



**Occupational Therapy
Board of New Zealand**

TE PŌARI WHAKAORA NGANGAHAU O AOTEAROA

FOSTERING FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSION

2021 Refresh of:

Competencies for Registration and
Continuing Practice

Scope of Practice

Code of Ethics

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Summary

The Occupational Therapy Board of Aotearoa New Zealand (OTBNZ) is required to regularly update the Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice, Scope of Practice and Code of Ethics. This is to ensure the profession continues to comply with changing legislation and reforms in the provision of health and disability services. Providing a user-friendly format for the registration of occupational therapists is also vital to ensure they are fit and competent for practice. The Competencies were last reviewed by Dr Linda Wilson in 2015 ([A process of instigating aspirational change through regulation. Occupational Therapy Board 2015](#)). The Scope of Practice had not been refreshed since its development in 2004. The OTBNZ did not believe a full review was necessary but more of a 'refresh' of documents used to fulfil its statutory functions as a Responsible Authority, its principal purpose being the health and safety of people.

Following an initial consultation process, a six-member Rōpū was set up using a treaty relationship model. It was co-chaired by two independent lay professionals – Dr Sharon Gemmel, who specialises in education and iwi, and Sally Wenley, a former OTBNZ Board member and journalist who collaborates with consumers. Practising occupational therapists made up the Rōpū members – Dr Gilbert Azuela and Joy Aiton, tangata Tiriti; and Jane Hopkirk and Jo-Anne Gilsenan, tangata whenua. The documents refresh took eight months and included hui, therapist meetings, written submissions, online questionnaires and workshops with practitioners and a diverse range of stakeholders.

A professional advisory group was referred to by the Rōpū during the refresh and included the Board's tikanga advisor, Whaea Iris Pahau, and its professional advisors, as well as regular consultation with stakeholders and therapists.

The Covid-19 restrictions led to fewer face-to-face hui than planned and more online zui (Zoom workshops and hui). Despite this, more than 150 people and organisations contributed. The Rōpū aimed to be as transparent as possible throughout the refresh consultation.

Why refresh OTBNZ documents?

The OTBNZ undertook the refresh to improve the relationship between the Scope, Ethics and Competencies documents; to be compliant with amended legislation, more self-explanatory for therapists and applicable in practice together rather than as silos.

To improve people's lifelong health outcomes throughout Aotearoa, there is an increasing need to work in partnership with people who use occupational therapy services and their whānau. To achieve this, consulting and communicating with other professionals involved in the health and disability sector needs to occur. Hence, therapists are expected to use digital technology, protect people's privacy and respect cultural differences.



The inequity of health and disability services for Māori was highlighted by the Government's Health and Disability System review (2020) and results from Stage One of the Health Services and Outcomes Kaupapa Inquiry from the Waitangi Tribunal (Wai 2575). Both concluded there have been poorer health outcomes and provision of services for Māori.

The OTBNZ was initially set up under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 to register occupational therapists to protect the health and safety of people. The Act was amended in 2019 with the following (HPCAA section 118):

*118(i) To set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence (**including competences that will enable effective and respectful interaction with Māori**), and ethical conduct to be observed by health practitioners of the profession.*

*118(ja) to promote and facilitate **inter disciplinary collaboration and co-operation** in the delivery of health services:*

Registered therapists' ePortfolio is a regulatory tool used to monitor their ongoing competence and audits are undertaken by the OTBNZ annually. Outcomes from reviews and feedback from therapists indicated that some competency performance outcomes were repetitive and difficult to achieve. This applied particularly to *Competency 2: Practicing Appropriately for Bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand*. Auditors reported that the competency needed further clarification and 'multicultural' inferences should be changed to 'bicultural.'

In February 2021, the World Health Organisation launched the Rehabilitation Competency Framework. This work was also considered during the refresh.

Occupational therapy continues to evolve as social factors such as poverty, discrimination, evidence-based practice, legislation and population demographics change. Covid-19 has added more challenges to the provision of services: for example, ethics and people's safety. All OTBNZ core documents are 'living' and will continue to be updated and modified through future consultations as needed. It is important that the Scope, Competencies and Ethical Practice keeps pace with the changing health and disability system.

Consultation process

The refresh began with a launch in Wellington on 14 February 2021. The launch included face-to-face participants and a Zoom link explaining the purpose. The whole project took eight months and more than 150 people became involved.

Stakeholders, including government agencies, health providers, iwi groups, consumer organisations, all occupational therapists, academics, occupational therapy schools and departments and other registration authorities were invited to submit online feedback, attend hui, webinars and Zoom meetings. Several hui and Zoom meetings were organised solely with tangata whenua to ensure they had the opportunity to make any specific comments and recommendations about issues and changes to further uphold agreements made in Te Tiriti o Waitangi.



Using a range of consultation methodology meant a high rate of responses and the webinars, along with Zoom meetings, received positive feedback from participants as questions were answered and robust discussions had. This meant the Rōpū had a wider understanding of therapists' needs and expectations within the core documents.

