



OPTOMETRISTS
AND DISPENSING
OPTICIANS BOARD

Te Poari o ngā Kaimātai Whatu me ngā Kaiwahakarato Mōhiti

OPHTHALMIC LASER SURGERIES GUIDELINES FOR NEW ZEALAND OPTOMETRISTS

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1. INTRODUCTION

An optometrist registered in the Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries (the Specialist optometrist) is authorised to perform specified ophthalmic surgical procedures below the mucous membrane or surface of the skin. Specifically, they are authorised to perform:

- a. neodymium:yttrium-aluminum-garnet (Nd:YAG) laser capsulotomy; and/or
- b. neodymium:yttrium-aluminum-garnet (Nd:YAG) laser peripheral iridotomy.

The main goal of optometrists performing ophthalmic laser surgeries is to assist in relieving the burden on the health system of patients waiting to receive these surgeries, which are currently carried out by ophthalmologists and nurses. By freeing ophthalmologists for more complicated procedures, this has the effect of reducing overall waiting times for all ophthalmic procedures, improving treatment efficiency, and therefore reducing unnecessary impairment of vision. The patient experience is also improved, as the same person who initially diagnoses the condition can undertake the treatment, often at the same visit. This improves the level of patient rapport and increases surgical satisfaction. In addition, it supports the key focus areas of the 2020 Health Reform – to increase primary health care in the community.

In the management of any patient, the Board expects that the optometrist will always act:

- in the best interests of the patient;
- in collaboration with the supervising ophthalmologist;
- in close contact with the patient's other health practitioners;
- to the current best practice, evidence-based medical standards;
- within the optometrist's training and experience; and
- in the performance of laser surgeries, within these guidelines and the boundaries of their scope of practice.

Practitioners are reminded of their obligations regarding informed consent. Patients under their care should be made aware of all options regarding their ophthalmic laser surgery.

The practice of optometry within the Specialist optometrist scope of practice includes:

- a. the practice of optometry, as described in the Optometrist scope of practice, that includes:
 1. 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 (a restricted activity under section 9 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act of 2003 (HPCA Act));
 2. assessing, diagnosing, treating and managing conditions affecting the eye and its appendages;
 3. prescribing medicines whose sale and supply are restricted by law to prescription by authorised prescribers;
 4. 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;
 5. 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 Aotearoa New Zealand. **AND**

- b. surgical or operative procedures, specifically for optometrist, and the performance of specified ophthalmic laser surgeries (a restricted activity under section 9 of the HPCA Act¹).

2. GUIDELINES

2.1 Pre-requisites

Before undertaking any independent ophthalmic laser surgeries, an optometrist must satisfy both the following:

- The practitioner must hold registration in the Optometrist scope of practice and not be subject to any conditions; and
- The optometrist must have worked in a hospital ophthalmology department for a minimum of three years with at least 400 hours in a relevant clinic (detailed in Section 2.2.2).

2.2 The training programme

2.2.1 Application to begin training

Should an optometrist meet the pre-requisites set out in Section 2.1, and wish to commence with the training programme of the prescribed qualification, they must submit an *Application for approval to begin training for a specified laser surgery* (Appendix 1) for Board approval.

This will provide the Board the necessary proof of eligibility to undertake training.

2.2.2 Board-approved types of clinics suitable for training

The Board approved the following types of clinics that would be suitable for training:

- YAG capsulotomy: any slit lamp-based in-person clinic, such as for anterior segment, uveitis, medical retina, surgical retina, glaucoma, acutes; and/or
- YAG laser peripheral iridotomy (LPI): clinics treating glaucoma, and acutes related to glaucoma.

Any other clinical setting will need Board-approval.

