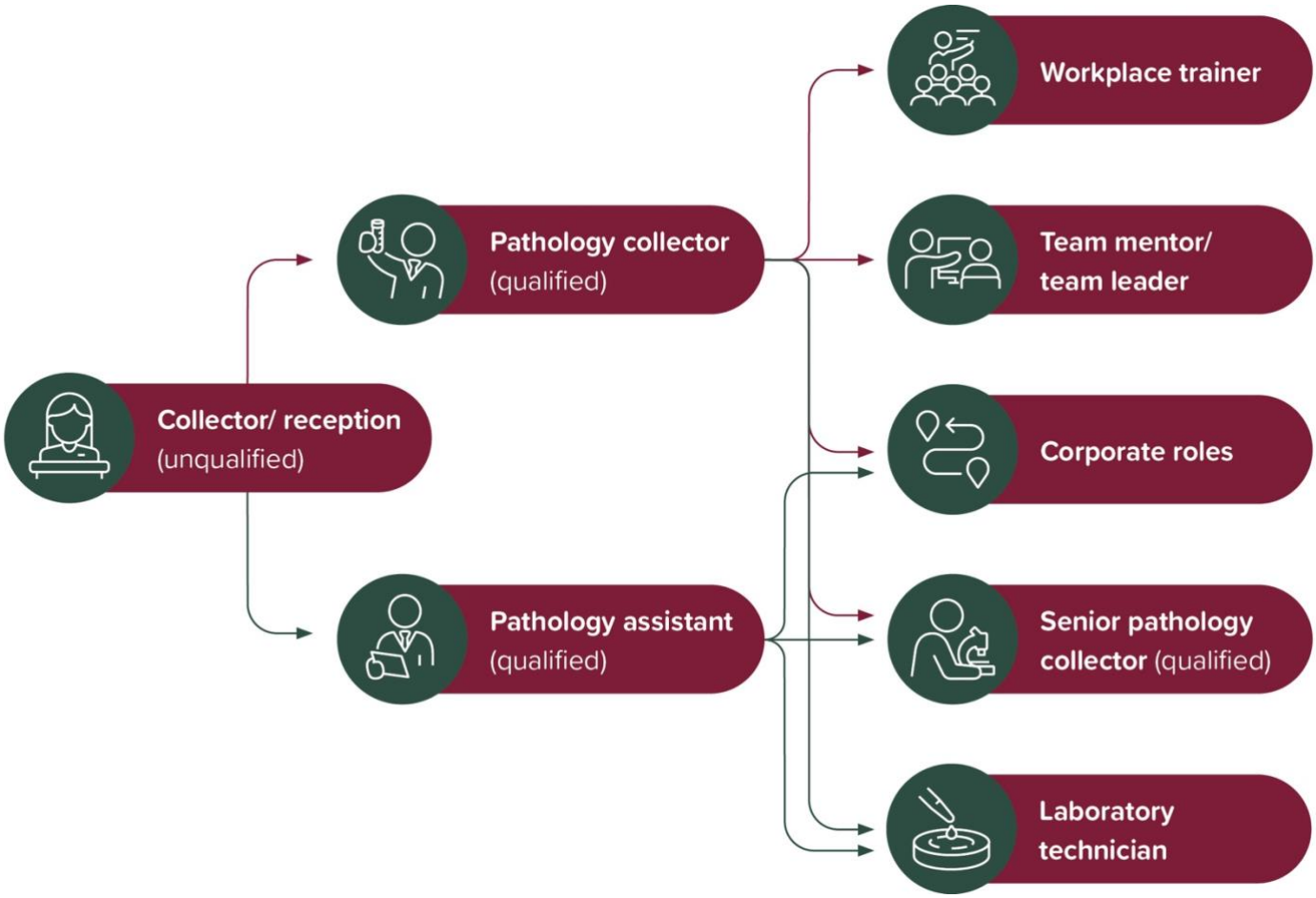
Employers also expressed a preference for candidates with practical, hands-on experience. While formal qualifications such as the Certificate III in Pathology Collection were frequently listed as desirable, many employers were willing to provide traineeships to bridge skill gaps, particularly in regional areas where workforce shortages are acute. This highlights the need for accessible, flexible training pathways that accommodate entry-level workers while ensuring they develop the technical and interpersonal skills required for the role. A current working with children check was also required or desirable in position vacant advertisements.

Employer interviews highlighted the immediate needs and expectations of pathology professionals. Employers emphasised the importance of foundational skills such as infection control, specimen handling, and customer service. These skills were deemed critical for ensuring workplace efficiency and maintaining safety standards.

4.2 Career pathways

Based on employer interviews conducted during the functional analysis, the following map showcases key pathways identified for pathology professionals. The career pathway map illustrates the progression of roles within the pathology sector, highlighting both unqualified and qualified positions and the potential for advancement.

Figure 3: Career pathways for pathology professionals



Unqualified roles, such as Collector/Receptionist, often serve as entry points into the sector. These roles involve basic administrative and specimen-handling tasks, providing exposure to the field but lacking the technical scope of qualified positions. Employers noted that many individuals transition from these roles into formal training pathways to enhance their skills and career prospects.

Qualified roles

Pathology collector (qualified): This role represents a foundational position for qualified professionals, with responsibilities including venepuncture, specimen collection, and infection control. Qualified collectors often pursue further development to move into senior or specialised roles.

Pathology assistant (qualified): These professionals focus on laboratory-based tasks, such as specimen preparation and data management. The role provides a pathway into more technical laboratory positions.

