



**Occupational Therapy  
Board of New Zealand**

TE POARI WHAKAORA NGANGAHAU O AOTEAROA

FOSTERING FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSION

**POLICY FOR REGISTERED OCCUPATIONAL  
THERAPISTS RETURNING TO PRACTICE IN NZ  
AFTER THREE YEARS**

**Policy**  
**for Registered Occupational Therapists**  
**Returning to Practice in NZ after three years**

## **Purpose**

To ensure that the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) meets the requirements of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) when considering annual practising certificate applications from practitioners who have not held an annual practising certificate for three years or longer, with reference to section 27 of the HPCA Act.

## **APPLICATION**

*This policy applies to practitioners who are already registered with the OTBNZ, but have not practised in New Zealand in the last three years immediately preceding their application for a practising certificate.*

## **Background**

Under the HPCA Act, the OTBNZ is required to escalate the level of scrutiny required before an annual practising certificate has been issued, where the practitioner has not held a practising certificate in NZ within the last three years, or lawfully practised occupational therapy within the previous three years (see sections 27(1)(d) and (f)).

In this policy the OTBNZ wishes to ensure that practitioners are competent, without imposing barriers to their return to practice. Recognising that practitioners returning to practice in New Zealand after three years will have differing levels of knowledge and experience, there are two categories of return to practice reflected in the policy.

## **Policy**

This policy identifies and sets out the OTBNZ requirements for the two types of returning practitioners who have not practised in New Zealand in the last three years.

**1:** Registered practitioners who have not practised in NZ for three or more years, and have practised overseas for at least two of the last three years;

**2:** Registered practitioners who have not practised in NZ for three or more years, and have not practised overseas for at least two of the last three years.

## **1. Practitioners who have not practised in NZ for three or more years and have practised overseas for at least two of the last three years**

These practitioners are required to:

- demonstrate their competence by:
  - providing an attestation to their competence (a tick box form), completed by an occupational therapist who has no conditions on their scope of practice (either NZ or overseas)<sup>1</sup>, with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously; *or*
  - completing the *Foundations in Cultural Competency* course and competence assessment application<sup>2</sup>; *and*
- provide their current curriculum vitae
- provide three fitness references
- provide a letter of good standing from all health registering/licensing authorities they have been registered/licensed with overseas
- provide a standard supervisor's report three months after returning to practice in NZ. The report must assess their competence across all competencies for registration. In addition, the supervisor must comment on the practitioner's knowledge and understanding of current legislation, practice area changes and related regulatory changes in the healthcare environment.

These practitioners will have the standard 'Return to Practice in New Zealand' condition placed on their scope of practice.

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<sup>1</sup> The attesting therapist must be registered/licensed in that country or state with a registration/licensing authority, and their legal entitlement to practice satisfactorily demonstrated.

<sup>2</sup> Completion of the course and the competence assessment application are only required if the practitioner is unable to provide an attestation to their competence by an occupational therapist they have worked with.

**N.B.** Practitioners who are unable to provide an attestation to their competence from an occupational therapist with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously or, who have practised in a country that does not regulate the practice of occupational therapy, will need to meet the requirements for Category 2 below.

**2. Practitioners who have not practised in NZ for three or more years and have not practised overseas for at least two of the last three years**

These practitioners are required to:

- demonstrate their competence by completing the *Foundations in Cultural Competency* course and competence assessment application; and
- provide their current curriculum vitae; and
- provide three fitness references; and
- provide a satisfactory Return to Practice Plan<sup>3</sup>; and
- provide a letter of good standing from all health registering/licensing authorities they have been registered/licensed with either in NZ or overseas.

These practitioners will have the standard 'Return to Practice in New Zealand' condition placed on their scope of practice.

'Return to Practice in New Zealand' condition

The 'Return to Practice in New Zealand' condition requires practitioners to receive fortnightly supervision for their first six months of practice in NZ. Supervisors must be registered occupational therapists with a current practising certificate and no condition on their own scope of practice. It is a practitioner's responsibility to arrange a suitable supervisor and maintain a record of supervision.

Non-compliance with the requirement to provide a supervisor's report will be followed up when the practitioner applies to renew their practising certificate.

**Guidelines**

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

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<sup>3</sup> A Return to Practice Plan is only required if the practitioner has not practised in NZ or overseas during the last five years.

- 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.

### **Validity of a Competence Assessment or Attestation of Competence**

According to the [Validity of Competence Assessments and Attestations Policy](#) an attestation of competence is valid for 12 months, and a competence assessment is valid for three years for the purposes of a return to practice application.

If an attestation of competence has been accepted and the practitioner does not commence practice in NZ within 12 months, they will need to demonstrate their competence again by way of either a fresh attestation of competence or a competence assessment.

If a competence assessment has been accepted for the purposes of a return to practice application and the practitioner does not commence practice in NZ within three years, they will need to demonstrate competence by submitting another competence assessment.

### **NOTE:**

This policy does not apply to practitioners who are registered in NZ under the *Registration Policy for Overseas Qualified Applicants*, who have never practised in NZ and three or more years have lapsed since their registration in NZ.

If a practitioner falls within this category they will be required to:

1. Demonstrate their competence by way of a competence assessment application as an overseas applicant:
  - a. Certificate of completion of [Foundations in Cultural Competency course](#);
  - b. [Competence self-assessment forms](#);
  
2. Will continue to have the 'Overseas Qualified Registrant' condition on scope until such time it is removed following an application for removal of condition

**Date approved: November 2015**

**Due for review: November 2018**