



Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board

Te Poari o ngā Kaimātai Whatu me ngā Kaiwhakarato Mōhiti

Board Decision

Changes to Optometrist Scopes of Practice, effective 1 April 2017

The Optometry profession in New Zealand takes pride in delivering a safe standard of care to health consumers. In recent years, changes to the scopes of practice have been proposed to ensure the public and health sector are better informed, and to keep members of the public safe from harm. After a number of consultations and careful consideration of submissions from practitioners and stakeholders, at the Board's recent February 2017 meeting, the Board resolved the following in respect of optometrist scopes of practice:

1. To rationalise the current optometrist scopes of practice from four scopes of practice to just one - the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice.'
2. To define the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' in a more comprehensive way, including a definition of what the 'practice of optometry' includes.
3. That the contemporary standard of optometric practice in New Zealand includes the prescribing of medicines by optometrists, and therefore, the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' will include the prescribing of medicines.
4. That the Board's policy position on how variations in practice previously described under the separate scopes of optometry will be managed by the imposition of conditions in accordance with sections 20 to 22 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) for greater transparency in its role of protecting members of the public.
5. That those optometrists currently registered with the Board in New Zealand, *who do not hold* a therapeutic qualification, are deemed safe to continue practising with a condition placed on their scope of practice indicating that they cannot prescribe medicines, as they have experience of the New Zealand setting and have been participating in clinical diagnostic continuing professional development activities for a number of years now.
6. To introduce a new time-limited scope of practice – the 'Provisional Scope of Practice' – for future applications for registration from overseas-qualified optometrists¹ who do not hold the qualifications to prescribe therapeutic medicines, to allow up-skilling to the current New Zealand and Australian standard while practising under supervision.

The principal purpose of defining scopes of practice under the HPCA Act is to provide a transparent framework so that health professionals and consumers of health and disability services can more easily understand the parameters within which a health professional is competent to work².

¹ Overseas-qualified optometrists – refers to optometrists who completed their optometry qualification outside of New Zealand and Australia.

² The *Health Professionals Competency Assurance Bill Discussion Paper*, published in September 2000.

The single 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' encompasses the full breadth of optometry, so the purpose of any conditions imposed is to identify, to health professionals and the public, areas of practice where a practitioner is not authorised by the Board to practise.

What this means for optometrists already registered with the Board

- Those registered in the current 'Optometrist (TPA Endorsement) Scope of Practice' will transfer to the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice.'
- Those registered in the current 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' will have a condition imposed on their scope of practice indicating that they are not authorised to prescribe medicines.
- Those registered in the current 'Educator Optometrist (TPA Endorsement) Scope of Practice' will transfer to the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' and will have a condition imposed on their scope of practice indicating that they are limited to practising within an educational institution.
- Those registered in the current 'Educator Optometrist Scope of Practice' will transfer to the 'Optometrist Scope of Practice' and will have conditions imposed on their scope of practice indicating that they are not authorised to prescribe medicines and are limited to practising within an educational institution.

What this means for future optometrist applicants for registration with the Board

New Zealand registrants

- New Zealand and Australian graduates, with Board-accredited therapeutics qualifications, will register in the Optometrist Scope of Practice (given proof of qualification, competence and fitness to practice).

Australian registered applicants

- Applicants currently holding proof of General registration in Australia, and applying to register in New Zealand under the Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement, will register in the Optometrist Scope of Practice. For those without a Board-accredited therapeutics qualification, a condition will be attached to their scope of practice indicating that they are not authorised to prescribe medicines.

Overseas-qualified applicants

- Overseas-qualified applicants with a pass in both the OCANZ Competence in Optometry Examination (COE) and a pass in an OCANZ-accredited ocular therapeutics qualification will register directly in the Optometrist Scope of Practice (given proof of qualification and fitness to practice).
- Overseas-qualified applicants with a pass in the OCANZ COE, but who do not hold a Board-accredited ocular therapeutics qualification, will register initially in the Provisional Scope of Practice. Having satisfied Board approved ocular therapeutic up-skilling requirements within three years, application can be made for entry to the Optometrist Scope of Practice.

Educator applicants with overseas qualifications

- Overseas-qualified applicants who hold a Board-accredited qualification and a Board-accredited ocular therapeutics qualification, including an OCANZ-accredited ocular therapeutics qualification, and who will be working solely in an educational institution, will

register in the Optometrist Scope of Practice and have a condition attached to their scope of practice indicating that they are limited to working in an educational institution.

- Overseas-qualified applicants who hold a Board-accredited qualification, but who have not passed the OCANZ COE or an OCANZ-accredited ocular therapeutics qualification, and *who will be working solely in an educational institution*, will register in the Optometrist Scope of Practice and have conditions attached to their scope of practice indicating that they are limited to working in an educational institution and are not authorised to prescribe medicines.

You can view the most recent consultation document detailing the above changes and the accompanying rationale by visiting the 'Latest News' page of the Board's website located at www.odob.health.nz

The above mentioned changes were published in the New Zealand Gazette on 9 March 2017 and take effect from the 1st of April 2017. You can view a copy of this notice on the Board's website or in the New Zealand Gazette located at <https://gazette.govt.nz/>