Advancement opportunities

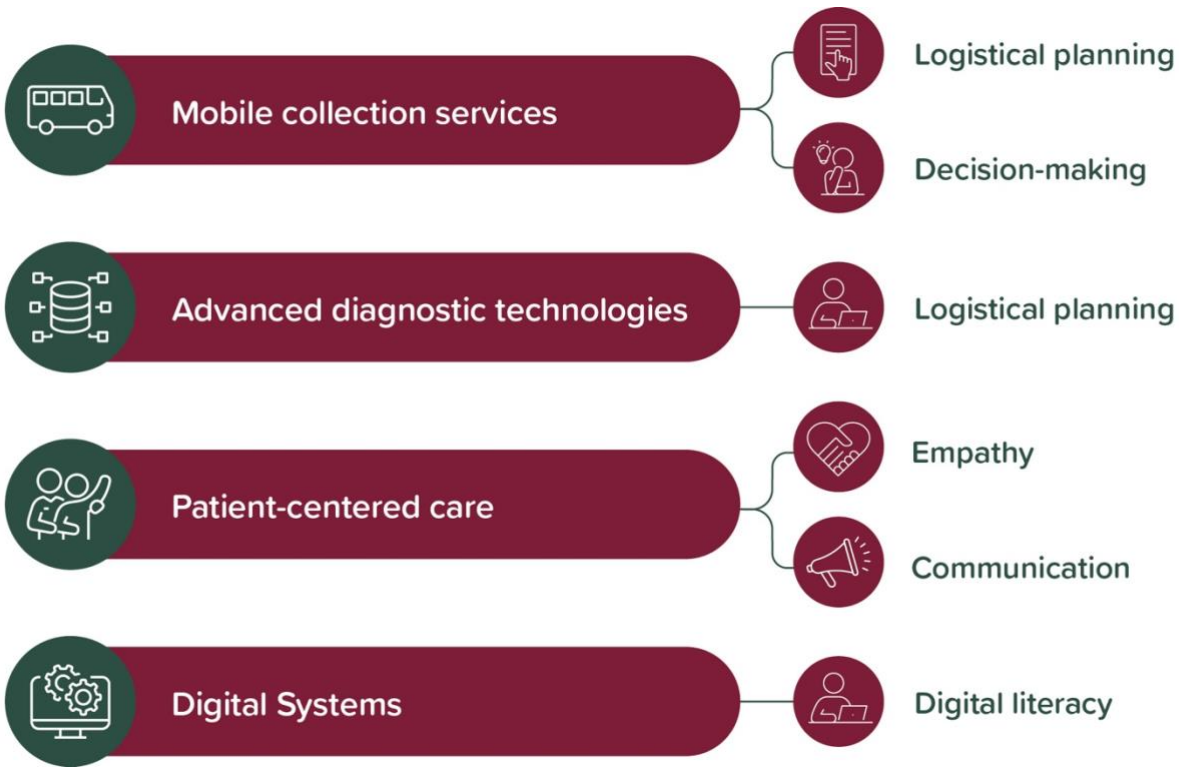
Career progression within the pathology sector allows professionals to apply their technical expertise and develop leadership and mentoring capabilities. The following advancement pathways were observed:

- Training roles: Experienced professionals often transition into roles focused on training and mentoring new entrants. These positions leverage their practical knowledge and contribute to workforce development by preparing the next generation of pathology professionals.
- Team mentor/leader: Leadership roles within teams allow experienced professionals to take on responsibilities for mentoring junior staff, coordinating team efforts, and ensuring high standards of practice within the workplace.
- Corporate roles: Positions such as account manager or area manager involve operational oversight and strategic management responsibilities.
- Senior pathology collector: Expanding on the foundational pathology collector role, this position involves performing advanced collection techniques and may include leadership responsibilities such as training less experienced colleagues.
- Laboratory technician: For pathology assistants, progression to laboratory technician roles involves specialising in laboratory-based tasks such as specimen analysis and advanced technical operations. This pathway requires a deep understanding of laboratory processes and the ability to work with precision.

4.3 Emerging trends in pathology roles

The pathology sector is experiencing rapid transformation, driven by technological advancements, evolving healthcare delivery models, and changing patient needs. These trends are redefining traditional roles and creating new opportunities for professionals in the field.

Figure 4: Emerging trends in pathology roles



Shift towards mobile collection services

A key development is the expansion of mobile collection services, enabling phlebotomists to collect specimens from patients in their homes or non-traditional settings. This approach improves accessibility for patients with mobility challenges and addresses regional healthcare disparities. Employers highlighted the need for logistical skills and independent decision-making in these roles, particularly in managing schedules, routes, and patient interactions.

Integration of advanced diagnostic technologies

The adoption of automated systems and AI-driven tools for specimen analysis and data interpretation is reshaping laboratory workflows. Pathology staff are increasingly required to develop technical proficiency in operating these systems and adapting to rapid technological advancements. Employers noted that these changes demand continuous professional development to ensure staff remain competent in using emerging technologies.

Focus on patient-centred care

Patient-centred care is becoming a cornerstone of pathology services, with employers emphasising the importance of soft skills such as empathy, communication, and adaptability. These skills are particularly critical in high-stress environments, such as emergency care, and when working with vulnerable populations, including children and the elderly. Training programs must address this by incorporating modules on patient interaction and handling complex cases.

Adoption of digital systems

The increasing focus on sustainability and efficiency has led to the adoption of digital systems for specimen tracking, electronic documentation, and data sharing. Employers reported that staff must be proficient in these systems to ensure accuracy, compliance, and efficient workflow management. Digital literacy is now considered a critical competency across all pathology roles.

4.4 Regional and remote challenges

Employers in regional and remote areas face persistent challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled pathology professionals. These difficulties are compounded by geographic isolation, limited access to professional development opportunities, and the smaller scale of healthcare operations in these regions. As a result, turnover rates are higher, and maintaining a consistently trained workforce remains a significant concern.

Training accessibility

A lack of local training opportunities is one of the most pressing issues. Many potential candidates in remote areas do not have access to nearby training facilities or accredited programs, discouraging them from pursuing careers in pathology. Employers advocated for the implementation of flexible training pathways, such as online modules or blended learning, to enable individuals to gain qualifications without the need to relocate. These solutions would not only increase accessibility but also support the development of a local workforce.

