



# POLICY FOR DISPENSING OPTICIANS RETURNING TO PRACTICE IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

## 1. Policy purpose and background

- 1.1. The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (ODOB) is required under the *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003* (HPCA Act) to ensure that dispensing opticians are competent and fit to practice. Section 27 of the HPCA Act requires that the ODOB apply increased scrutiny when issuing annual practising certificates (APC) to practitioners who have not worked as a dispensing optician or held a practising certificate in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) within the last 3 years.
- 1.2. The ODOB strives to ensure that the protection of the public is achieved, while also ensuring that unwarranted barriers are not imposed on dispensing opticians who have been out of practice in NZ.
- 1.3. This policy revokes and replaces the *Policy on dispensing opticians rejoining the workforce (2009)*.

## 2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1. This policy applies to applicants wishing to return to practice in NZ and after an absence of 3 or more years from practice or holding a practising certificate in NZ.
- 2.2. The policy applies to both applicants who remain on the ODOB register as non-practising, and those who have been removed from the ODOB register and since requested restoration.
- 2.3. The policy applies to practitioners who have not been working, as well as those who have been working as a dispensing optician overseas.
- 2.4. Applicants who graduated with an optometrist prescribed qualification in NZ but have never been registered with the ODOB should apply under the ODOB's *New Graduate registration policy*.
- 2.5. This policy outlines, in general terms, how the Board will apply the above sections of the HPCA Act. The Board will consider each application on a case-by-case basis and there may be rare circumstances when its decision is at variance to this policy.

## 3. Acronyms and abbreviations

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

Association of Dispensing Opticians of New Zealand	ADONZ
Annual Practising Certificate	APC
Aotearoa New Zealand	NZ
Competence in Optical Dispensing Examination	CODE
Continuing professional development	CPD
Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003	HPCA Act
Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal	HPDT
Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand	OCHANZ
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board	ODOB
Professional Standards Committee	PSC
The governing Board of the Optometrist and Dispensing Opticians Board.	Board

## 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.
Returning to practice in NZ	A practitioner who was registered with the ODOB, and held at least one valid practising certificate while registered, but have not been practising for more than 3 years should consider this policy if they wish to return to practice. While registration may be restored, in order to practice, the practitioner's application for a practising certificate can be considered by the Registrar (or delegate), the Professional Standards Committee or Board. Additional requirements may be necessitated prior to approval, or a condition on their scope may be imposed, as set out in this policy.
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."
Supervision	Supervision is a formal arrangement, defined in the HPCA Act as the monitoring of, and reporting on, the performance of a health practitioner by a professional peer or approved person. Meetings while under supervision are formal and structured, with the supervisor leading the meetings and ensuring that all required elements are discussed. Specific cases will be discussed, and the practitioner may be required to keep a log of certain patients, and/or bring copies of patient records, so that they can be examined and discussed with their supervisor at these meetings.
Supervisor	As defined in the HPCA Act which states "supervision means the monitoring of, and reporting on, the performance of a health practitioner by a professional peer."  The ODOB's requirements for practitioners who may provide supervision or mentorship are that they must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• be a professional peer (optometrists or dispensing opticians as appropriate)</li> <li>• be registered with the ODOB</li> <li>• be in good standing with the ODOB</li> <li>• hold a current APC</li> <li>• have been practising for a minimum of 5 years, and</li> <li>• be approved by the Board as a suitable supervisor or mentor.</li> </ul>

## 5. Restoration to the Register

5.1. Practitioners who have previously been registered with the ODOB, and their registration was cancelled at their own request (s142 of HPCA Act) or their name was removed from the Register under section 144 revision of the register processes, can apply to restore their name to the Register.

- 5.2. If a practitioner is applying for restoration more than five years since removal from the register, they must supply:
- 5.2.1. Proof of identity.
  - 5.2.2. Certified copy of original qualifications used or initial registration.
  - 5.2.3. Any additional relevant qualifications gained since initial registration, if applicable.
- 5.3. Practitioners who were removed from the Register prior to 18 September 2004, must submit a new application for registration.
- 5.4. Practitioners who had their registration cancelled due to a Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal (HPDT) ruling may re-apply for registration if the HPDT ruling allows. A new registration application is required.
- 5.5. Previous conditions on scope of practice will be re-activated if the restoration is approved. If the practitioner considers the condition is no longer applicable, they may request this be reviewed with provision of evidence for their request.