2.2.3 The structure of the training programme

Board-approved surgical procedures have a four-step graduated training process. This begins with theory-based components, before observational then supervised skills-based practical components, before ongoing competency assurance requirements. Together, the process has an acronym DOSE, whose steps include:

¹ Ministry of Health (2014) Restricted activities under the Act. Available at: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/health-practitioners-competence-assurance-act/restricted-activities-under-act>

- **Declaring competence in pre-training requirements and obtaining the theoretical and procedural aspects of the surgery:**
The optometrist has demonstrated their understanding and comprehensive knowledge in the specified areas of competence for the safe delivery of ophthalmic laser surgeries published on the Board’s website (Registration pathway 6 – “Specialist optometrist – Ophthalmic laser surgeries”) to the satisfaction of their supervising ophthalmologist; **then**
- **Observing the surgery being performed:**
The optometrist has satisfactorily **observed** the minimum required number of surgeries being performed by their supervising ophthalmologist published on the Board’s website (Registration pathway 6 – “Specialist optometrist – Ophthalmic laser surgeries”), attested to by their supervising ophthalmologist; **then**
- **Supervised surgery:**
The optometrist has **satisfactorily and independently** performed the required number of surgeries **under the supervision of their supervising ophthalmologist** published on the Board’s website (Registration pathway 6 – “Specialist optometrist – Ophthalmic laser surgeries”), attested to by their supervising ophthalmologist; **then**
- **Ensuring ongoing competence in annual audits:**
The optometrist must provide the Board with a patient log (Appendix 3) to meet the on-going audit requirements as well as complete an annual continuing competency declaration for ophthalmic laser surgeries (see the guidelines for “Recertification” for further information).

To ensure adequate management of risk during the training process, DOSE must be completed in sequence, with checkpoints along the way requiring approval from the Board to proceed (Figure 1). These steps affirm that the training, observations, and supervised surgeries that an optometrist has undertaken have led to the level of competence needed for the optometrist to independently undertake the specific ophthalmic surgeries.

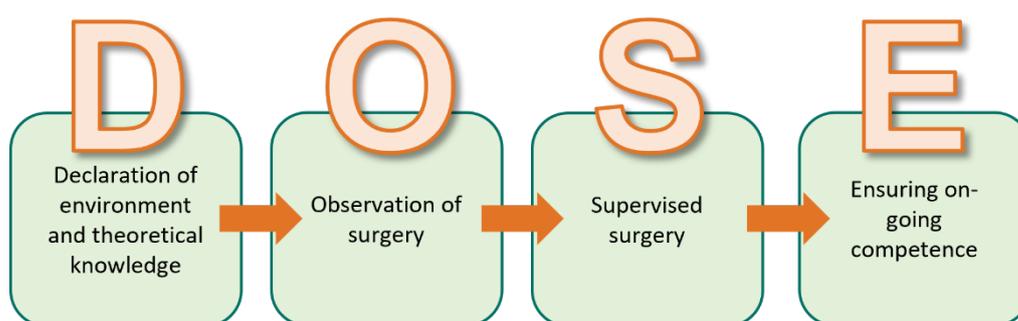


Figure 1 - The DOSE protocol for training an optometrist in ophthalmic laser surgeries.

2.2.4 Training process for surgeries

The detailed requirements for each specific laser surgery can be found in the supporting documents listed in Section 2.2.5, but this section gives an overview of the process for a single procedure.

As part of declaring competence, and after receiving approval from the Board to begin training (Section 2.2.1) *Application for training (LAS1)*, Appendix 1), the optometrist is required to complete the theory-based learning requirements first.

To achieve this, the optometrist must have demonstrated their **knowledge and understanding** (which includes a Board-approved laser course) in the following specified areas of competence for the safe delivery of ophthalmic laser surgeries. To meet these criteria, the Optometrist must have:

- a. comprehensive knowledge of the relevant anatomy and physiology of the eye and adnexa.
- b. knowledge of the physics of light and laser, and the penetration of light through ocular tissues.
- c. an understanding of the interaction of light and living tissue including thermal effects, photocoagulative effects, photoablative effects and photodisruptive effects.
- d. knowledge of the wavelengths and powers utilised in ophthalmic lasers for the specific surgery.
- e. knowledge of required sterile techniques for performing laser surgery.
- f. knowledge of surgical procedure and specialised equipment.
- g. knowledge of the risks and benefits for each surgery.
- h. knowledge of appropriate management plans for adverse outcomes.