Recruitment and retention incentives

Employers often rely on financial and logistical incentives to attract workers to remote locations. Common measures include housing allowances, relocation assistance, and higher wages. However, these incentives are frequently insufficient to overcome the challenges of working in isolated areas, such as limited amenities, professional isolation, reduced career advancement opportunities and lack of career opportunities for family members. Addressing these factors will require a more comprehensive approach that combines financial incentives with broader support systems, including mentoring and peer networks.

Broad skill requirements

In remote settings, pathology professionals are often required to take on multiple roles, blending pathology collection with administrative or patient care responsibilities. This multifunctionality demands cross-disciplinary training and a high degree of adaptability. Employers noted that standard training packages do not always address these unique requirements, emphasising the need for tailored training that equips candidates with both technical and administrative skills.

Cultural competency

Cultural competency is a critical requirement in regions with significant Indigenous populations. Employers highlighted the importance of equipping staff with the knowledge and skills to understand and respect cultural practices. This competency is essential for building trust and delivering effective healthcare services in these communities. Integrating cultural awareness modules into training programs was seen as a vital step toward achieving this goal.

Tailored strategies for workforce development

The challenges identified by regional and remote employers underscore the need for tailored strategies to support workforce sustainability. Key recommendations include:

- expanding flexible training pathways to reduce barriers for local candidates
- offering comprehensive incentive packages that address both financial and professional concerns
- designing training programs that incorporate cross-disciplinary skills and cultural competency modules
- strengthening community engagement initiatives to foster local trust and attract candidates from within the region.

4.5 Employer feedback on training gaps

Employer interviews revealed several critical gaps in current training programs for pathology professionals. These gaps highlight the need for targeted enhancements in areas such as technical skills, cultural competence, digital literacy, and workplace experience.

Key feedback from employers is summarised in the table below, which outlines specific gaps and recommended solutions. For example, employers consistently emphasised the importance of equipping graduates with practical strategies for managing patient anxiety and discomfort, particularly when working with needle-phobic patients or those with complex needs. Similarly, the lack of training in cultural

competence and communication was noted as a barrier to delivering effective care to diverse populations, including Indigenous communities.

Technical skill deficits, such as handling high-risk procedures or managing challenging venous access, and the increasing reliance on digital systems, were also areas of concern. Employers highlighted the need to enhance practical training through extended workplace placements and develop specialised units to address unique industry needs, such as domiciliary collections and emergency care settings.

By addressing these gaps through targeted curriculum improvements, training programs can ensure graduates are better prepared to meet industry demands and provide high-quality care in diverse healthcare environments.

Table 1: Training gaps and recommended solutions

Training gap	Recommended solutions
Needle-phobic patients	Role-play simulations and case-based learning on anxiety management.
Cultural competence	Training on cultural sensitivity, effective communication, and respecting traditional practices.
Advanced collection techniques	The addition of a unit of competency on software proficiency, data security, and electronic documentation.
Specialised units	Develop specialised units for specific needs such as paediatric collections.

4.6 Specialised skills and niche roles

The pathology sector includes a range of specialised roles that require unique competencies not typically addressed in standard training programs. Addressing the specific needs of these roles through targeted training would enhance workforce readiness and ensure alignment with the dynamic demands of the sector.

Mortuary technician

Mortuary technicians play a critical role in post-mortem procedures, anatomical specimen handling, and maintaining detailed records of autopsy processes. Employers emphasised the need for targeted training in anatomy, physiology, and the respectful handling of remains to ensure compliance with ethical and legal standards. These competencies are essential for maintaining professionalism and quality in sensitive and specialised operations.

Domiciliary phlebotomist

Domiciliary phlebotomists work independently in patients' homes, addressing diverse medical needs while managing logistical challenges. This role demands strong interpersonal skills, proficiency in infection control tailored to home environments, and the ability to assess risks effectively. Training programs for these professionals should include:

- risk assessment in home settings

- safe transport of specimens
- effective communication with patients and their families.

Pathology assistants and specimen receptionists

Other niche roles include pathology assistants in high-complexity laboratories and specimen receptionists in large-scale pathology operations. These positions require:

- Pathology assistants: advanced technical skills for handling high-risk samples, managing sophisticated laboratory equipment, and performing complex laboratory procedures.
- Specimen receptionists: administrative expertise, including workflow coordination, data management, and ensuring accuracy in high-volume operations.

Cross-disciplinary training

Employers highlighted the growing importance of cross-disciplinary skills for specialised roles. For example:

- combining laboratory techniques with clinical skills to create versatile professionals capable of filling both technical and patient-facing roles
- training that integrates clinical and administrative expertise to enhance operational efficiency and adaptability.

4.7 Technology and digital competencies

The increasing reliance on digital systems, such as electronic patient management and specimen tracking, has reshaped the skill requirements for pathology professionals. Employers consistently highlighted the need for enhanced digital literacy across key areas to ensure workforce efficiency and accuracy in modern pathology workplaces.

Data entry and laboratory software proficiency

Employers reported that inaccuracies in electronic documentation and data entry can result in significant delays and increased costs for healthcare providers. To address this, they recommended that core units include practical training on laboratory software operation, best practices for electronic data management, and maintaining accuracy under time pressures.

Specimen tracking technologies

The adoption of barcode labelling systems and real-time specimen tracking technologies has made digital proficiency essential. Employers emphasised the importance of elective units that provide hands-on experience with these tools, enabling staff to seamlessly integrate into workplaces and reduce errors in specimen processing.

Electronic health records (EHR) and digital communication

Digital communication platforms, such as EHR systems, are increasingly integral to pathology workflows. Pathology staff are expected to retrieve, update, and share patient information electronically. Employers recommended that units of competency incorporate proficiency in navigating EHR systems and communicating findings digitally, ensuring smooth coordination across healthcare teams.

Data security and patient confidentiality

With the growing use of digital systems, ensuring compliance with data protection regulations and maintaining patient confidentiality are critical responsibilities for pathology staff. Employers highlighted the need for core units on cybersecurity, including ethical considerations and best practices for safeguarding sensitive information.