Timetable

- Rōpū meets face-to-face and identifies terms of reference and starts to draft changes to documents in February 2021
- **First draft** documents emailed to stakeholders integrally involved with therapists
- Hui held with education providers, academics and tangata whenua
- Feedback considered by Rōpū and changes made to documents
- **Second draft** documents sent to all stakeholders
- Rōpū chairs meet with Dr Martin Chadwick, Ministry of Health, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer
- Zoom meetings with Māori practitioners and stakeholders, Professional Advisory group and OT Association
- Webinars with all interested stakeholders
- Rōpū develops final draft of documents
- Legal review of the document
- Te reo review
- **Final draft** of refreshed documents considered by OTBNZ at the Board meeting in October 2021
- Release of documents to education providers
- Final ratification at OTBNZ Board meeting on 1 December 2021
- Gazetting of Scope in December 2021
- Publication of all three documents in December 2021

Analysis of documents

The Rōpū proposed a change in style throughout the documents – from referring to practicing therapists in first person (you), to third person (they), on the grounds that many other people, as well as therapists, will use the documents. However, the overwhelming response from the first round of consultation was to retain first person.

There was also substantial discussion, research and feedback from many practitioners about whether to use 'interprofessional', 'interdisciplinary' or 'transdisciplinary' which the Ministry of Health prefers to use (Competency 3). The consensus was to use 'interdisciplinary,' which is commonly recognised among professionals across the health sector and people. It is also documented in the HPCAA Section 118(ja).



Use of te reo throughout the documents was ratified by the Rōpū and the Board. Te reo that some therapists may be less familiar with was also included. This led to the development of an extensive glossary and “pop-up” links to provide a translation/meaning across all three documents.

In former OTBNZ documents, people receiving services were referred to as ‘patients,’ in more recent times ‘clients,’ and now it will be ‘people’. This change aims to remove a western medical model and hopefully indicate an equal and collaborative relationship with the therapist.

Code of Ethics

At the Rōpū’s first hui analysis of the Code of Ethics, they were described as clunky and not centred enough around people, as well as therapists. Modifications were made to the first draft, but a Code developed by former Health and Disability Commissioner, Ron Patterson, for the Optometrist and Dispensing Opticians Board was then tabled. The Rōpū proposed using the different Code, which was simple, concise and more focused on people than the Board’s existing Code. But following the distribution of the first draft, most responses rejected the draft Code saying it was too close to the Code of Consumer Rights, which practitioners already must abide by. There was also concern it would be difficult for the Board to regulate against such a simple Code in potential disciplinary tribunal hearings, as it failed to outline therapists’ expected values and practice. Also, it did not correlate closely enough to Te Tiriti as its focus was primarily on western ethics and not tangata whenua. Several responses stated the proposed Code read more like competencies. Hence, the Rōpū withdrew the Code and sent out a refreshed version of the Board’s Code of Ethics with additions and changes for the next round of consultation.

The refreshed Code of Ethics document begins with a preliminary statement, which sets the standard for the ethical conduct expected of practising occupational therapists.

The Mātāpono, or principles, cover three main relationships: with the people receiving occupational therapy services; with the communities and people who may require occupational therapy services and with colleagues and the profession.

A more extensive Code about the use of social media and privacy surrounding digital information was included. Another addition was encouraging therapists to be more proactive about addressing equity issues in the workplace and health system. This includes advocating for people receiving services.

Several submissions urged the Rōpū to do a complete rewrite of the Code rather than a refresh and include occupational therapist academics in the process. It was acknowledged the current format is quite westernised but a complete review and rewrite was not part of the Board’s terms of reference for this project. Undoubtedly, the Board may turn its attention to this issue in the future.



Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice

The biggest changes were made to Competency Two, starting with the title by replacing **Practising appropriately for Bi-cultural Aotearoa New Zealand** with **Responsiveness to Te Tiriti o Waitangi**. The tangata whenua therapists in the Refresh Rōpū held a hui and the Board's Māori tikanga advisor also made recommendations. The feedback from the first and second drafts was positive about the changes to this competency, saying it was much clearer and easier to apply in practice.

In Competency Four, the word 'sustainable' was included in the title and throughout the competency. Practising sustainably has social, political and environmental implications and is referred to in multiple government policies. This led to 'sustainable' being included in multiple points to encourage therapists to use resources for the long-term benefit of people, rather than just short-term gains and to be aware of the environment when running their own practice.

Scope of Practice

The Scope content was modified and a legal introduction included.

The Scope is used to describe the occupational therapy profession in a way that is meaningful to anyone reading it, whilst including language that is important and relevant to the occupational therapy profession. It now also includes core principles of occupational and social justice, sustainability and equity. There is an increased focus on partnership with other professionals as well as recognition of emerging therapist roles in leadership, governance, management and policy.

A Glossary is included, with relevant legislation which must also be followed by therapists.

Thank you

The Rōpū thanks everyone who took time to give feedback and suggestions throughout the core documents refresh project. Many therapists and organisations emailed substantial online responses and others gave valuable input during the various hui. Every response was examined and appreciated. The refresh is expected to result in additions in occupational therapy training for undergraduates at the two schools and modifications in some practices throughout the country. The staff at the OTBNZ office in Wellington will answer any further questions you may have.