



Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand

Kaihaumanu Tūroro o Aotearoa

**POLICY FOR REGISTERED PRACTITIONERS WHO
HAVE NOT COMMENCED PRACTISING 12 MONTHS
AFTER REGISTRATION**

Refer - Part 2 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003

**REQUIREMENTS FOR RECENTLY REGISTERED
PRACTITIONERS APPLYING FOR A PRACTISING CERTIFICATE
UNDER THE HEALTH PRACTITIONERS COMPETENCE
ASSURANCE ACT 2003**

PURPOSE

In order to practise in New Zealand (NZ), as an occupational therapist, it is a legal requirement to be registered by the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand, (OTBNZ), and to hold a current practising certificate.

This document outlines the requirements of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) and sets out the OTBNZ's policy requirements for recently registered NZ practitioners¹ who have not commenced practising in New Zealand 12 months after registration.

APPLICATION:

This policy applies to recently registered practitioners.

BACKGROUND

Requirements for an annual practising certificate

Section 27(1) of the HPCA Act sets out the criteria to be satisfied in order to be issued with a practising certificate.

In order for a practitioner who has not commenced practising occupational therapy for 12 months or more since registration, to be issued with a practising certificate they must provide satisfactory information that demonstrates that they:

1. have maintained the required standard of competence; and
2. that a mental or physical condition does not prevent them from performing the functions required for the practice of occupational therapy

¹ A 'recently registered practitioner' is an individual who has qualified as an occupational therapist from an educational institution in NZ and is registered with OTBNZ but who has not commenced practising occupational therapy in NZ within 12 months of registration.

New Graduate Condition on Scope:

A 'recently registered practitioner' will have the 'New Graduate' condition on scope of practice. This condition is noted on the public 'Register of Occupational Therapists' and on individual practitioners' practising certificates.

POLICY FOR COMMENCING PRACTICE AFTER 12 MONTHS OF REGISTRATION

The OTBNZ's policy with respect to competence, and fitness requirements for commencing practice 12 months after registration and the 'New Graduate' condition on scope of practice are set out below.

1. Competence to practise

In order to commence practising, practitioners who are registered in the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist, must meet the OTBNZ's standards of clinical, cultural and ethical competence for registration.

Some individuals gain registration but do not commence practising for some time. While having the prescribed NZ qualification in Occupational Therapy meant these practitioners were deemed to be competent for registration, in the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist, the OTBNZ must satisfy itself that they have maintained the required standard of competence if the period of non-practice is more than 12 months following registration.

Required information

Practitioners falling within this category are required to demonstrate their competence by:

1. providing a letter explaining:
 - a) why they have not commenced practising in New Zealand directly after registration; and
 - b) why they consider they are competent to practise

When providing information on point (b), the practitioner can include information on (but is not limited to):

- a. how they have maintained currency of occupational therapy knowledge;

- b. If applicable, provide details of specific information i.e. courses undertaken, books read etc.
2. providing a professional development plan that demonstrates how the practitioner intends to maintain and develop their occupational therapy knowledge and skills.

Tips for formulating this plan

- a. What are my practice goals?
 - b. Where am I now and where do I wish to be in three to six months' time
 - c. What have I got to do to achieve my goal/s?
 - d. How do I plan to grow and develop as a practitioner?
 - e. How do I intend to use supervision for my professional development?
3. Individuals who have undertaken a postgraduate course of study which is relevant to their competence to practise occupational therapy, are required to provide an original or certified copy of the relevant postgraduate programme syllabus.
4. Curriculum Vitae (Resume)

Applications will be considered on a case by case basis. In order to be issued with a practising certificate, practitioners must satisfactorily demonstrate competence to practise occupational therapy in NZ.

Policy Guidelines

Why is this information required?

This information is required in order:

- to ensure there is adequate support for the practitioner to begin practising in New Zealand;
- to identify factors that may increase the risk of loss of competence and factors that may mitigate this risk;
- to support practitioners to update their skills and knowledge;
- to assure the public of professional competence while avoiding unnecessary barriers to practitioners wishing to resume professional practice

What can practitioners do to upskill their knowledge and skills?

The OTBNZ recommends that practitioners seeking to practise after 12 months of registration update their knowledge of:

- the OTBNZ's *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice 2015*
- the *Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists*
- the Treaty of Waitangi and relevance to occupational therapy practice in bicultural NZ;
- cultural and social dynamics and safety specifically relevant to bicultural NZ;
- understanding of the New Zealand Health sector and the New Zealand legal system including working with the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), Health and Disability Commissioner (HDC) (including the HDC Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights Regulation), and the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act (HPCAA).

Considerations

When determining whether a practitioner meets the required standard of competence the OTBNZ shall take into consideration:

- When the practitioner obtained their formal occupational therapy qualification, their training and subsequent experience
- the length of time away from practice
- the appropriateness and extent of any continuing professional development (CPD) undertaken by the practitioner , including any evidence that they have kept up to date with current occupational therapy practice and advances
- the nature and extent of any practise outside New Zealand and its relevance to the OTBNZ's General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist
- the nature and extent of any research, study or teaching undertaken by the practitioner
- whether the practitioner meets the fitness to practise requirements as specified in s16 of the Act
- any declared health condition(s), disciplinary or competency issues and civil or criminal proceedings which may affect the practitioner's fitness or competence to practice
- any other relevant factors.

