



OPTOMETRISTS AND DISPENSING OPTICIANS BOARD

Te Poari o ngā Kaimātai Whatu me ngā Kaiwahakarato Mōhiti

POLICY ON OPTOMETRISTS 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 optometrists and to recognise, accredit and set programmes to ensure the ongoing competence of optometrists.

The Board's key processes for ensuring the ongoing competence of optometrists 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*
- 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 optometrists returning to the workforce

Section 27 of the Act requires that if an optometrist 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 an optometrist:

- 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 optometry 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 optometrist's scope of practice in order to be satisfied that the optometrist 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 optometrist has been out of practice. The optometrist 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 an optometrist who has been out of the workforce less than three years

Where no other considerations under section 27 of the Act are relevant, the APC will be issued as if the optometrist holds a current APC. The optometrist will be required to fulfill the requirements of the CPD recertification programme 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.

The number of CPD credits an optometrist 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 optometrists*.

For an optometrist who has been out of the workforce between 3 and 6 years

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

- complete the full two year CPD credit requirement relevant to the optometrist's scope of practice 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 clinical supervision of a Board nominated optometrist for a period of one month or for another period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated optometrist must be registered with at least two years' standing in at least an equivalent scope of practice and hold a current APC.

For an optometrist who has been out of the workforce between 6 and 9 years

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

- complete a refresher course as required by the Board. This may be in the form of:
 - Objective Structured Clinical Examinations through OCANZ or through SOVS, University of Auckland
 - a period of upskilling or theoretical updating
- complete the full two year CPD credit requirement in the first full year back in practice
- work under the clinical supervision of a Board nominated optometrist for a period of one month or other period nominated by the Board. The Board nominated optometrist must be registered with at least two years' standing in at least an equivalent scope of practice and hold a current APC.
- undergo an assessment by a Performance Assessment Committee toward the end of the first APC period.

For an optometrist who has been out of the workforce more than 9 years

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

- undergo a clinical paper through SOVS as directed by the Board
- pass any final year optometry examination specified by the Board
- pass the OCANZ Competency in Optometry examination.

Other requirements

Optometrists 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 optometrists

Approved by the Board: November 2009