Once all learning outcomes are met, the optometrist is required to submit the *Declaration for required learning* (Appendix 2) for Board approval.

Once approval has been received, the optometrist can then proceed with the skills-based practical component.

To meet the **skills-based practical component**, the optometrist must complete a series of practical skills, in order, to the satisfaction of their supervising ophthalmologist.

The Optometrists must have:

- a. first demonstrated competence in the theoretical and procedural aspects of performing the specified lasers surgery in a mock environment, to the satisfaction of their nominated ophthalmologist
- b. satisfactorily **observed a minimum of 20** Nd:YAG capsulotomies and/or Nd:YAG laser periphery iridotomies (as applies) being performed by their supervising ophthalmologist, attested to by their supervising ophthalmologist;
- c. satisfactorily and independently **performed a minimum of 20** Nd:YAG capsulotomies and/or 10 Nd:YAG laser periphery iridotomies (as applies) under the supervision of their supervising ophthalmologist, attested to by their supervising ophthalmologist.

To meet the requirements of this phase, the optometrist will be required to submit the following documents to the Board for approval:

- a. Laser surgery logbook (Appendix 3), and
- b. Laser surgery declaration (Appendix 4).

Once the Board approves the above stages of the training programme, the optometrist is now allowed to perform the surgery independently to meet the remaining skills-based practical component of the training programme. This requires the submission of the following documents to the Board for approval:

- a. Updated Laser surgery logbook (Appendix 3), and the
- b. Final supervisor sign-off and declaration form (Appendix 5).

Satisfactory completion of the training programme will result in a Board outcome letter stating that the optometrist has met the requirements of the training programme and may apply for registration in the additional scope, the Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries (Registration pathway 6).

2.2.5 Supporting documents - Authorised procedures and their specific requirements

These documents are relevant for the specified authorised procedures and are only relevant for the procedures in which the optometrist wishes to be approved to practice under the Specialist optometrist scope of practice.

- *Requirements for Nd:YAG laser capsulotomy* (Appendix 6)
- *Requirements for Nd:YAG laser peripheral iridotomy* (Appendix 7).

2.3 Registration

2.3.1 The process leading up to registration

There are multiple contact points with the Board as part of the training process. Before beginning training, the optometrist is required to apply for approval from the Board. During training, there are multiple steps through the DOSE pathway which require Board approval before proceeding.

By successfully completing the training programme, the optometrist will meet the requirements to enable them to apply for registration in the Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries (Registration pathway 6).

The diagram below is a visual representation of the process. The orange arrows indicate which steps of the process require approval of a submission to the Board before proceeding to the next step. This has been further explained by the text in the orange blocks. The number in parenthesis indicates the required form to be submitted to the Board from the appendices attached.

