

Return to practice policy | 2024

Purpose

To identify the timeframes on recency in practice, the information the Council may consider when assessing applications from people wishing to return to practice and potential requirements that Council may propose to use to enable a safe return to practice.

Background

Under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act), the Osteopathic Council is charged with providing for mechanisms to ensure that osteopaths (practitioners) are competent and fit to practise when they apply for registration and practising certificates.

Definitions

Recency of Practice is considered to include the factors described in s27(1)(d) and s27(1)(f) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003; namely:

- The date at which the applicant last held an annual practising certificate of a kind sought by the application; and,
- The date at which the applicant last lawfully practised the profession to which the application relates

While practice outside of New Zealand is not directly considered in this definition, it may serve to mitigate concerns regarding recency of practice.

Registration applications relate to the persons qualifications and fitness for registration as described in section 17 of the HPCA Act.

Practising certificate applications relate to competence to practise within a scope/s of practice as described in sections 26 - 32 of the HPCA Act.

Rationale

The HPCA Act requires that all practitioners must hold a current Annual Practising Certificate (APC) to ensure they are competent and fit to practise in order to protect the health and safety of the public. If an applicant has not held an APC of a kind sought by the application within 3 years immediately preceding the date of the application, section 27(1) and (2) require that the application is further considered.

The Registrar may be able to consider and determine the application under a delegation given to them by the Council, or the application may need to be submitted to the Council for its consideration. The Council is charged with ascertaining the competence of practitioners wishing to return to practice after a period away from work, to ensure their competence has been maintained.

Up to three years without recency of practice

Restrictions on issuing an APC under this policy would not normally apply where a practitioner has held an annual practising certificate of a kind sought by the application and lawfully practised the profession to which the application relates within the 3 years immediately preceding the date of the application.

Restrictions may still be considered under other sections of the Act, such as where there may be concerns that a practitioner has failed to maintain the required standard of competence and/or may be unable to perform the functions required of their profession because of some mental or physical condition.

Practitioners are required to declare that they have met continuing competency requirements, such as maintaining professional development expectations.

Over three years without recency of practice

Where an applicant has not held an annual practising certificate of a kind sought by the application or has not lawfully practised the profession to which the application relates within three years immediately preceding the application, the Council will generally seek further information relating to their practice. The Council may also consider additional requirements, such as including or varying conditions in the health practitioner's scope of practice, as part of the application process.

The following tables provide guidelines regarding the information sought and potential requirements at varying levels of recency of practice, but precise requirements would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Three to five years without recency of practice

Information	Potential requirements
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Submit a detailed curriculum vitae which covers the periods prior to and after practising or completion of qualification.• Provide a chronology of events since last practised.• Provide evidence and description of last recency of practice.• Provide letter or recommendation from practitioners who can attest to your practice.• Provide evidence of any courses of study completed after last recency of practice.• A narrative which describes what you believe would facilitate your safe return to practice.• Additional information which may be considered on a case-by-case bases.	<p>One or more of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Informal support offered by working in a group practice environment• Formal programme of support offered by an employer or clinical colleagues• Learning needs analysis and a subsequent programme of study.• Whole or part of the Competent Authority Pathway Programme (CAPP)• A period of supervised practice (indirect or direct) and reporting against the Osteopathic Practice Competencies• Successfully completing a workplace-based clinical assessment

Five to ten years without recency of practice

Information	Potential requirements
As for three to five years above.	As in three to five – additionally, one or more of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Structured clinical observation sessions• A clinical skills assessment and/or theory assessment prior to starting practice• Formal 'Return to Practice' programme offered by a tertiary education provider.• Bespoke programme prescribed by Council and provided by a tertiary education provider

More than ten years

Information	Potential requirements
As for three to five years above.	<p>For applicants where more than ten years has elapsed between the application and when they last held an APC and/or practised the relevant profession, there are likely to be significant requirements for a return to practice. This may be mitigated by recent overseas practice in a comparable role to the kind sought by the application.</p> <p>Potential requirements include one or more of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formal assessment of competence and/or learning requirements by tertiary education provider.• Completion of the OCNZ Competent Authority Pathway Programme• Completion of all or parts of a registerable qualification in osteopathy.