5 Mapping to qualifications

The qualifications under review were mapped to the findings from the functional analysis, ensuring they address industry practices and operational demands. Core units were aligned with key functions identified during the analysis, such as specimen collection, client interaction, and infection control. Elective units were also reviewed to ensure appropriateness.

5.1 Functional job analysis

Functions and subfunctions provide a structured framework for understanding the roles and responsibilities of pathology professionals. Functions represent high-level responsibilities essential to pathology services, while subfunctions break these down into detailed tasks that achieve those broader objectives. This distinction ensures that training products address both the overarching and specific requirements of industry roles.

5.1.1 Pathology collectors

The functions of pathology collectors are primarily patient-facing, focusing on activities that ensure accurate and timely specimen collection while maintaining high standards of care. See Figure 5 for key functions and sub-functions identified.

These functions and subfunctions highlight the role of pathology collectors in balancing technical competency with effective communication. Employers emphasised the need for comprehensive training in these areas, ensuring staff can manage diverse client needs appropriately while upholding professional standards.

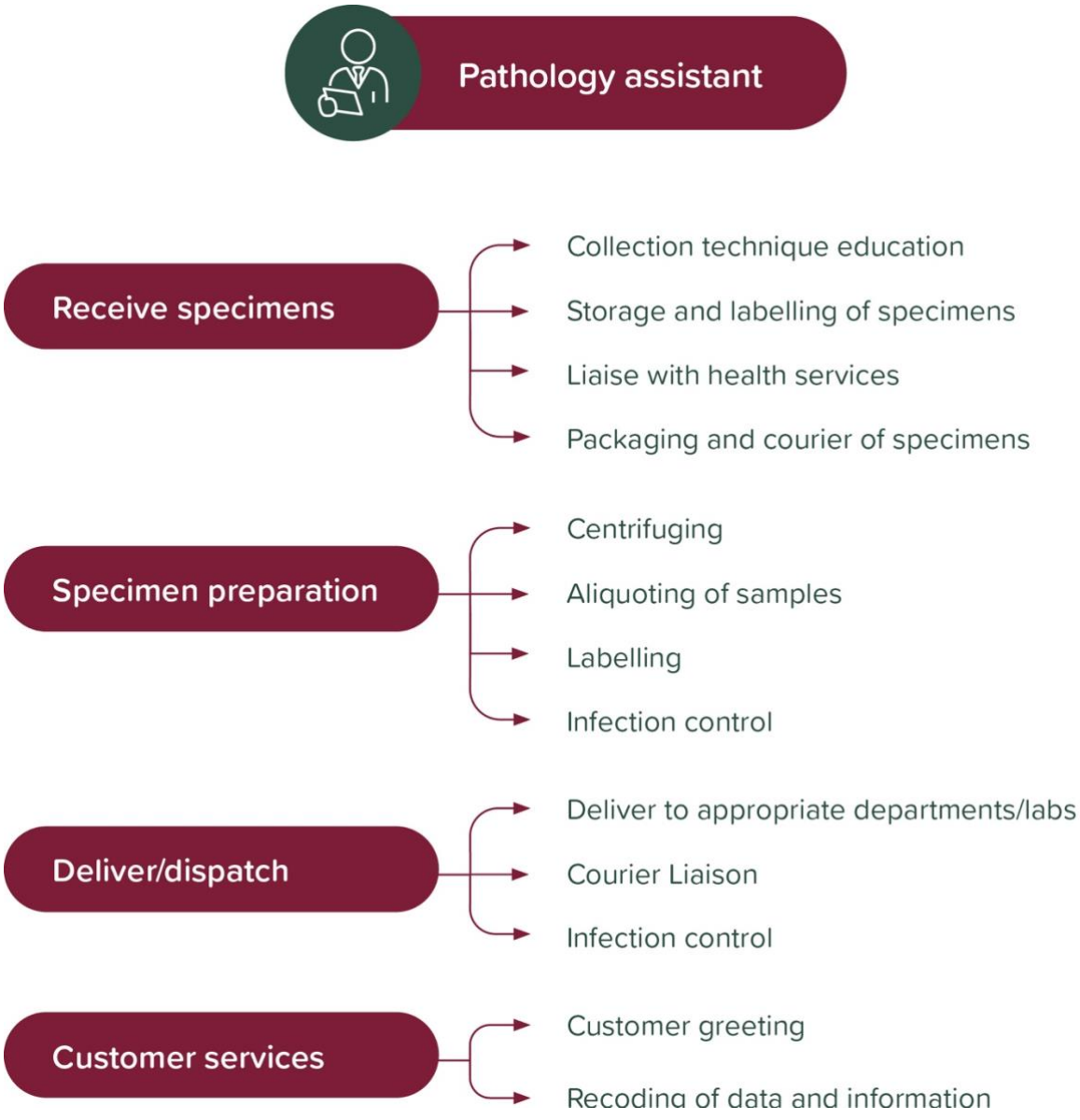
Figure 5: Functions/subfunctions of pathology collectors

5.1.2 Pathology assistants

Pathology assistants focus on laboratory support tasks that underpin the smooth operation of pathology services. See Figure 6 for key functions identified:

The role of pathology assistants requires a strong foundation in technical and administrative skills, with employers highlighting the importance of attention to detail and data accuracy. Additionally, as pathology operations become more complex, there is an increasing demand for assistants to take on specialised subfunctions, such as handling high-risk samples or operating advanced diagnostic tools.

Figure 6: Functions/subfunctions of pathology assistants



5.2 Function/subfunction mapping to training package products

Mapping between functions and subfunctions to the training products under review was conducted (Appendix D) to highlight the alignment between industry requirements and the competencies provided in the qualifications. This mapping is intended to ensure that units of competency address foundational skills for essential tasks and specialised capabilities for advanced or niche roles.

