

## FAQ: Recency of practice

25 November 2015

### Why must National Boards have a Recency of Practice (RoP) registration standard?

The National Law requires National Boards to develop registration standards about the requirements for Recency of Practice (RoP) for registered health practitioners. Recent practice is an important way that practitioners can maintain their professional skills and knowledge.

### Why is there a requirement for 450 hours of practice in three years in the Recency of Practice standard?

While there is not yet research that shows how much recent practice a health practitioner needs to maintain their skills and knowledge, National Boards have drawn on the research that is available as well as their regulatory experience to set requirements for recent practice. National Boards consider that 450 hours of practice over three years provides an appropriate balance between ensuring that practitioners have undertaken sufficient recent practice to maintain the knowledge and skills to safely practise the profession; and providing reasonable flexibility for situations such as part-time work, study leave and parenting leave.

The following example shows how this requirement could apply:

Year	Practitioner A	Practitioner B	Practitioner C	Practitioner D	Practitioner E	Practitioner F
1	150 hours	100 hours	450 hours	0 hours	50 hours	400 hours
2	150 hours	100 hours	0 hours	0 hours	50 hours	0 hours
3	150 hours	250 hours	0 hours	450 hours	350 hours	50 hours

### Why do I need to have graduated from an approved program of study within the previous 24 months and be applying for registration for the first time to meet the RoP standard?

On the rare occasion, some graduates do not make an application for registration within 24 months of graduating from a Board approved course that leads to a qualification in optometry. During this period the graduate may not have had the opportunity to consolidate the skills and knowledge to practice in the profession safely after a 24 month break from gaining the qualification in optometry that leads to registration as an optometrist. In this situation the Board would review an individual's application on a case by case basis and consider the regulatory options such as a period of supervised practice open to the Board, to support the practitioner and protect the public in the transition to the role of a practicing registered optometrist.

### If I am an overseas graduate why do I have to have successfully completed, within the previous 24 months, a competency assessment or examination approved by the Board?

On the rare occasion, some overseas graduates who successfully complete a competency assessment or examination approved by the Board do not make an application for registration within 24 months of the final examination. In this situation the graduate may not have had the opportunity to consolidate the skills and knowledge to practice in the profession safely in Australia after a 24 month break from completing the

relevant assessments or examinations in optometry that leads to registration as an optometrist. In this situation the Board would review an individual's application on a case by case basis and consider the regulatory options such as a period of supervised practice open to the Board, to support the practitioner and protect the public in the transition to the role of a practicing registered optometrist.

**What do I need to do if I am returning to practice from a break greater than three years because either my registration lapsed or I am returning to general registration from non-practicing registration?**

You need to formulate a return to practice plan for consideration by the Board. Each application is considered on an individual case by case basis.

**Where do I find information on a return to practice plan to submit to the Board?**

The [Supervision guidelines for optometrists](#) contains information to assist you to develop your recency of practice plan. The Board has also developed the following template documents for submission with your application located [here](#) along with the supervision guidelines for optometrists.

- Supervision agreement
- Supervised practice plan
- Supervised practice plan: Attachment B – professional development plan

**What do I need to do if I am changing to a new scope of practice that I do not have recency of practice in?**

You need to formulate a professional development plan for consideration by the Board before commencing practice in the new scope of practice. Each submission is considered on an individual case by case basis.

**Where do I find information on a professional development plan to submit to the Board?**

The [Supervision guidelines for optometrists](#) contains information to assist you to develop your professional development plan. The Board has also developed the following template document for submission located [here](#) along with the supervision guidelines for optometrists.

- Supervised practice plan: Attachment B – professional development plan

As each registrant's submission is considered on an individual case by case basis the Board may request further information from you.

**Now that I have to submit a plan for professional development/recency of practice what should I take into consideration?**

The plan for professional development/recency of practice should take into consideration:

- your specific learning needs, including past education, experience and training, and
- the requirements of the specific position that you are proposing to work in.

**How will my plan for recency of practice/professional development be reviewed by the Board?**

The Board's registration and notification committee will consider your application prior to you recommencing practice. The Board may seek further information if it is not satisfied that the submitted plan for recency of practice/professional development provides sufficient information about the safeguards for the return to practice.

The Board may also decide to formalize the re-entry plan by imposing conditions as indicated in the [recency of practice standard](#). In the event you require a supervisor/s the Board will require your supervisor/s to confirm that you have complied with the recency of practice/professional development plan.

**When will the new standards come into effect?**

The new standards will generally apply from the start of a registration period for simplicity and clarity. Aligning new standards with registration periods helps practitioners, employers and others understand which standard to apply. In some cases, the new standards are very similar to the old standards and there

are very few if any changes that practitioners will need to make. This means it is possible to start the new standards sooner. In other cases, e.g. some of the recency of practice registration standards, the changes are more significant so practitioners will have more time to prepare and meet the new requirements.

New RoP standards will commence on:

1. 1 December 2015 for professions where the requirements have not changed significantly: chiropractic, dental, optometry, osteopathy and pharmacy
2. 1 October 2016 for medicine, and
3. 1 December 2016 for medical radiation practice, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology. These professions have introduced more significant changes to their RoP requirements.

Practitioners applying for or renewing their registration after these dates will need to meet the new RoP standards.

The new PII standards will commence:

4. in early 2016 (TBC) for chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation practice, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy and podiatry
5. on 1 June 2016 for nursing and midwifery.

### **Audit of registration standard requirements**

If you are selected for audit, you will be audited against the registration standard that was in effect during the audit period. For example, if you are audited in February 2016 for CPD for the period 1 December 2014 to 30 November 2015, the standard that you will be audited against is the standard that was in effect at that time, not the new standard that started after 30 November 2015.

### **Evidence for the revised registration standards**

National Boards aim to draw on the best available evidence to inform their regulatory work. AHPRA worked with National Boards to commission research about continuing professional development and recency of practice to ensure that the revised registration standards were as evidence-based as possible. In addition, National Boards drew on their regulatory experience with the previous registration standards and benchmarking with other comparable regulators. The literature on CPD and RoP is still developing and doesn't yet provide definitive answers to some issues, such as the ideal amount and type of CPD that health practitioners should do. However, where the literature does suggest some characteristics of effective CPD, National Boards have aimed to include these in their standards. The Boards will continue to monitor and respond to developments in the literature in future reviews.