

Communiqué

The 37th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the National Board) was held on 13 December 2012 at the Australian Health Practitioner Regulatory Agency (AHPRA) National Office in Melbourne.

The day prior to the meeting the Board also undertook its annual planning session. This session allowed the Board to focus on its role of regulator of the profession, key relationships and define what will be a substantial work program for 2013.

This communiqué outlines the issues discussed, and decisions made by the Board at its meeting as well as other points of interest.

The Board publishes this communiqué on its website and emails it to a broad range of stakeholders. Please forward it on to colleagues and employees who may be interested in the work of the Board.

Consultations

The Board has released a revised version of its *Guidelines for use of scheduled medicines* for consultation. This paper is now published at 'Current consultation' section under the 'News' tab of the Board's website.

The Guidelines propose amendments to allow optometrists with an endorsement for scheduled medicines to independently manage patients with chronic glaucoma or at high risk of developing the disease. The Guidelines require optometrists to practise in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's *Guidelines for the Screening, Prognosis, Diagnosis, Management and Prevention of Glaucoma*.

The Board invites interested parties to provide feedback by COB Monday 4 February 2013.

Continuing professional development registration standard and guidelines

The Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council, at their meeting on 9 November 2012, approved the Board's amended *Registration standard for continuing professional development*. The standard will come into effect when published on the Board's website. This will be published in January 2013 at the conclusion of the current registration renewal process.

The revised standard does not increase requirements from the standard in place from 1 July 2012, but rather it increases the range of CPD activities and the time-frame available for optometrists to meet these same requirements. The amended standard allows optometrists to meet the CPD requirements over a two-year period. That is 80 points over two previous consecutive registration periods.

Some optometrists may have completed more than the minimum requirements in 2012. They will be able to count the additional points in 2013. For example, if an optometrist completed 60 points in 2012, they will need to complete 20 points in 2013 to ensure a minimum total of 80 points over the two registration periods of 2012 and 2013. They will then need to complete 60 points again in 2014 to meet the minimum 80 points over the 2013 and 2014 registration periods.

The *Guidelines for continuing professional development for endorsed and non-endorsed optometrists* have also been revised to provide more flexibility in how optometrists can meet the requirements – particularly the face to face requirement.

The Board will publish revised FAQs and CPD provider manual when the standard and guidelines are published.

Some of the submissions received during the consultation process are published at the 'Past consultations' section under the 'News' tab on the Board's website.

Registration renewal

The registration renewal date of 30 November has now expired. Any optometrist who has not renewed their registration as yet has until 31 December to do so. These applications for renewal will incur a late payment fee, which will be payable in addition to the annual renewal fee.

In the National Scheme, health practitioners are responsible for renewing their registration on time. The job of the Board – with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) – is to make this as simple and straightforward as possible.

There are significant consequences for individuals who do not renew on time in the National Scheme.

Under the National Law, optometrists who do not renew registration within one month of their registration expiry date must be removed from the National Register of Practitioners (i.e. after 31 December 2012). Their registration will lapse and they will not be able to practise their profession in Australia until a new application is approved. Neither the Board nor AHPRA have any discretion about this.

Optometrists who do not renew their registration by 30 November 2012, or within the following one month late period, can apply to AHPRA for a fast-track application for registration. These practitioners should note that they are not able to practise their profession until their fast-track registration application has been processed and approved.

Optometrists can check that their application has been received via the online receipt service at [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency - Renewal Received Confirmation](#). Individuals whose application to renew registration has been received can practise while their application is being processed.

Optometrists can print a copy of their registration certificate using AHPRA's online services at www.ahpra.gov.au.

Audit of compliance

As the registration renewal period draws to a close so does the phase 2 pilot audit process.

Optometrists are being randomly selected for audit for compliance with the board's registration standards: criminal history, professional indemnity insurance, recency of practice and continuing professional development. Optometrists selected for audit will need to provide evidence to support the declarations made in relation to these registration standards when they renew their registration.

AHPRA will notify individuals randomly selected for the audit and provide them with clear instructions about what they will need to do next and what evidence they will need to provide.

Optometrists selected for audit should review this information, including the Optometry specific FAQs published at the 'Audit' section under the 'Registration' tab on the AHPRA website.

If you have submitted your audit information, your application for renewal of registration will remain in the assessment stage whilst the information provided is reviewed.

Your name will remain on the public register at this time. The listing on the National Register of Practitioners is evidence for employers and Medicare that an optometrist is registered, even if their registration expiry date has passed.

Assignment of accreditation function for the optometry profession

The Optometry Council was assigned the role of accreditation authority for the optometry profession by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council prior to the commencement of the National Scheme for an initial period of three years.

Following a review including wide-ranging public consultation, the Board has decided to continue this assignment to the Optometry Council for a period of 5 years from 1 July 2013.

In making the assignment, the Board is conscious of the need to balance the need for flexibility and responsiveness to developments such as the review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme with the need for certainty and continuity for education providers and to enable effective planning and efficient management by the Council. The Board will build in appropriate flexibility into its future arrangements with the Council and will also establish an agreed program of work and key issues to be addressed during the period of the assignment. The Council will continue to provide the Board with regular reports (in addition to reports on accredited programs) on its activities and governance structures in line with the Quality Framework for the Accreditation Function.

Approval of Doctor of Optometry program – University of Melbourne

Following consideration of an accreditation report from OCANZ, the Board has approved the Doctor of Optometry program conducted at the University of Melbourne.

Graduates from this program are qualified for general registration and endorsement for scheduled medicines with the Board.

The Board has approved the program with the same conditions listed in the OCANZ accreditation report. These conditions indicate that an accreditation standard has been substantially met and the imposition of conditions on the approval will ensure the program meets the standard within a reasonable time.

The conditions on the program will be removed by the Board as advised by OCANZ.

Community Reference Group

AHPRA is establishing a Community Reference Group on behalf of all National Boards in the National Scheme. The Community Reference Group will consist of ten members from the community who will provide input and advice on how AHPRA and the National Boards can engage the community more effectively. More information on how to apply to become a member will be available on the AHPRA website in coming weeks, with applications expected to close at the end of January.

Conclusion

The Board publishes a range of information about registration and the Board's expectations of practitioners on its website at www.optometryboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more detail or with questions about your registration please send an [online enquiry form](#) or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

On behalf of the Board I wish all optometrists and all of you a very safe and restful festive season. We look forward to a very busy and productive 2013.

Colin Waldron

Chair

20 December 2012