



1. Optometrist Scope of Practice

An optometrist registered in the optometrist scope of practice provides evidence-based comprehensive eye health and vision care in a professional and ethical manner, in accordance with the HPCA Act.

The “practice of optometry” includes:

- prescribing any ophthalmic appliance, optical appliance, or ophthalmic medical device intended for remedial or cosmetic purposes or for the correction of a defect of sight;
- assessing, diagnosing, treating and managing conditions affecting the eye and its appendages;
- prescribing medicines whose sale and supply is restricted by law to prescription by authorised prescribers;
- reporting or giving advice in an ophthalmic capacity, using the knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence initially attained for the primary optometry qualification and built upon in postgraduate and continuing clinical education, wherever there could be an issue of patient health or wellbeing;
- signing any certificate required for statutory purposes, such as driver licensing eyesight certificates; and
- holding out to the public, or representing in any manner that one is authorised to practise optometry in New Zealand.

The practice of optometry goes wider than clinical optometry, and includes teaching, research, optometric or eye health management, in hospitals, clinics, general optometric practices and community and institutional contexts, whether paid or voluntary.

Additionally, clinical practice is defined as any work undertaken by an optometrist that relates to the care of an individual patient. Non-clinical practice is defined as any work undertaken by an optometrist that does not relate to the care of an individual patient.

2. Provisional Optometrist Scope of Practice (time-limited)

An optometrist registered in the provisional optometrist scope of practice provides evidence-based comprehensive eye health and vision care in a professional and ethical manner (excluding the prescribing of therapeutic medicines), in accordance with the HPCA Act, works under supervision, and is in the process of completing Board-accredited training to prescribe therapeutic medicines.

The Provisional Optometrist Scope of Practice is time-limited and registration in this scope of practice will end after three years, or other period as specified by the Board from time to time, or on the successful completion of a Board-accredited therapeutics qualification leading to registration in the Optometrist Scope of Practice.

Evidence of enrolment in a Board-accredited therapeutics course will be required at the time of registration.

The optometrist's registration may be subject to conditions as set out in section 22(3) of the HPCA Act.

These conditions may include:

- a requirement to practise under supervision;
- a requirement to practise under oversight;
- that the practitioner may not perform certain tasks, or that those tasks are only performed under certain circumstances;
- a requirement to practise only in a stated capacity, for example as an employee or a nominated person or a person of a stated class;
- a requirement to practise only for a specified period;
- a requirement to get one or more stated qualifications or further experience of a stated kind; and
- a requirement to comply with any condition the Board believes to be necessary to protect the safety of the public.

Practising safely within the scope of optometry

It is the Board's prerogative as the Government-appointed regulator of optometrists to define the practice of the profession of optometry (by way of the scope of practice), and to set the relevant qualifications and competence measures to practise optometry. Only the Board can amend the scope of practice (in consultation with the profession and relevant stakeholders).

The principal purpose of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) is to protect the health and safety of the public. The Board will take very seriously any indication that a practitioner may be performing any procedure that is not within the scope of optometry, and will take appropriate action in accordance with the Act to ensure the protection of the public. Such action by the Board could include, amongst other things, referral of the matter to a Professional Conduct Committee (PCC) for investigation, and consideration of interim suspension of a practitioner's practising certificate or the imposition of interim conditions on their scope of practice. A PCC has the authority to lay charges against a practitioner before the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, which can result in very serious ramifications for a practitioner's livelihood.

Should you be contemplating undertaking any tasks that an optometrist would not ordinarily perform, or if you are unsure about whether any such task may be within the current scope of practice, you **must** contact the Board in the first instance to determine whether the task is within the scope of practice. The practice of optometry in other jurisdictions, and the views of others, may not always reflect the current scope of practice in New Zealand. When in doubt, contact the Board.