2.3.2 Applying for the Scope of Practice

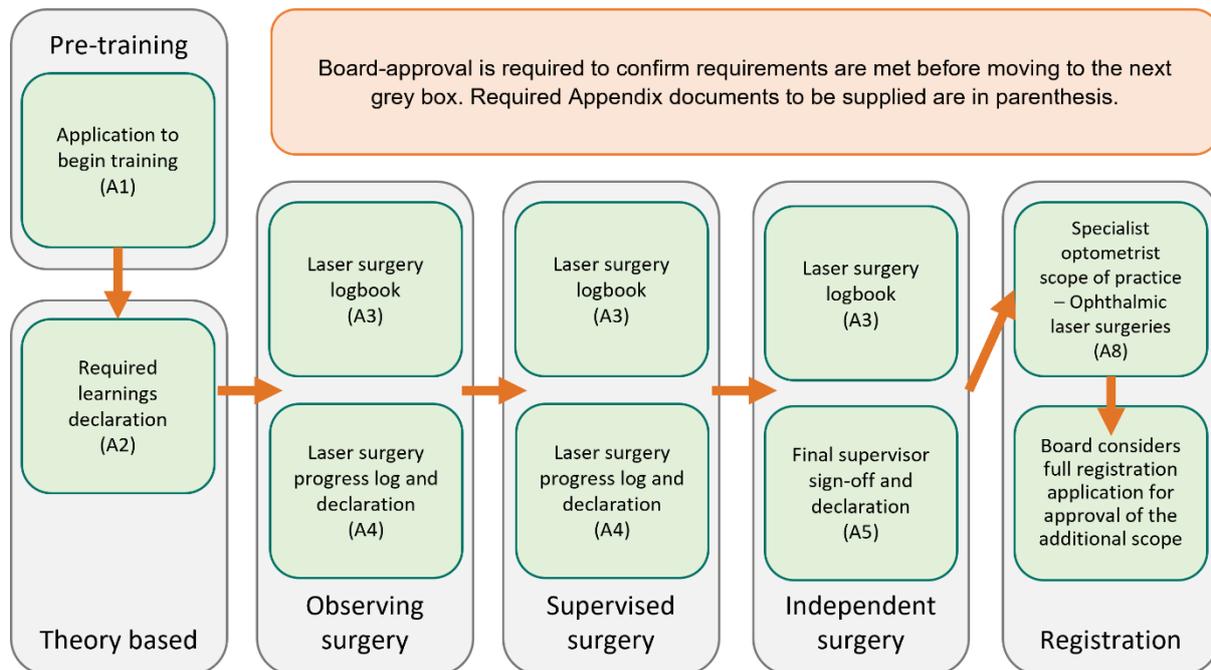


Figure 2 - The process from initial application to the approval of the Specialist optometrist scope of practice. Board approval is required before moving between each grey box – e.g. the Board must approve both the Laser Surgery logbook (Appendix 3) and the Laser surgery progress log and declaration (Appendix 4) before the optometrist can move to Independent surgery. The numbers in parenthesis indicate the associated appendices that are required to be submitted at each stage of the process.

Should an optometrist meet the registration requirements, they must complete the application for registration in the *Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries* (REG5, Appendix 8). This application takes 20 working days to be processed.

As the optometrist will already have an annual practising certificate (APC) in the Optometrist scope of practice, this will be reissued with both scopes of practices on and will include the Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries. In other words, once the registration application has been approved, one APC will be issued with both scopes listed.

The REG5 form can be downloaded from the Board's website (<https://www.odob.health.nz/i-want-to-register/register-as-an-optometrist/>).

The Board approves all registrations and APCs. If approved, the additional scope will be listed on the optometrist's APC and in the Register of Optometrists.

2.3.3 Costs

The application for change in scope of practice/ an additional scope of practice , where the application is received by the Board within one year of the date the relevant qualification was conferred	\$153.00
The application for change in scope of practice/ an additional scope of practice , where the application is received by the Board more than one year after the date the relevant qualification was conferred	\$368.00

The registration application will be referred to the Board's Registration Committee for review and approval. If approved, and assuming the optometrist already has an APC, their APC will be reissued with the additional scope of practice. No additional cost will be required.

The Board's Gazetted fees are available on the Board's website (<https://www.odob.health.nz/i-want-to-register/fees/>).

2.4 Recertification

2.4.1 Recertification requirements

Once approved and practicing within the Specialist optometrist scope of practice, the final step of the DOSE procedure places additional requirements for ensuring ongoing competency to ensure practice within the expanded Specialist optometrist scope of practice is kept up to date and performed at a high level of competency. Please note that these requirements are in addition to the competency requirements required as part of the Optometrist scope of practice, such as gaining sufficient continuing professional development (CPD) points and completing random self-audits as required. It is the optometrist's responsibility to ensure that they meet the on-going competency requirements for both the Optometrist scope of practice as well as the additional requirements relevant to the Specialist optometrist scope of practice, which are **in addition** and **annual**.