## **6. Applications for annual practising certificates (APC) for dispensing opticians returning to the workforce**

- 6.1. Section 27 of the HPCA Act requires that if a dispensing optician has not held an APC of a kind sought by the applicant, or has not lawfully practised the profession within the 3 years immediately preceding the date of application, or there are concerns that they do not meet the required standard of competence, the Registrar/ Deputy Registrar must submit the application to the Board's Professional Standards Committee (PSC), for its consideration under delegation. This includes situations where a dispensing optician:
- 6.1.1. has continued to reside in Aotearoa New Zealand but has not practised in the previous 3 or more years, or
  - 6.1.2. has been practising in a jurisdiction that does not regulate the practice of optical dispensing in the previous 3 or more years.
- 6.2. Under sections 28 and 29 of the Act the Board may decline an application or include conditions in the dispensing optician's scope of practice to be satisfied that the dispensing optician meets the required standard of competence.
- 6.3. Conditions applied under section 29 of the HPCA Act may vary according to the time the dispensing optician has been out of practice. The dispensing optician must be able to supply to the Board a declaration advising of the last period of work within the scope of practice applied for.

## **7. Considerations and requirements for dispensing opticians returning to practice in NZ, when applying for an APC**

- 7.1. The main factor determining the requirements for a dispensing optician returning to practice, is the period (years) they were not practising within the profession.
- 7.1.1. For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce less than 3 years**
- a) Where no other considerations under section 27 of the HPCA Act are relevant, the APC will be issued as if the dispensing optician holds a current APC. The dispensing optician will be required to fulfil the normal continuing professional development (CPD) requirements for the year in which they apply for the APC and may also be required to undergo a self-audit. Any CPD deficit, audit requirement, or other outstanding

requirement that was in place when the previous APC expired will also need to be fulfilled within the first 3 months since returning to practise.

- b) The number of CPD credits a dispensing optician is required to obtain by the end of their CPD cycle depends on the month that the first APC is issued within the current recertification cycle. For detailed information on credit requirements where a first APC is issued part way through the recertification cycle, please refer to the Board's *Recertification programme for continuing professional development of dispensing opticians*.

#### **7.1.2. For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce between 3 and 6 years**

- a) The Board may require the dispensing optician to fulfil one or more of the following conditions:
- i. obtain the full 2-year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice or in a time frame specified by the Board and/ or,
  - ii. complete a self-audit during the course of the first APC period and/ or,
  - iii. work under the supervision of a Board nominated optometrist or dispensing optician for a period of 1 month or other period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated practitioner must be registered for at least 5 years, be in good standing with the Board for this period, in at least an equivalent scope of practice or higher, i.e. a dispensing optician or an optometrist, and hold a current APC; and/or
  - iv. complete a period of upskilling (educational programme) which may include modules from the any of the prescribed qualifications as directed by the Board.

#### **7.1.3. For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce between 6 and 9 years**

- a) The Board may require the dispensing optician to fulfil one or more of the following conditions:
- i. complete a course or additional training (re-training) as required by the Board, which may be in the form of:
    - a successful pass of the Competence in Optical Dispensing Examination (CODE) conducted by the Association of Dispensing Opticians of New Zealand (ADONZ) Optiblocks Education Committee<sup>1</sup>, and/ or
    - a period of upskilling through modules or workshops from any of the prescribed qualifications as directed by the Board, and a successful pass on the agreed assessment. For example, Australasian College of Optical Dispensing's (ACOD) Workshop 3, and/or
    - any other educational programme as directed by the Board; AND/OR
  - ii. obtain the full 2-year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice or in a time frame specified by the Board, AND/OR
  - iii. work under the supervision of a Board nominated optometrist or dispensing optician for a period of 1 month or other period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated practitioner (supervisor) must be registered for at least 5 years, be in good standing with the Board for this period, in at least an equivalent scope of practice or higher, i.e. a dispensing optician or an optometrist, and hold a current APC.

