

Communiqué

The 55th meeting of the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) was held on 29 August 2014 at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in Melbourne. This communiqué outlines the issues and decisions from this meeting as well as other points of interest.

We publish it on our website and email it to a broad range of stakeholders. Please forward it to your colleagues and employees who may be interested.

Introduction of the registration standard for general registration for initial applications

1. Changes to general registration – Addition of notation 1 December 2014

The Board are progressing the implementation of the new registration standard for initial graduates that will come into effect on 1 December 2014 as all of the optometry courses of study from 2013 onwards include therapeutics as part of the undergraduate degree. A letter will be sent to individual optometrists with general registration who are not endorsed for scheduled medicines to inform or remind them of the notation that will be applied to their general registration from the 1 December 2014 that states 'The optometrist is not qualified for endorsement for scheduled medicines and is not able to prescribe Schedule 4 medicines for the treatment of conditions of the eye.' As the introduction of the registration standard is occurring during the renewal period the issuing of registration certificates will be delayed until after the 1 December 2014 for any optometrist who renews their registration prior to that date. The notation will be added to the public register and details will appear on the back of the registration certificate.

2. Approval transitional arrangements for overseas applicants sitting board approved examinations in November 2014

The Board has been made aware of a small group of overseas applicants who will complete board approved examinations with the Optometry Council of Australia and New Zealand (OCANZ) in November 2014, who prior to 1 December 2014 would have been eligible for general registration. The Board has approved transitional arrangements for this group of overseas applicants who lodge an incomplete application prior to the 1 December as they await their final examination results to be eligible for general registration upon submission of evidence of successfully passing the examinations and all other requirements for general registration after the 1 December.

Optometry Regulatory Reference Group

The Optometry Regulatory Reference Group (the Reference Group) is convened by the Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) to:

- provide a forum for discussion of matters relating to the registration of optometrists and to the accreditation of optometry programs under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the national scheme), and
- to foster communication and understanding of the different regulatory and accreditation issues between New Zealand and Australia.

The Reference Group Terms of Reference are published on the Board's website at www.optometryboard.gov.au/About/Optometry-Regulatory-Reference-Group.aspx.

The group met for the third time on 15 August 2014 and discussed a range of issues including entry-level competency standards, future graduate numbers and workforce implications, CPD audit and the introduction of the registration standard for general registration for initial applicants. This provided a valuable opportunity to share information about the activities of the members and to discuss issues of common interest.

Revised explanatory statement – When is it necessary to be registered as an Optometrist?

The Board have reviewed the above statement in response to stakeholder feedback and a revised version will be published shortly on the website. Changes have been made to provide more flexibility for education providers to determine if registration as an optometrist is required for employees whose educational activities do not include students who are treating patients or members of the public.

National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Combined Meeting 2014

The National Board meeting was held to coincide with the annual National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Combined Meeting on the 30 August.

The meeting is held to encourage learning through sharing ideas, innovation and networking about the regulation of health professionals. The goal is to help us to increase our understanding and respond to our wider regulatory and reform environment. The Combined Meeting was attended by members of all of the National Boards, NSW Councils' representatives, the Agency Management Committee, AHPRA staff, government departments, accreditation agencies and regulatory authorities from New Zealand.

Consultation paper for the three year review of NRAS

On Friday 30 August, the consultation paper for the scheduled three year review of the National Scheme was published. The consultation paper is considering the National Scheme as a whole including the work of Boards, AHPRA, accrediting entities and the role of governments. The consultation paper can be accessed [here](#).

Queensland – new arrangements for handling notifications from 1 July 2014

From 1 July 2014, a new law came in to effect in Queensland, the *Health Ombudsman Act 2013*.

All complaints about Queensland health practitioners will be received by the Office of the Health Ombudsman (OHO) who will either manage the matters or refer them to the relevant National Board to manage.

Complaints that were made to AHPRA or National Boards before 1 July 2014 will generally continue to be managed by AHPRA on behalf of National Boards. However, under the new law the Office of the Health Ombudsman can request that a matter be referred to them to be managed. If this were to happen, AHPRA will inform both the notifier and the practitioner who is the subject of the notification.

For information about the Office of the Health Ombudsman please go to www.oho.qld.gov.au or call 133 646 (133 OHO).

Further information

We publish a range of information about registration and our expectations of you as an optometrist on our website at www.optometryboard.gov.au or www.ahpra.gov.au.

For more detail or questions about your registration or renewal please send an online enquiry form or contact AHPRA on 1300 419 495.

Colin Waldron

Chair, Optometry Board of Australia

11 September 2014