5.2.1 Pathology collectors

For pathology collectors, core units focus on competencies such as venepuncture, infection control, and client interaction. These are critical for roles involving direct patient care and specimen collection. For instance, units like *HLTPAT002 Perform venous blood collections* and *HLTPAT004 Collect specimens other than blood* address technical proficiencies needed for accurate and safe specimen collection. Infection control is embedded within these units, reinforcing the importance of maintaining safety and hygiene standards in all interactions.

Table 2: Gaps identified between functional analysis and *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection*

Function	Subfunction	Relevant unit/s of competency	Gaps identified and recommendations
Data entry	Add information to patient management systems	*BSBMED301 Interpret and apply medical terminology appropriately*	Digital literacy is addressed minimally. Consider including a core unit focusing on business technology to enhance capability in managing databases and spreadsheets. For example, *BSBTEC201 Use business software applications*
Complete timed collections	Time procedures, for example glucose tolerance test, blood cultures	*HLTPAT002 Perform venous blood collections*	Timed collections may require further training on scheduling and process management for specific tests
Complete ward rounds	Communicate with staff and patients, collect blood specimens	*CHCCOM005 Communicate and work in health or community services*	Specific inter-professional communication skills may

			need enhancement for ward settings
Complete domiciliary visits	Plan visits, conduct risk assessments	*CHCCCS027 Visit client residence*[*]	Risk assessment and personal safety for domiciliary visits could benefit from more targeted training.

Note: Units of competency marked with an[*] are elective units. All other units are core.

5.2.2 Pathology Assistants

For pathology assistants, core units cover specimen reception, preparation, and data entry. Units such as *HLTPAT006 Receive, prepare, and dispatch pathology specimens* focus on the logistical and administrative aspects of pathology workflows. These competencies ensure that specimens are handled efficiently, contributing to timely and accurate diagnostics.

Table 3: Gaps identified between functional analysis and *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance*

Function	Subfunction	Relevant unit/s of competency	Gaps identified and recommendations
Communicate with clients	Greet clients, record information, obtain consent	*CHCCOM005 Communicate and work effectively in health or community services* *CHCDIV001 Work with diverse people*	Cultural competency training specific to healthcare contexts could strengthen inclusion efforts.
Data entry	Add information to patient management systems	*BSBMED301 Interpret and apply medical terminology appropriately*	Digital literacy is addressed minimally. A core unit focusing on business technology could improve database and spreadsheet skills. For example, *BSBTEC201 Use business software applications*
Deliver and dispatch	Deliver to labs, liaise with couriers	*HLTPAT006 Receive, prepare and dispatch pathology specimens*	Handling dangerous goods and hazardous materials may need more emphasis. Consider including *TLIF3091A Apply awareness of dangerous goods and*

	hazardous materials requirements.

Note: Units of competency marked with an * are elective units. All other units are core.

5.3 Specialised units and electives

Specialised units and electives in *HLT37215 Certificate III in Pathology Collection* and *HLT37415 Certificate III in Pathology Assistance* are designed to address the unique and emerging needs of the pathology sector. These units offer targeted training for roles requiring advanced technical skills, niche expertise, or specific patient care capabilities.

For example, units such as *HLTPAT003 Perform capillary blood collections* and *HLTPAT005 Collect specimens for drugs of abuse testing*, cater to specialised roles where non-standard collection methods are frequently required. These units ensure that pathology professionals are experienced in managing challenging collection scenarios, including patients with difficult venous access or workplace compliance testing.

Other electives focus on patient-centred care for vulnerable populations. Units like *HLTPAT007 Work with paediatric patients in pathology* and *HLTHPS010 Interpret and respond to patient-specific requirements* provide skills to engage effectively with children, elderly patients, or those with complex needs, ensuring both safety and empathy during procedures.

Emerging areas such as mobile pathology and domiciliary services are also addressed through tailored modules. These include training on logistics, risk management, and independent operation in non-traditional settings, equipping professionals to deliver services in rural and home-based environments.

Specialised units also extend to laboratory-based roles, such as *MSL975064 Perform chemical pathology tests*, which are designed for pathology assistants working in high-complexity diagnostic environments. These electives enhance the ability to contribute to advanced laboratory operations and ensure accuracy in specimen analysis.

By incorporating these specialised units and electives, the qualifications provide flexibility and depth, enabling professionals to pursue roles in diverse settings and meet the evolving demands of the pathology sector.

6 Recommendations

This section outlines actionable recommendations based on stakeholder feedback, consultation findings, and industry requirements. The focus is on refining training products to address skills gaps, enhance workforce readiness, and align qualifications with current and emerging industry needs to support decision-making regarding the training package products.

6.1 Training package product refinements

6.1.1 Core and elective units

Retain core units focused on infection control, communication, and fundamental collection skills, ensuring alignment with industry standards.

Include *HLTPAT006 Receive, prepare, and dispatch pathology specimens* as a core unit in the Pathology Assistance stream and an elective in the Pathology Collection stream.

Consider *CHCCOM005 Communicate and work effectively in health or community services* and *CHCDIV001 Work with diverse people* as electives rather than core, depending on their relevance to specific roles.

6.1.2 Specialised units

Develop a specialised unit for collecting blood specimens from newborns, babies, and toddlers, incorporating:

- prerequisite work experience of 12 months (or equivalent experience) in a pathology-related role
- mandatory inclusion of paediatric-specific consent and cultural competency
- simulation and workplace observations to ensure competence.

Proposed outcome: Enhanced pathways for niche roles such as paediatric pathology collection, addressing skill gaps identified in consultations.

6.1.3 Work Placement Hours

- Maintain a minimum of 35 hours for supervised work placement but specify tasks required during this time to ensure meaningful exposure.
- Increase simulated live blood draws to 5 prior to placement and raise real blood draws to 5 in a simulated environment before placement. Retain the requirement for 20 live draws during placement.

Proposed outcome: Better-prepared graduates with practical experience aligned with workplace needs.

