

Returning to Practice after a prolonged absence: Information & Guidance for Practitioners

Introduction

(NB. This paper does **not** apply to practitioners returning to practice after recent practice overseas, or have been out of practice for 3 years or less. Please refer to [Return to practice policy](#) under *Policies and Publications* on the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) website).

In order to return to practice in New Zealand you will need to submit a *Competence Assessment Application* which includes the cultural competence essay and the competence self-assessment against the OTBNZ's *Competencies for Registration*.

Some factors that have been found to assist the process of returning to practice after an absence are:

- Being connected to the profession
- Having current knowledge
- Being pro-active
- Having a structured process
- Using supervision
- Being work ready

What you need to do

Ensure you understand and can comply with the OTBNZ's requirements of you and your practice.

Gain the legislative and clinical knowledge required in the area in which you intend to practice.

Gain the theoretical and practical occupational therapy knowledge relevant to the area in which you intend to practice.

Develop networks with the profession and find mentors.

Submit competency assessment to the OTBNZ. You will need to be registered and have an APC *before starting* employment as an occupational therapist.

Please first read '*Application for competence assessment for practising within the General Scope of practice: Occupational Therapists*' which you will find at Registration/How to register as an Occupational Therapist/Registration information/Competence Assessment Application.

Summary of OTBNZ requirements

OTBNZ Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge, training and skill to comply with the Code of Ethics and performance criteria in the Boards 'Competencies for Registration as an Occupational Therapist'. • Competence in practising to the relevant legislation, practice guidelines, policies and standards including HPCA Act 2003, Health & Disability Code of Rights, Privacy Code etc. • Knowledge of current theoretical models of practice • Competence in reflective practice • Competence in client centred practice
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At present there is not a specified course of study that you can take for return to practice. This has been investigated and is not financially feasible. However, there are a number of activities that you can undertake to make your return to practice smooth, and to enhance your ability to complete a Competence Assessment with appropriate evidence of your competence.

Below are some suggestions you might like to consider undertaking prior to submitting a Competence Assessment.

Updating legislative & Clinical knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify & understand the guidelines, policies, standards that apply to your intended area of practice (make sure you include the OTBNZ Code of Ethics, OTBNZ Competencies for Registration, HPCA Act 2003, Health & Disability Code of Rights, Privacy Code). • Refresh your knowledge of the clinical area you intend to practice in. Identify whether any new theories or ways of working have been developed.
Be pro-active	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be systematic about identifying what you need to learn and how this can be achieved will help to ensure you cover all relevant aspects. • Concentrate on what is needed for the practice area you wish to return to; you can catch up with other topics later. • Assess where your learning needs lie and target resources to help you address these. • Seek out information from the OTBNZ website. • Study other websites such as the NZAOT (www.nzaot.com), the Ministry of Health (www.moh.govt.nz) and the occupational therapy schools (www.aut.ac.nz; www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz). • Join local professional groups. • Make use of the online resources (e.g. OT groups on Facebook, Google scholar). • Attend an NZAOT conference or workshop. • Take relevant papers or courses.

<p>Having current Occupational Therapy knowledge – formal & informal</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refresh you knowledge of occupational therapy practice, current theoretical models of practice, terminology & jargon. • Make observational visits and/or work as an assistant or volunteer, or 'buddy' a colleague. • Find out where to access appropriate learning resources. • Make opportunities for discussion with practitioners on identified learning areas (e.g. culturally safe practice, current models of practice and client centred practice). • As you prepare to return to practice, informal supervision/ mentoring/ guidance can help in assimilating new knowledge, approaches to practice and influences on the profession. • Completion of specified Occupational Therapy papers. • Completion of other relevant tertiary level papers; these could be academic or industry based (e.g. modules from Careerforce study programmes, rehabilitation papers).
<p>Connect with the profession</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet up with colleagues working in the area you wish to return to • Visit local occupational therapy units and practices & talk with local professional leaders • Join the New Zealand Association of Occupational Therapists (NZAOT) and follow some of the on-line group discussions or the Values Exchange discussions on ethical issues. If there is a Local Area Network group join up with that. • Network with colleagues on-line.
<p>Becoming work ready</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider what other arrangements you will need to make (for example childcare). • Consider the type of work you will want (full/part time). • Revise your CV, and update your interview skills • If you have not been in paid employment in recent years you may like to consider taking a non-occupational therapist position so that you are not trying to adjust to returning to working at the same time as you are returning to your profession.

Reading list

Code of Ethics, OTBNZ
Competencies for registration, OTBNZ

Some recommended texts to refer to:

- Brown, C., & Stoffel, V. C. (2011). *Occupational therapy in mental health: A vision for participation*. Philadelphia, PA: F.A. Davis Company.
- Bruce, M.A., & Borg, B. A. (2002). *Psychosocial frames of reference: Core for occupation-based practice* (3rd ed.). Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Inc.
- Crepeau, D., Cohn, E., & Schell, B. (2010). *Willard and Spackman's occupational therapy*. (11th ed.). Philadelphia, USA: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.
- Law, M., Dunn, W., & Baum, C. (2005). *Measuring occupational performance: supporting best practice in occupational therapy*. (2nd ed.). Thorofare, NJ: SLACK Inc.
- Randomski, M., & Trombly, C. (Eds.). (2008). *Physical dysfunction for occupational therapy* (6th ed.). Philadelphia: Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins.
- Taylor, M.C. (2000). *Evidence-based practice for occupational therapists*. Edinburgh: Blackwell Science.
- Townsend, E., & Polatajko, H. (2007). *Enabling occupation 2: Advancing an occupational therapy vision for health, well-being & justice through occupation*. Ottawa: CAOT.
- Whiteford, G., & Hocking C. (Eds.). (2012). *Occupational science: Society, inclusion, participation*. West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Some suggested websites that are of use:

www.otboard.org.nz

www.aut.ac.nz/study-at-aut/study-areas/health-sciences/undergraduate-courses/bachelor-of-health-science-occupational-therapy

www.otagopolytechnic.ac.nz/schools-departments/occupational-therapy.html

<http://ajot.aotapress.net/content/62/6/625.full.pdf+html>