The additional requirements while practice within the Specialist optometrist scope of practice are:

- maintaining a collegial relationship with a registered ophthalmologist working at the Board-approved location where they are performing the laser surgery; **and**
- maintaining competence in laser safety by completing a Board-approved laser safety course every two years. (The Board has a list of accredited providers); **and**
- submitting to the Board *Annual continuing competency declaration for Ophthalmic Laser Surgeries* (Appendix 9) for each year that surgeries have been performed.

2.4.2 Annual competency declarations

Every year before or on the 31st of October of each year, the Specialist optometrist must submit to the Board a completed *Annual continuing competency declaration for Ophthalmic Laser Surgeries* (Appendix 6). This declaration includes the following information:

- The procedures for which the declaration pertains.
- A reflective statement on how newly acquired learnings have influenced practice;
- An opportunity to register any change to employment and/or supervisor details;
- Affirmation that they continue to meet the requirements for performing the specified laser surgery;
- The submission of a *Continuing competency plan* (Appendix 10).

- The submission of a *Laser surgery logbook* (Appendix 3) showing they have performed a minimum of 20 procedures per annum for each approved procedure.

An optometrist may register at any time for this scope of practice and its recertification requirements will be calculated accordingly.

2.4.3 Recertification cycle

Unlike the regular Optometrist scope of practice, which has a two-year recertification cycle, the recertification cycle for the Specialist optometrist scope of practice is annual. This reflects the higher level of risk involved within this expanded scope of practice, which therefore requires a higher level of Board oversight for ensuring competency and public safety.

Both Optometrist and Specialist optometrist cycles end on 31st October. However, the Specialist optometrist recertification process must be completed each year. Consideration also needs to be made for planning continuing education and professional development activities throughout the annual recertification cycle. To help facilitate this, a *Continuing competency plan* (Appendix 10), detailing which events or activities are planned for the upcoming year, is required to be submitted each year as part of the Annual competency declaration.

2.4.4 Non-compliance

It is the practitioner’s responsibility to ensure they have the means to achieve the annual obligations.

If at any stage they are continuously unable to meet these obligations, the Board may consider altering their scope of practice by changing any health services that they are permitted to perform or by including any condition or conditions that the Board considers appropriate. The Board may also consider suspending their registration for the Specialist optometrist scope of practice – Ophthalmic laser surgeries.

It is therefore important to remain committed to achieving the annual requirements, and where issues arise, these should be discussed with the Board at the earliest possible opportunity.

3. APPENDICES

The list of appendices below:

Appendix 1	Application for approval to begin training for a specified laser surgery (LAS1)
Appendix 2	Declaration of required learning (LAS2)
Appendix 3	Laser surgery logbook (“Cases logbook”) (LAS3)
Appendix 4	Laser surgery progress log and declaration (“Progress log”) (LAS4)
Appendix 5	Final supervisor sign-off and declaration (LAS5)
Appendix 6	Requirements for Nd:YAG laser capsulotomy
Appendix 7	Requirements for Nd:YAG laser peripheral iridotomy
Appendix 8	Application for an additional scope: Specialist Optometrist (REG6)
Appendix 9	Annual continuing competency declaration for Ophthalmic Laser Surgeries (“Continuing competency declaration and plan”) (LAS6)
Appendix 10	Continuing competence plan (LAS7)

Acknowledgements:

The Board wishes to thank all those involved for their contributions to developing the Specialist optometrist scope of practice, the prescribed qualification, and their participation in the pilot study.

Revision history

Version 1	Drafted	Approved by the Board	May 2022