6.2 Skill Sets

6.2.1 Blood Collection Skill Set

While existing skill sets for blood collection provide entry-level competency, they should be enhanced to include:

- advanced techniques such as venous access for blood gas analysis
- handling needle-phobic patients and individuals with neurodiverse condition
- add *CHCCOM005 Communicate and work in health or community services* and *CHCLEG001 Work legally and ethically*

Proposed outcome: Graduates with improved technical expertise, patient-handling skills, and a strong understanding of legal and ethical practices in health services.

6.2.2 Cross-Disciplinary Training

Introduce a skill set combining collection and administrative competencies to equip professionals working in smaller or remote facilities where multifunctionality is required.

Proposed outcome: Targeted training solutions for specialised and cross-functional roles, improving employability and meeting industry demands.

6.3 Digital and technological competencies

Incorporate a digital competency unit covering:

- proficiency in electronic health record systems
- specimen tracking technologies and laboratory software
- cybersecurity practices for data protection.

Proposed outcome: Graduates with strong digital skills ready to work in technology-driven environments.

6.4 Stakeholder collaboration

6.4.1 Validation of recommendations

Engage technical committees and industry representatives to validate and refine the proposed qualification structure and units.

6.4.2 Continuous feedback mechanisms

Establish mechanisms for ongoing feedback from employers, educators, and graduates to ensure training products remain responsive to industry changes.

Proposed outcome: A collaborative and adaptive framework for training product development.

6.5 Addressing regional and remote needs

6.5.1 Incentives for placement providers

Advocate for financial and logistical support to encourage regional healthcare facilities to offer work placement opportunities.

Proposed outcome: Reduced barriers to training and workforce development in underserved areas.

6.6 Future-proofing the workforce

6.6.1 Sustainability practices

Incorporate sustainability principles into training products, aligning with broader healthcare industry goals.

Proposed outcome: Graduates with an understanding of sustainable practices in healthcare, enabling them to implement environmentally responsible techniques and contribute to organisational sustainability goals.

6.6.2 Adaptability to emerging trends

Ensure regular updates to training products to reflect advancements in artificial intelligence, automation, and point-of-care diagnostics.

Proposed outcome: A resilient workforce equipped for the evolving pathology sector

Appendices

Appendix A: Job Advertisements Analysis Spreadsheet

Appendix B: Employer Interview Questionnaire

Appendix C: Functional analysis – Key Roles, Functions and Subfunctions

Appendix D: Mapping to Training Package Products

Appendix D: Glossary

Appendix A: Job advertisements analysis spreadsheet

- Researched all states and territories
- 35 advertisements viewed
- Qualifications required:
  - Certificate III in Pathology Collection (4) (5 preferred, desirable, highly regarded)
  - Certificate III in Pathology Assistance (0) (2 preferred, desirable, highly regarded)
  - Working with Children Check (3) (1 preferred)
  - First Aid (3)
  - Drivers licence (2)

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Australian Clinicalabs, Collector/Phlebotomist Midwest WA, same position available in Bunbury WA Indeed 12/9/24	**Position description:** Collector/Phlebotomist, process specimens, complete documentation. **Requires:** Certificate III or IV in Pathology Collection or relevant experience. **Traineeships available** Renumeration not included.	Specimen processing and reception.	Traineeship available **Requires:** Certificate III or IV in Pathology Collection or relevant experience
Australian Clinicalabs, Pathology Collection, Perth WA Seek 12/9/24	**Position description:** Collection of blood and other samples from patients. **Requires:** Certificate III or IV in Pathology Collection. Renumeration not included.	Store and process specimens, documentation.	**Requires:** Certificate III or IV in Pathology Collection

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Eastern Health – Lab Assistant, Hospital Specimen Reception, Box Hill, VIC Seek 8/9/24		**Position description:** Specimen reception team, receiving and processing samples. Front and back of house. Keyboard skills, customer Service. Communication face to face and over phone. **Requires:** healthcare setting experience, shift work. $65,754 per annum	
Austin Health, Pathology Collector Grade 2/Phlebotomist, Shepperton, VIC Seek 9/9/24	**Position Description:** Collect blood and other samples, documentation, package and prepare for transport **Requires:** Experience or Certificate III in Pathology collection or Diploma of nursing $31.65 per hour		**Requires:** Experience or Certificate III in Pathology Collection or Diploma of Nursing
Dorevitch Pathology Pathology Collector, Melbourne VIC Seek 12/9/24	**Position description:** collecting blood, coordinating specimen samples. Record keeping. **Requires:** Certificate III in Pathology Collection or healthcare background.		**Requires:** Certificate III in Pathology Collection or healthcare background.
Queensland Government - Laboratory Assistant Specimen collection, Townsville QLD	**Position description:** Phlebotomy, specimen reception procedures, work unsupervised,	Specimen reception procedures	

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Seek 9/9/24	commitment to quality management. **Qualifications:** Not stated but inferred, see below. **Requires:** Phlebotomy experience. **Preferred:** Qualification in specimen collection. $33.52 - $35.24 ph		
Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology - Pathology Specimen Collector, Gold Coast QLD – same position also available in Brisbane Seek and own website 6/9/24	**Position description:** Blood collection, in-house training provided. **Requires:** First aid certificate Preferred: Certificate III in Pathology specimen collection. $27.00 per hour	Receive specimens, documentation	**Requires:** First Aid Certificate This could provide credit transfer to cover unit *HLTAID011 Provide First Aid*
QML PathologyLab Assistant Cairns, QLD Seek 9/9/24		**Position description:** Receipting and processing of specimens **Requires:** Experience processing specimens, data entry, customer service. **Qualification:** Certificate III in Laboratory Techniques (not current qualification) or Pathology	

