



Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board

POLICY ON DISPENSING OPTICIANS REJOINING THE WORKFORCE

Background

The principal purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) is to protect public health and safety by ensuring that health practitioners are competent. Section 118 of the Act requires the Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board) to authorise the registration of dispensing opticians and to recognise, accredit and set programmes to ensure the ongoing competence of dispensing opticians.

The Board's key processes for ensuring the ongoing competence of dispensing opticians is by requiring them to:

- obtain the required number of continuing professional development (CPD) credits specified by the Board's *Recertification programme for continuing professional development of optometrists and dispensing opticians*
- complete a CPD Deficit Audit in the event that the required number of CPD credits have not been obtained
- complete a Random Self Audit if requested to do so by the Board.

Applications for annual practising certificates (APC) from dispensing opticians returning to the workforce

Section 27 of the 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 three years immediately preceding the date of application, the Registrar must submit the application to the Board for its consideration. This includes situations where a dispensing optician:

- has continued to reside in New Zealand but has not practised in the previous three or more years, or
- has been practising in a jurisdiction that does not regulate the practice of optical dispensing in the previous three or more years.

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 in order to be satisfied that the dispensing optician meets the required standard of competence.

This policy outlines, in general terms, how the Board will apply the above sections of the 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.

Conditions applied under section 29 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.

Requirements

For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce less than 3 years

Where no other considerations under section 27 of the HPCA 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 CPD requirements for the year in which they apply for the APC and may also be required to undergo a self audit. This means the dispensing optician will need to obtain 10 CPD credits in the first full year back in practice, prorated to date of issue of APC. Any CPD deficit, audit requirement or other outstanding requirement that was in place when the previous APC expired will also need to be fulfilled.

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 APC is issued. For detailed information on credit requirements where an APC is issued part way through the year, please refer to the Board's *Recertification programme for continuing professional development of dispensing opticians*.

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

The Board may require the dispensing optician to fulfill any one or more of the following conditions:

- obtain the full two year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice or in a time frame specified by the Board
- complete a self audit during the course of the first APC period
- work under the supervision of a Board nominated optometrist or dispensing optician for a period of one month or other period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated practitioner must be registered with at least two years' standing and hold a current APC
- complete a period of upskilling which may include modules from the OTEN/TAFE NSW Optical Dispensing Certificate IV course.

For a dispensing optician who has been out of the workforce more than 6 years

The Board may require the dispensing optician to fulfill any one or more of the following conditions:

- complete a refresher course as required by the Board, which may be in the form of:
 - a written, oral or practical examination eg the final practical from the OTEN/TAFE NSW Optical Dispensing Certificate IV course
 - a period of upskilling which may include modules from the OTEN /TAFE NSW Optical Dispensing Certificate IV course
- obtain the full two year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice or in a time frame specified by the Board
- work under the supervision of a Board nominated optometrist or dispensing optician for a period of one month or other period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated practitioner must be registered with at least two years' standing and hold a current APC.

Other requirements

Dispensing opticians will be assessed in the areas of clinical competence, ethical conduct and cultural competence. Any costs involved with training or upskilling, including undergoing refresher courses and a performance assessment, if required, will be met by the applicant.

Related policies:

Recertification programme for continuing professional development of dispensing opticians

Approved by the Board: November 2009