

Authority

This standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 31 March 2010 pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (2009)* (the National Law) with approval taking effect from 1 July 2010.

Summary

The Optometry Board of Australia has established this standard in accordance with sections 38(1)(e) and 55(1)(f) of the National Law.

All applicants for registration who are not new graduates, and all applicants for renewal of registration, must demonstrate they have had sufficient optometry practice experience within the previous three-year period in order to maintain their competence to practise as an optometrist. The specific requirements for recency depend on the nature of the optometrist's practice, their level of experience, the length of absence from practice and whether they are intending to change the nature of their practice on return to practice.

Optometrists who are unable to meet the recency standards set out below will be required to submit to the Board a plan for re-entry to practice for the Board's consideration and may be required to complete specific education and/or assessment or work under supervision or oversight before being granted unrestricted registration.

Scope of application

This standard applies to all applicants for registration as an optometrist, and all registered optometrists who are applying to renew their registration. This standard applies in circumstances where the applicant has:

- previously been registered but let their registration lapse, or
- maintained their registration as an optometrist in an Australian jurisdiction, but has not been engaged in practice during the previous registration period.

This standard applies to optometrists who are:

- returning to practice after a period of absence (as outlined above), or
- changing significantly the nature or scope of their practice, for example, by moving from an administrative (nonclinical) role back into clinical practice.

This standard does not apply to:

- persons who hold student registration as an optometry student

- persons who hold nonpractising registration as an optometrist, or applicants for nonpractising registration.

Requirements

1. All applicants for registration as an optometrist, and all optometrists applying to renew their registration, must satisfy the Optometry Board of Australia that they have had sufficient practice experience in the three-year period prior to their application in order to ensure their continuing competence to practice.
2. The Board considers that a minimum of 150 hours per year or 450 hours over three years of practice in optometry constitutes sufficient practice experience for the purposes of meeting this standard.
3. For optometrists returning to practice within their previous practice scope:
 - a) an absence of less than one year — no specific requirements to be met before recommencing practice
 - b) absence of between one and three years — complete a minimum of one year's quota of CPD activities relevant to their scope of practice, prior to recommencement, targeted at maintaining and updating their knowledge, clinical judgement and technical skills
 - c) absence greater than three years — provide to the Board a plan for professional development and for re-entry to practice
4. For optometrists proposing to change the scope or nature of their practice, for example, by moving from an administrative role into clinical practice:
 - a) if the change is to a subset of their current practice — no specific requirements to be met
 - b) if the change is an extension of practice that the optometrist's peers might reasonably expect in practice of that nature, the optometrist is required to undertake training that peers would expect before changing or expanding their scope of practice
 - c) if the change is to a different field or scope of practice, the optometrist is required to consult with the Board and develop a professional development plan for ensuring their competence.
5. The Board reserves the right to require an optometrist returning to practice after a break of more than three years to satisfy the Board of their competence to practice by completing one or more of the following:
 - a) a competency assessment approved by the Board

- b) a period of supervised practice approved by the Board
 - c) a program of study approved by the Board.
6. The Board may decide to place conditions on the registration of an optometrist returning to practice after an absence. In determining the nature of conditions to be placed on an optometrist's registration, the Board will consider the following matters:
- a) the person's registration and practice history
 - b) their period of absence from practice
 - c) when their primary qualification was awarded
 - d) any activities related to the practice of optometry undertaken in the previous 3 years
 - e) any history of participation in continuing professional development activities
 - f) any additional qualifications obtained during the period of absence.

Exemptions

The Board may grant an exemption from this standard in the following circumstances:

- a) persons who have graduated from an approved program of study in optometry in the 12 months prior to their application for registration
- b) persons who have successfully completed a competency assessment or examination approved by the Board, within the three-year period prior to applying for registration
- c) persons who have successfully completed an approved program of study in optometry, within the three-year period prior to applying for registration, provided the applicant can demonstrate they have met the continuing professional development standard during that period.

Compliance assessment

Renewal requirements (National Law s. 109)

An applicant for registration or renewal of registration will be required to make a declaration that they have engaged in sufficient practice of optometry in the previous three years to safely and competently practice as an optometrist.

Audit

The Board may request an applicant for registration or renewal of registration as an optometrist to provide

documentation of their practice experience in the previous three years, to determine their compliance with this standard.

Consequences of noncompliance

If a registered optometrist or applicant for registration is unable to make the declarations required, the Board may refuse their registration or renewal of registration and any endorsements, or grant registration subject to conditions.

Knowingly making a false declaration will be considered by the Board to be a professional conduct matter and as such, may be dealt with by the Board through the disciplinary mechanisms available under the National Law. These mechanisms include the impositions of sanctions ranging from caution or reprimand, to suspension or cancellation of registration.

Definitions

Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a health practitioner in their profession. For the purposes of this registration standard, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes working in a direct nonclinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles, and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession and/or use their professional skills.

Recency of practice means that a practitioner has maintained recent practice in, the profession since qualifying or obtaining registration.

Review

This standard will commence on 1 July 2010. The Board will review this standard at least every three years.