



POLICY FOR ISSUING OF PRACTISING CERTIFICATES

1. The purpose of this policy

- 1.1. To work as an optometrist or dispensing optician in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ), practitioners must be registered with the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (ODOB) and hold a current practising certificate.
- 1.2. Practising certificates may be issued to practitioners who hold current registration with the ODOB and meet the required standard of competence (section 29(1) of the *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003* (HPCA Act)).

2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to ODOB-registered optometrists or dispensing opticians applying for an Annual Practising Certificate with the ODOB.

3. Acronyms and abbreviations

- 3.1. The following acronyms and abbreviations are used in this policy:

Aotearoa New Zealand	NZ
Annual Practising Certificate (practising certificate)	APC
The governing Board of the Optometrist and Dispensing Opticians Board	Board
Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003	HPCA Act
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board	ODOB
Professional Standards Committee	PSC

4. Definitions and interpretation

- 4.1. The following definitions and interpretations are used in this policy:

Dispensing optician (DO)	A health practitioner with a recognised qualification that is registered with the ODOB under the DO scope of practice. DOs interpret prescriptions for glasses and contact lenses, give advice to the patient in selecting spectacle lenses and frames (including their fitting). They can also teach how to use contact lenses and low vision aids and dispense a prescribed optical appliance. It is illegal for a person to call themselves a DO unless they are registered with the ODOB. A DO must hold a current practising certificate to practise in NZ. DOs are required to regularly maintain their competence through a recertification programme to be allowed to keep practising.
Good standing (professional status)	A practitioner who, in the past five years, has not been the subject of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• any concerns about their ability to perform the functions of their scope of practice due to a mental or physical conditions• a competence review or required to complete a competence programme• any disciplinary/ conduct proceedings, and• any complaints with the ODOB, Health and Disability Commissioner, or overseas authorities.

Optometrist	A health practitioner with recognised qualifications registered with the ODOB, under the Optometrist, Provisional Optometrist or Specialist Optometrist scope of practice. An optometrist provides evidence-based comprehensive eye health and vision care in a professional, culturally safe, and ethical manner, in accordance with the HPCA Act and ODOB standards. Optometrists conduct eye examinations, diagnose eye disease or other conditions, and prescribe optical appliances or medications for defects in sight or diseases of the eyes. An optometrist must be registered with the ODOB and hold a current practising certificate to practise in NZ. Optometrists are required to maintain their competence through a recertification programme to be allowed to keep practising.
Scope of practice	As defined in the HPCA Act which states a "scope of practice: a) means any health service that forms part of a health profession and that is for the time being described under section 11, and b) in relation to a health practitioner of that profession, means one or more of such health services that the practitioner is, under an authorisation granted under section 21, permitted to perform, subject to any conditions for the time being imposed by the responsible authority."

5. Applicants who have practised in New Zealand within the last 3 years

- 5.1. Practitioners who do not meet any of the criteria under s27(1) of the HPCA Act may be issued with a practising certificate when they have completed the following requirements:
- 5.1.1. Completed an online application including self-declaration (Appendix 1 of this policy).
 - 5.1.2. Provided a police check/ proof of a fit2work check request, and/ or certificate of good standing from overseas authorities, and practice history (employment proof) as applicable, if they have resided or worked overseas since they last held an Annual Practising Certificate (APC) in NZ.
 - 5.1.3. Provided a valid cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)/ first aid certification as per Board requirements or provided an ODOB approval letter for CPR alternative recognition or CPR exemption.
 - 5.1.4. Ensured personal data held by the ODOB is correct.
 - 5.1.5. Paid the required fee.
- 5.2. Information received which may suggest significant fitness, competence or other issues will be managed as a notification under the *Complaints and notifications policy*.
- 5.3. Where a practitioner is holding a current practising certificate, this is referred to as a renewal of practising certificate process and usually occurs near the end of the practising year (just before 31 March each year).
- 5.4. Where a practitioner has gone non-practising (does not hold current APC but held one in the last three years) and wanting to return to practise, this is referred to as changing your practising status from non-practising to practising.

6. Applicants who have not practised in New Zealand within the last 3 years

- 6.1. Registered practitioners who have never practised in Aotearoa New Zealand or have not held a practising certificate in NZ within the last 3 years may be issued with a practising certificate when they have completed the following requirements:
- 6.1.1. Completed an online application including self-declaration (Appendix 1, questions for applicant)

- 6.1.2. Provided a police check/ proof of a fit2work check request and/ or certificate of good standing from overseas authorities and practice history (employment proof) as applicable, if they have resided or worked overseas since they last practised in NZ.
 - 6.1.3. Provided a valid cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR)/ first aid certification as per Board requirements or provided an ODOB approval letter for CPR alternative recognition or CPR exemption.
 - 6.1.4. Met the competence requirements.
 - 6.1.5. Ensure personal data held by the ODOB is correct.
- 6.2. For practitioners that have not practised/ held and APC in NZ for 3 or more years, their applications will be referred to the Professional Standards Committee (PSC) for consideration in line with the Board's *Policy for Optometrists returning to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand* or *Policy for dispensing opticians returning to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand*, as relevant.

