



# Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand

Kaihaumanu Tūroro o Aotearoa

## **REGISTRATION POLICY**

### **FOR NEW ZEALAND GRADUATES APPLYING FOR REGISTRATION MORE THAN 12 MONTHS FOLLOWING GRADUATION**

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



**REQUIREMENTS FOR NZ GRADUATES APPLYING FOR  
REGISTRATION UNDER THE HEALTH PRACTITIONERS  
COMPETENCE ASSURANCE ACT 2003 MORE THAN 12 MONTHS  
FOLLOWING GRADUATION**

**This policy does not apply to recent graduates applying for registration**

## **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 registration requirements of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) and sets out the OTBNZ's policy requirements for NZ graduates applying for registration more than 12 months following graduation.

The registration requirements for recent NZ graduates are not included in this document – they are set out in a separate policy which is available on the OTBNZ website.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Section 15 of the HPCA Act – registration requirements**

Under section 15 of the HPCA Act the OTBNZ may register applicants within the scope of practice 'General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist' if they:

1. are competent to practise within that scope of practice; and
2. have the qualifications that are prescribed, under section 12, for that scope of practice; and
3. are fit for registration in accordance with section 16.

## **POLICY FOR REGISTRATION**

The OTBNZ's policy with respect to the competence, qualification and fitness requirements for registration is set out below.

## **Competence for registration**

In order to be registered all applicants for registration in the General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist, must meet the OTBNZ's standards of clinical, cultural and ethical competence for registration.

Some graduates leave NZ prior to being registered by the OTBNZ. When determining whether individuals meet the competence requirements for registration, the OTBNZ may in some cases take into account overseas practice experience. To be eligible for such consideration applicants must have practised overseas for at least two<sup>1</sup> of the last three years.

This policy sets out the OTBNZ's competence requirements for two categories of NZ graduate:

- Applicants who have not previously been registered in NZ, but who have practised overseas for at least two of the last three years; *and*
- Applicants who have not previously been registered in NZ and have not practised overseas for at least two of the last three years.

### **1. Applicants who have not previously been registered in NZ, but who have practised overseas for at least two of the last three years**

Applicants who have not previously been registered by the OTBNZ, but who have practised overseas for at least two of the last three years, are required to provide:

- a current curriculum vitae with details of their overseas practice experience since graduation; *and*
- a satisfactory attestation to their competence from an occupational therapist<sup>2</sup> with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously in the last three years; *and*
- a certified copy of the attesting occupational therapist's licence to practise (if they are registered in another country)
- original or certified copy of a satisfactory letter of good standing from all health registering/licensing authorities the applicant has been registered/licensed with overseas.

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<sup>1</sup> The two years do not need to be continuous.

<sup>2</sup> The attesting therapist must be registered/licensed if residing in a country or state with a registration/licensing authority.

**N.B.** Applicants who are unable to provide an attestation to their competence by an occupational therapist with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously, will be required to meet the policy requirements for Category 2 below.

Applicants who have practised in countries that do not regulate the practice of occupational therapy may be required to meet the policy requirements for Category 2 below.

**2. Applicants who have not previously been registered in NZ, and have not practised overseas for at least two of the last three years**

Some individuals obtain the prescribed NZ qualification in Occupational Therapy but do not register. While having the prescribed NZ qualification in Occupational Therapy meant these practitioners were deemed to be competent at graduation, the OTBNZ must satisfy itself that they have maintained the required standard of competence if the period more than 12 months have lapsed since they obtained the prescribed NZ qualification.

**Required information**

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

1. providing a letter explaining:
  - a) why they have not registered and commenced practising in New Zealand directly after graduation; 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 for categories 1 and 2**

### **Why is this information required?**

This information is required in order:

- to ensure there is adequate support for the applicant 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 applicants to update their skills and knowledge;
- to assure the public of professional competence while avoiding unnecessary barriers to applicants wishing to register and resume professional practice

### **What can applicants do to upskill their knowledge and skills?**

The OTBNZ recommends that applicants seeking to register 12 months after graduation update their knowledge of:

- the OTBNZ's *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice 2015*
- the *Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists 2015*
- 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 an applicant meets the required standard of competence the OTBNZ shall take into consideration:

- When the applicant obtained their formal occupational therapy qualification, their training and subsequent experience
- the length of time that has lapsed since graduation
- the appropriateness and extent of any continuing professional development (CPD) undertaken by the applicant , 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 applicant
- whether the applicant 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 applicant's fitness or competence to practice
- any other relevant factors.

### **Qualification for registration**

The prescribed NZ qualifications for registration are:

- Bachelor of Health Science (Occupational Therapy), AUT University, Auckland; *and*
- Bachelor of Occupational Therapy, Otago Polytechnic, Dunedin.

NZ graduates are deemed to be qualified for registration if they hold a prescribed qualification for registration.

### **Fitness for registration**

The criteria relating to fitness to practise are set out under section 16 of the HPCA Act.

### **English language requirements**

Applicants whose first or home language is not English, are required to demonstrate proficiency in English.

The OTBNZ's policy requirement for registration is International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic test results with a score of at least 7 in each band, or a minimum score of at least a B in each of the four components of the Occupational English test (OET). Some applicants may qualify for an exemption to this requirement; the full English language policy is available on the OTBNZ website.

### **Assessment of criminal convictions**

Section 16(c) of the HPCA Act states that no applicant for registration may be registered if he or she has been convicted in NZ or elsewhere of any offence punishable by imprisonment for a term of 3 months or longer, and he or she does not satisfy the responsible authority that, having regard to all the circumstances, including the time that has elapsed since the conviction, the offence does not reflect adversely on his or her fitness to practise as a health practitioner of that profession.

The OTBNZ will consider each case on its merits to determine whether individuals are fit to practise occupational therapy in NZ.

### **Physical and mental health**

For registration purposes the OTBNZ must be satisfied that applicants 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 for registration, 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.

### **Condition on scope of practice**

Applicants who satisfactorily meet the requirements for registration will be registered with '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 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.

### **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 individuals leave NZ without being registered with the OTBNZ. On their return to NZ and once registered, they can ask the OTBNZ to consider removing the condition on their scope, if the totality of their overseas practise 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.

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; 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. Evidence of supervision if applicable; and
6. a satisfactory attestation to their competence from an overseas occupational therapist<sup>3</sup> with whom they have worked for at least six months continuously; and
7. the attesting occupational therapist's licence to practise (if they are registered in another country)

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<sup>3</sup> The attesting therapist must be registered/licensed if residing in a country or state with a registration/licensing authority.

8. a satisfactory letter of good standing from all health registering/licensing authorities the applicant has been registered/licensed with overseas.

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 month supervisor's report**

Practitioners 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 commencing practice in NZ.

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

**Practitioners who do not commence practice in NZ within three years of registration - refer to the *Policy for Practitioners Returning to Practice in NZ***

**Date approved: November 2015**

**Due for review: November 2018**