2. Fitness to practise

Assessment of criminal convictions

The OTBNZ must consider whether having regard to all the circumstances, including the time that has elapsed since a conviction, whether a practitioner's conviction in NZ or elsewhere of an offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of 3 months or longer, reflects adversely on their fitness to practise as an occupational therapist.

Physical and mental health

In order to be issued a practising certificate the OTBNZ must be satisfied that practitioners are able to perform the functions required for the practice of occupational therapy, and that they are not prevented from doing so because of some mental or physical condition.

Good standing

In determining applicants' fitness to practise, the OTBNZ is required to take into consideration:

- professional disciplinary proceedings, (whether in NZ or in another country);
and
- investigations in respect of any matter that may be the subject of professional disciplinary proceedings, (whether in NZ or in another country);
and
- orders of professional disciplinary tribunals, (whether in NZ or in another country); *and*
- any issue which may give the OTBNZ reason to believe that an applicant may endanger the health or safety of members of the public.

'New Graduate' Condition on scope of practice

Recent registered practitioners will be registered with the 'New Graduate' condition on their scope of practice. This condition is noted on the public 'Register of Occupational Therapists' and on individual practitioners' practising certificates.

The 'New Graduate' condition requires practitioners to receive weekly supervision for the first 12 months of practice in NZ². Supervisors must be registered occupational therapists with a current practising certificate and no condition on their own scope of practice.

Removal of condition after 12 months of practice in NZ

It is up to individual practitioners to apply to have the 'New Graduate' condition removed after they have completed 12 months of practice in NZ. The weekly supervision requirements continue to apply until the practitioner is informed by the OTBNZ that their condition has been removed.

The OTBNZ will give consideration to removing the 'New Graduate' condition once practitioners have provided the following:

- an application for the removal of the condition; and
- a satisfactory supervisor's report in all core competency areas; and
- a copy of the supervision log; and
- the prescribed fee.

The OTBNZ will remove the 'New Graduate' condition only if it is satisfied that practitioners have satisfactorily demonstrated their competence to practise safely without the condition.

Removal of 'New Graduate' condition - consideration given to overseas practice

Some practitioners leave NZ prior to completing 12 months of practice. On their return to NZ they can ask the OTBNZ to consider removing the condition on their scope, if the totality of their NZ and overseas practise or if they have only practised overseas since registration the period of their overseas practice, adds up to two years during the last three years.

Applications are considered on a case by case basis and the OTBNZ may in some cases, remove the condition on scope where a practitioner has satisfactorily demonstrated their competence to practice occupational therapy in NZ.

² Practitioners with overseas practice experience, may be eligible to have the 'New Graduate' condition removed prior the completion of 12 months of practice in NZ – see below.

For avoidance of any doubt, to be eligible for removal of the condition prior to completing 12 months of practice in NZ, practitioners must have practised for at least two³ of the last three years:

- either in NZ and overseas; or
- solely overseas.

The OTBNZ will give consideration to removing the condition once practitioners have provided the following:

1. an application for removal of condition and the prescribed fee:
2. a current curriculum vitae with details of their occupational therapy practice experience since initial registration in NZ; and
3. a self-assessment in the form of a letter reflecting on their overseas practice in relation to the overseas competence standards and linking these to the OTBNZ's Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice 2015; and
4. a letter from an occupational therapist who has known the practitioner for six months or more who has a current practising certificate and no conditions on scope confirming they have read and agree with the information the practitioner has provided in their self-assessment; and
5. A record of supervision, if applicable; and
6. if the practitioner has practised in NZ (for 3 months or more?), a satisfactory supervisor's report in all core competency areas and the supervision log; and
7. a satisfactory attestation to their competence from an overseas occupational therapist⁴ with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously; and
8. the attesting occupational therapist's licence to practise (if they are registered in another country)
9. a satisfactory letter of good standing from all health registering/licensing authorities the applicant has been registered/licensed with overseas.

³ The two years do not need to be continuous.

⁴ The attesting therapist must be registered/licensed if residing in a country or state with a registration/licensing authority.

The OTBNZ will remove the 'New Graduate' condition only if it is satisfied that practitioners have satisfactorily demonstrated their competence to practise safely without the condition.

Three months supervisor's report

Practitioners with less than 12 months practice experience in NZ, who have had the 'New Graduate' condition removed from their scope of practice, are required to provide a standard OTBNZ supervisor's report three months after returning to practice in NZ.

The report must assess their competence across all competencies for registration and continuing practice. In addition, supervisors must comment on their knowledge and understanding of current legislation, practice area changes and related regulatory changes in the healthcare environment.

Practitioners who do not return to practice in NZ within three years

Practitioners who have not commenced practice in NZ within three years of the removal of the 'New Graduate' condition, are subject to the provisions of the OTBNZ's policies for practitioners returning to practice in NZ (available on the OTBNZ website).

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