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
		Collection is desirable. Renumeration not stated.	
QLD Government Pathology Assistant, Haematology, Woolloongabba, Brisbane QLD Seek 9/9/24		**Position description:** Complete pre- and post-analytical lab tasks. **Qualification:** Certificate III in Pathology Assistance, highly regarded. $33.53 to $35.24 per hour	
Virtus Health QLD Fertility Group, Brisbane QLD Seek 20/9/24		Full time Lab Assistant for 12-month contract Accessioning samples, data entry processing of samples for cytogenetic culture.	Experience preferred, no qualifications required.
Health Central Adelaide, Operational Services Officer, Phlebotomist, Gawler SA Indeed 6/9/24	**Position description:** Venepuncture, specimen collection, storage, prep and transport. Reception duties. **Preferred:** Experience **Requires:** Working with Children Check $29,725 to $54,680 per annum	Reception duties	Requires: Working with Children Check

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Health Central Adelaide, Phlebotomist/Domiciliary, Adelaide SA Seek 10/9/24	**Position description:** Customer service, phlebotomy, specimen collection and management. Receiving and sorting specimens performing preliminary preparation of specimens. Travel to patients. **Requires:** Working with children check $57,842 to $62, 221per annum		**Requires:** Working with Children Check
Abbott Pathology – Dorevitch Pathology, Collector, Adelaide SA Seek 12/9/24	**Position description:** Collect blood, maintaining records, prepare and package specimens. Customer service. **Requires:** Certificate III in Pathology Collection. Experience, Working with Children Check Remuneration no stated.		**Requires:** Certificate III in Pathology Collection. Working with Children Check
Diagnostic Services, Specimen Collector (Phlebotomist) Adelaide, SA Seek 12/9/24	**Position Description:** Collect, store and process pathology specimens. Use software. Training provided. No qualifications provided. $26.00 to $30.00 per hour		

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
4Cyte Pathology Lab assistant in specimen reception, North Ryde, NSW Seek 19/9/24 Jora 19/9/24		Unpacking, labelling specimens. Reception duties. **Requires:** Typing, medical terminology, computer skills. Qualifications not stated. Renumeration not included.	
NSW Health Pathology, Clinical Assistant I work for NSW 10/9/24		**Position Description:** Patient and specimen reception, data entry. **Qualification:** Certificate III or IV in Pathology Assistance advantageous. $33.52 to $35.24 per hour	
Laverty Pathology, Pathology Collector, Sutherland NSW Seek 8/9/24 Healius Pathology 8/9/24	Collecting blood, collecting other samples, coordinating specimens. **Requires:** Demonstrated experience/ Certificate III in Pathology Collection. Working with Children Check Remuneration not stated.	Documentation, prepare, package specimens. Customer contact	**Requires:** Certificate III in collection. Working with Children Check
Laverty Pathology Sydney NSW Pathology Collector (phlebotomist)	**Requires:** Certificate III in Pathology Collection (or willing to complete). Collect blood and non-blood specimens.		**Requires:** Experience and knowledge in phlebotomy.

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Seek 20/9/24	Preparing specimens for transport		Certificate III in Pathology Collection advantageous.
NSW Health Pathology Westmead Mortuary Technician/Post Mortem Assistant Seek 8/10/24			Demonstrated experience performing tissues donations, post-mortems or similar clinical/funeral industry and mortuary procedures. Fundamental anatomy and physiology, medical terminology $71,980 - $76,219 per annum
Diagnostic Services Technical Assistant Launceston, TAS Seek 17/9/24		**Position Description:** Sample handling and prep, reception duties. **Requires:** Lab experience advantageous. Nil quals. $32.34 to $38.75 per hour	
First Choice Diagnostics Co, Casual Drug and Alcohol Tester/collector Hobart TAS Seek 17/9/24	Perform drugs and alcohol testing at multiple industry sites. Work independently. Experience in pathology or pathology collection roles advantageous $30-$40 per hour		

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Western Diagnostics, Laboratory Assistant, Darwin, NT Seek 17/9/24		**Position description:** Receiving, handling and processing specimens, analyser maintenance. Assisting scientists. **Requires:** Experience processing samples, experience operating analysers. Remuneration not stated.	
Sullivan Nicolaides Pathology - Pathology Specimen Collector, Darwin NT Seek and own website 6/9/24	**Position description:** Blood collection, in-house training provided. **Requires:** First aid certificate **Preferred:** Experience working in health, aged care. Remuneration not provided.	Receive specimens, documentation	First Aid Certificate
Queensland Health Cairns Pathology Assistant QLD Government 8/9/24	Key responsibilities – perform lab duties, microbiology set up, receive specimens, data entry No qualifications required	$33.52 - $35.34 per hour	
Queensland Health Brisbane Pathology Assistant QLD Government 8/9/24	Receipt and storage of specimens, ordering supplies, prioritise work, answer enquiries **Requires:** No mandatory qualifications. Certificate		

Company and position title, advertiser	Collection Requirements	Assistant Requirements	Comment
Government of SA Health, Pre-analytical Assistant Operational Services Officer Royal Adelaide Hospital OPS1 progressing to OPS2 SA Pathology 6/9/24	III in Pathology Assistant or higher well regarded Sorting and accessioning samples, data entry, customer enquiries. No qualifications required.		**Requires:** National Police Check Working with children check
Western Diagnostic (Healius), Jandakot Perth Laboratory Assistant Seek 7/9/24	Receiving and processing specimens. Operation and maintenance of analysers, data entry. **Requires:** Experience. Certificate III in Laboratory Techniques desirable	Remuneration not included.	
NSW Health Pathology, Bathurst NSW, Technical Assistant Grade 2 Pathology Collector/Phlebotomist NSW Health Pathology 6/9/24	Certificate III in Pathology Collections or venepuncture experience, demonstrated ability to learn all aspects of clinical environment. Data entry	$30.16 - $31.31 per hour Includes Rural Health Workforce Incentive Scheme ($3,150 per annum).	**Requires:** Class C drivers licence
Queensland Health, Coopers Plains, Brisbane Mortuary (Pathology) Assistant Seek 12/9/24	Assist in preparing bodies for viewing and post-mortem procedures. **Requires:** Demonstrated autopsy/dissection and/or pathology laboratory experience. Physical ability to lift and turn bodies.	$73,861 - $78,977 per annum	**Requires:** Class C drivers licence

Appendix B: Employer interview questionnaire

The following questions were designed for our consultation with interviewees from the sector and will be conducted online using the TEAMS platform.