7. Issuing of practising certificates

- 7.1. An Annual Practising Certificate (APC) will be valid for the length of the practising year: 01 April – 31 March.
- 7.2. If an application is received after 1 April, the APC will be valid from the date of its approval until 31 March the following year.
- 7.3. The online record of the APC will be considered the most current version of the practitioner's practising status and is visible publicly on the ODOB register.
- 7.4. An APC may be issued with a condition on their scope of practice to complete the CPR requirement within a defined period from date APC is issued (as per schedule of delegations), where an applicant does not provide:
 - 7.4.1. a valid CPR/first aid certificate,
 - 7.4.2. alternative recognition approval from the ODOB, or
 - 7.4.3. an exemption approval letter with their application from the ODOB.

8. Deemed practising status

- 8.1. Under section 30 of the HPCA Act, if a complete renewal application is submitted by 31 March, and the practitioner holds a APC expiring 31 March of that year, the practitioner will be treated as holding that practising certificate and therefore entitled to practise from 01 April. This is known as 'deemed to hold'.
- 8.2. 'Deemed to hold' status applies when a practising certificate application has not yet been approved by the Registrar (or delegate) by 1 April and continues in effect until either the date the renewal application is approved, or until the practitioner is notified by the Registrar that it will not be approved.

9. Practising certificate fees

- 9.1. The costs of an APC are set by the ODOB under section 130(1)(c) of the HPCA Act and published in the NZ gazette following consultation.
- 9.2. Fees must be paid at the time an online application is submitted and are non-refundable.

10. Decline of practising certificate

- 10.1. The ODOB may decline an application for a practising certificate where:
 - 10.1.1. The practitioner does not meet the criteria for issuing of a practising certificate.
 - 10.1.2. The practitioner provides false or misleading information (section 27(3) of the HPCA Act).
 - 10.1.3. The practitioner has not paid expenses listed under section 26(4) of the HPCA Act.
- 10.2. The practitioner must be provided with notice of any proposal to decline and be given an opportunity to respond/ make comments.
- 10.3. The practitioner must be advised of the option for requesting a review by the Board, or an Appeal to the Courts of the Registrar's (or delegates) or Board delegate's (committee's) decision to decline a practising certificate.

11. Workforce survey

- 11.1. The ODOB (in collaboration with the Ministry of Health) collects workforce data from its practitioners as part of the renewal of the APC process. This is to determine workforce needs and assist with planning for optometrist and dispensing opticians in NZ.
- 11.2. This relates to section 123 of the HPCA Act, requiring the ODOB to provide the Director-General of Health with key workforce information regarding practising optometrists and dispensing opticians (i.e. name; date of birth; ethnicity; gender; employer; place or places of work; and the average weekly number of hours worked by the health practitioner at each place of work).
- 11.3. Similar information, including practitioners' registration ID, scope of practice, the date the scope of practice was approved, registration date, practising status (incl. APC valid dates), qualification, year qualified, institute and country of qualification are also shared with the Ministry of Health. This is for the purpose of being issued with a unique identifier (Common Person Number (CPN)), issued to all health practitioners. This is used for the maintenance of a central national database holding information to identify health providers (individuals, organisations and named facilities).
- 11.4. Additional questions around current workforce needs may be added.
- 11.5. The Board may also publish its findings. To ensure anonymity, responses will only be publicly reported as aggregated data and individual responses will be treated as completely confidential.

12. Related legislation, policies, and procedures

- 12.1. The ODOB's *Registration policy*
- 12.2. The ODOB's *Fitness to practise policy*
- 12.3. The ODOB's *Restoration to the Register policy*
- 12.4. The ODOB's *Policy for Optometrists returning to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand*
- 12.5. The ODOB's *Policy for Dispensing Opticians returning to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand*
- 12.6. The ODOB's *Policy for Reconsideration of decisions.*

Revision history			
Version	Changes	Approval date	Next review
v1	Drafted as a result of the ODOB's 2022/2023 transformation programme that included a full review of key policies.	January 2024	2027

APPENDIX 1

SELF-DECLARATION: DECLARATIONS COMPLETED AS PART OF APC APPLICATION

I solemnly and sincerely declare that:

1. All of the information provided with this application for the renewal of my APC is true and correct in every particular and detail.
2. I will provide the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board with any such further information it may consider necessary.
3. I give consent to the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board to share my information (name, date of birth, ethnicity, gender, employer, place/s of work and the average weekly number of hours worked by me at each place of work) with the Director-General of Health for the purpose of supporting the Ministry of Health's responsibilities for workplace planning and development. The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board may also use this information to determine workforce related needs within the sector.
4. I give consent to the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board to share my information (name and title, gender, date of birth, registration ID, scope of practice, date scope of practice approved, registration date, practising status (incl. APC valid dates), qualification, year qualified, institute and country of qualification) with the Ministry of Health for the purpose of being issued with a unique identifier (Common Person Number), issued to all health practitioners, for the maintenance of a central national database holding information to identify health providers (individuals, organisations and named facilities).
5. I have no convictions, or any criminal charges pending in any court in Aotearoa New Zealand or elsewhere for any offence against the law (other than minor traffic offences). Should I be made aware of any convictions or criminal charges pending from the date of this declaration, I will notify the Board within 14 days of being made aware of it.
6. I believe to the best of my knowledge that I am competent to practise in accordance with my scope of practice and that I have no mental or physical condition/s that may impact on my ability to practise my profession.
7. I know of no information that could cause the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board not to be satisfied that I am a fit and competent person to hold a practising certificate.
8. I am aware of the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board recertification requirements, and I understand I must meet all the requirements to maintain registration with the Board.