

# Trainings

## Learning and earnings on t

by **Angela McCarthy**  
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**This AUT diploma allows trainees to balance study with work while on the path to a valuable qualification**

Interested in the surgery and theatre side of health but not as a nurse or doctor? Anaesthetic technicians are part of the theatre team and assist with procedures for surgery.

Anaesthetic technicians train at one of 21 training hospitals around New Zealand while studying by distance education (correspondence) through AUT's Diploma of Applied Sciences (Anaesthetic Technology), the only anaesthetic technician training in New Zealand.

Trainees must be with a training hospital before they're accepted into the diploma.

There are six papers and two practical manuals to complete over three years. Each paper involves 150 hours study over a semester, including a minimum of eight hours practical



**Lea Adamson went from theatre nurse to anaesthetic technician.**

work at block courses.

Training includes study of anaesthesia, biophysics, human anatomy and physiology theory. Trainees also have two training manuals of competencies to complete and get signed off at the hospital. For the first six months trainees in ADHB theatres are doubled with trained staff while

given practical instruction. They slowly start working more independently and gradually move into more complicated surgery lists. Over the three years they have ongoing clinical assessments, appraisals and reviews.

Trainees must complete 6,340 clinical hours to be eligible to sit their final registration exam and become fully qualified. This is approximately 40 hours a week over three years.

There is a fast track option for nurses with degrees and relevant experience.

### The graduate

**Lea Adamson**

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**Trainee anaesthetic technician  
Auckland District Health Board**

As an anaesthetic technician I help anaesthetists administer the anaesthesia safely.

I check and prepare life-saving equipment for patients, monitor patients' vital signs and put in intravascular lines for medications and fluids.

I also assist the anaesthetist when

the patient needs a breathing tube or other specialist procedures such as epidurals.

Our patients range from newborn babies to elderly patients. It is very rewarding knowing you help make a patient's experience of surgery safer.

Prior to having children I was a theatre nurse in South Africa and we were expected to help the anaesthetist. I loved it but we didn't get specific training. When I heard about the anaesthetic technician roles here I applied for a position straight away. It sounded perfect for me.

Normally training takes three years but I did two because I had relevant theatre nursing experience. I'd say I spent about six hours a week studying. You have to work your study around work but the ADHB helps by providing half a day a week for study. It is tough but manageable.

All papers had mid-semester tests, an assignment and a final exam. We also had to complete weekly worksheets. The clinical papers were completed on the job, followed by end of year exams.

One thing that really stood out was the range of different surgical

# the surgical team

## Anaesthetic technician

### Diploma in Applied Sciences (Anaesthetic Technology)

**Where:** AUT University  
Contact: 0800 288 864 or (09) 921 9779

**Email:** [courseinfo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:courseinfo@aut.ac.nz) or [studinfo@aut.ac.nz](mailto:studinfo@aut.ac.nz)

**Web:** [www.aut.ac.nz](http://www.aut.ac.nz) or [www.nzats.co.nz](http://www.nzats.co.nz)

**General entry requirements:** NZ citizen or permanent resident and trainee at a NZATS approved training hospital. Prefer applicants with some life experience.

**Academic entry requirements:** Minimum NCEA Level 2 physics or AUT level 2 biophysics or equivalent plus NCEA level 3 biology or AUT level 3 anatomy and physiology or equivalent.

**Starting salary:** Trainees — \$30,566 increasing to \$38,900 over three years. Newly qualified technician — \$45,153 with annual increments.  
**Course costs:** Vary but usually paid by training hospital.

specialties we experienced. During rotation through the departments, we covered everything from dental extractions in toddlers to open heart surgery. It was amazing to gain that breadth of experience.

While rotations are great from a learning perspective, I found it a little hard at times because I'd just start to feel comfortable and familiar with a department and then I'd be moved.

Trainees were diverse in age but despite gaps of up to 20 years we all got along. It was nice to realise I could keep up with the younger ones academically.

## The employer

**Sian Mitchell**

**Training and Development Coordinator,  
Anaesthetic Technicians**

**Auckland District Health Board**

We were keen to employ Lea because she already had relevant clinical experience and outstanding references. It was also hard to resist her enthusiasm for the role.

It is greatly beneficial if the trainee is comfortable with patients in a hos-

pital setting because we can then train them faster, which helps us keep up with demand. Trainees may be nurses, laboratory technicians, paramedics and technicians in the sterile services department.

We also like to employ trainees with non-healthcare backgrounds because they bring different skill sets such as technical and computer skills which are also central to the role.

Trainees also need excellent interpersonal skills, good time management and organisational skills, attention to detail, ability to think on one's feet, follow instructions and demonstrate leadership abilities.

There has to be a trained assistant working with an anaesthetist for each episode of anaesthesia, which equates to one anaesthetic technician per theatre. With the ADHB expanding its surgical services to meet demand, this means there are strong prospects for anaesthetic technicians who train here.

We currently have 26 trainees with six due to qualify in March. We employ approximately six trainees each year over two intakes; February and July.