#### **7.1.4. For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce more than 9 years**

- a) The Board may require the dispensing optician to fulfil all the following conditions:
- i. complete a course or additional training (re-training) as required by the Board, which may be in the form of:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://adonz.co.nz/>

- a successful pass from the Competence in Optical Dispensing Examination (CODE) conducted by the Association of Dispensing Opticians of New Zealand (ADONZ) Optiblocks Education Committee<sup>2</sup>, and/or
  - a period of upskilling through modules or workshops from any of the prescribed qualifications as directed by the Board, and a successful pass on the agreed assessment. For example, ACOD’s Workshop 3, and/or
  - any other educational programme as directed by the Board; AND
- ii. obtain the full 2-year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice or in a time frame specified by the Board, AND
  - iii. work under the supervision of a Board nominated optometrist or dispensing optician for a period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated practitioner (supervisor) must be registered for at least 5 years, be in good standing with the Board for this period, in at least an equivalent scope of practice or higher, i.e. a dispensing optician an optometrist, and hold a current APC.

7.2. Other requirements as set out by the Board:

- 7.2.1. The Board will consider and assess the practitioner’s application on a case-by-case basis.
- 7.2.2. The Board will assess the practitioner in the areas of clinical competence, ethical conduct, and cultural competence. See Appendix 1 for the matrix used to assess areas for consideration when considering an application for **restoration/ return to practice**.

## 8. Costs

- 8.1. Any costs involved with training or upskilling, including undergoing refresher courses and a performance assessment, if required, will be met by the applicant.

## 9. Related legislation, policies, and procedures

- 9.1. *Recertification programme for continuing professional development of dispensing opticians.*

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

<sup>2</sup> <https://adonz.co.nz/>

## APPENDIX

### MATRIX FOR ASSESSMENT OF RESTORATION/ RETURN TO PRACTICE

This matrix is used to assess areas for consideration when considering an application for restoration/ return to practice. The matrix is not an exhaustive list but is intended as an aid to ensure that all relevant aspects are considered when making a decision. Users are expected to exercise critical thinking when utilising the list.

<b>Education/ History</b>	
Qualification	What prescribed qualification does the applicant hold? When was the qualification received? Is the applicant an NZ or overseas graduate?
Postgraduate study	Has the applicant undertaken any further study? Is the study relevant to the optical dispensing practice in NZ?
Experience	Has the applicant practiced in NZ? For what time period?
ODOB history	Does the applicant have any history of complaints, disciplinary, competence issues or non-compliance with the ODOB?
Conditions held	Did/does the applicant have any conditions on their scope of practice or previous APC which remain relevant now?
<b>Break from practice</b>	
Activities undertaken while away from practice	What activities relevant to optical dispensing practice has the applicant been undertaking? Has the practitioner-maintained links to the profession while away?
Length of time	How long since the applicant has last practiced as a dispensing optician?
Practising overseas (if relevant)	What country/ies did the applicant work in? Is optical dispensing regulated in this country? For what time period? Were there any competence or disciplinary issues identified?
Study, research or teaching activities (if any)	Is the study, research or teaching activities undertaken (if any) relevant to practice as a dispensing optician in NZ/now?
Professional development	Has the applicant undertaken any continuing professional development (CPD) whilst away?
<b>Preparation for return</b>	
Activities undertaken to prepare for return	What preparation has the applicant undertaken to return to practice? (e.g., Seminar attendance, communication with other practitioners, independent study)
Area of practice (if known)	Is the practitioner intending to return to the same or different area of practice (if known)
Competence	Does the practitioner meet the competence requirements? Were any areas of concern identified?
Fitness	Does the applicant meet the fitness to practice requirements as per the fitness policy? Were any areas of concern identified?
Other	Any other relevant considerations?