Your organisation

1. How large is your organisation?
2. How many collection sites do you have?
3. In which states and territories do you operate?
4. How many staff do you have that are:
   - Pathology collectors
   - Pathology assistants
   - Undertaking tasks from both collect and assist work areas
   - Undertake Laboratory Technician work tasks
5. Are you an in-house RTO?

Job roles and functions

1. Which areas do your employees (pathology collectors and assistants) work in?
   - Hospitals

- Medical laboratories
- Diagnostic centres
- Clinics (pop-up cllnics included)
- Doctor's offices
- Other? (people's homes, aged care homes, etc)

2. Do employees work with diverse groups of people? Such as people with disability, children, older people, people experiencing mental health issues, etc?
3. Do your pathology collectors and assistants collect the following samples?
    - Blood samples using techniques such as venipuncture (inserting a needle into a vein), finger pricks, or heel pricks (in infants)
    - Samples such as urine, saliva, sputum, stool, and tissue samples
    - Samples for specialised tests (eg glucose tolerance tests or blood cultures)
4. What does a typical day look like for a pathology collector? Are there steps/procedures they must complete daily?
5. What functions do each of the roles perform – what would a typical day look like for that person?
6. How long do people generally work as a pathology collector or assistant? Do they follow any particular career path?
7. Which 5 skills and qualities do you think are most valuable or critical to be a pathology collector or assistant?
8. Do pathology collectors work remotely and alone? Are these provisions (such as special training) for these environments?
9. If collectors travel to the homes of those who are housebound or to onsite workplaces such as construction sites, aged care facilities and more? Are there special skills required?
10. Do your employees (pathology collectors and assistants) work and interact with children at work? In what way? Do they receive special/specific training?
11. Where do you feel the industry is lagging behind in terms of skills or capabilities?
12. What are the latest technologies or tools you are currently using or considering in your workplace?
13. How important are sustainability practices

Attracting and retaining staff

1. Who is your typical candidate/applicant?
    - Men
    - Women
    - Age group
    - Culturally and linguistically diverse people
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

2. What are the key skills and experience you look for in candidates?
3. Do you prefer experienced employees in this area?
4. Do you only employ people already qualified, or train on the job? Or a combination – prefer qualified but because of skill shortages employ unqualified
5. Are there qualifications, other than pathology collection and pathology assisting that you consider valuable?
6. If qualification not required, what training is provided to new employees?
7. If people train on the job, how do they receive it?
8. Do you offer traineeships and are they completed?
9. Is training offered for working with people with special needs? If so, what training is offered in this area?
10. Are you familiar with the pathology qualifications that are available?
11. If qualifications are not preferred for new employees, how is the qualification not fit for purpose?
12. Is there a clear career pathway for people with pathology qualifications?
13. What are the pathways available?
14. What training is provided to support these pathways?
15. Do people tend to move through the pathways?
16. Do people move into laboratory technician roles?

- Would you be willing to share your pathology roles position descriptions with us?

Industry trends

1. How do you visualise the next 5 years in this industry? Are there any emerging trends / technologies / specialisations.
2. Is the industry affected by any of the following and what might they be:
    - Political influences
    - Technological changes
    - Socio-economic changes, higher demand for services
    - More engagement with other services or more referrals
    - Competitive market space, new entrants and providers.

Appendix C: Functional analysis – Key roles, functions and subfunctions

Roles	Functions performed	Subfunctions
Pathology Collector	Collect blood and other pathology specimens	• Interpret pathology request • Obtain consent • Collection technique education • Receive, store and prepare specimens • Infection control
	Prepare for opening of service	• Confirm cleanliness of collection room • Set up collection area • Confirm adequate supplies of collection equipment
	Customer service	• Greet clients • Receive pathology requests • Record personal and clinical information • Obtain consent for specimen collection • requests

Roles	Functions performed	Subfunctions
		• Explain collection techniques to clients
		• Work with diverse people
	Data entry	• Add information to patient management systems
		• Interpret pathology requests
	Infection control	• Adopt standard infection control guidelines
	Collect blood and other specimens	• Select and assemble appropriate equipment
		• Select appropriate collection site
		• Follow appropriate blood collection procedures
		• Label specimens appropriately
		• Complete timed specimen collections e.g. Glucose Tolerance Test and blood cultures
	Complete ward rounds and collections	• Communicate with ward staff and patients
		• Complete blood collections
	Complete domiciliary visits	• Plan visit to facility or home of client
		• Risk assessment – personal safety and exit location

	Receive pathology specimens	• Receive specimens, including:
		  • urine
		  • saliva
		  • sputum
		  • stool
		  • skin and nail scrapings

	Prepare specimens	Including: • centrifuging • aliquoting of samples • packaging samples appropriately

Roles	Functions performed	Subfunctions
		• delivering specimens to appropriate departments in laboratories
	Maintain supplies	• Re-stock collecting area as required
Pathology Assistant	Communicate with clients and health services	• Greet clients
		• Record personal and clinical information
		• Obtain consent for specimen collection
		• Liaise with health services
		• Work with diverse people
	Receive pathology requests	• Interpret pathology requests
		• Explain collection process to client
	Data entry	• Add information to patient management systems
	Receive pathology specimens	Receive specimens including:
		• blood
		• urine
		• saliva
		• sputum
		• stool
		• skin and nail scrapings
	Label specimens	• Label specimens appropriately
	Prepare and package specimens	• Prepare samples including:
		• centrifuging
		• aliquoting of samples
		• packaging samples appropriately
	Deliver and dispatch specimens	• Deliver specimens to appropriate departments in laboratories
		• Liaise with pathology couriers