



Osteopathic Practice Competencies

January 2023



Introduction

The Osteopathic Council New Zealand (“the Council”) registers osteopaths and prescribes the qualifications and standards of ongoing competence required for osteopathic practice in New Zealand. These competencies should be read as an integrated whole.

The Council was established by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (“the Act”). The principal purpose of this Act is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing mechanisms to ensure that health practitioners are competent and fit to practise their profession.

Only osteopaths who are registered with the Osteopathic Council and hold a current practising certificate may use the title of osteopath and legally practise osteopathy in New Zealand.

Acknowledgement

The Osteopathic Council New Zealand acknowledges the kind agreement of the General Osteopathic Council (UK) to incorporate its themes as the domains in this document.

Competencies review and development process

Stage 1: Analysis of international and national trends

International osteopathic practice standards and regulatory frameworks, and the standards and frameworks of a range of relevant health professions in New Zealand, were analysed to identify current trends applicable to osteopathic registration in New Zealand.

Osteopathic standards: International search

The international search covered North America, Europe, the UK and Australia.^(1, 2, 3, 4) Regulatory control of osteopathic practice varies widely. The US state licensing authorities do not appear to have regulatory practice frameworks, but the American Osteopathic Association's Code of Ethics has a degree of overlap with other regulatory frameworks.⁽¹⁾ In Canada, osteopathy is not yet a regulated profession.

In response to the differences in osteopathic education in Europe, the World Health Organisation has taken a strategic role in encouraging standardisation.⁽⁴⁾ This has influenced a number of European countries to collaborate in the development of a framework for osteopathic education.⁽⁵⁾ This European framework identifies a range of skills and knowledge necessary for osteopathic practice but does not form a regulatory framework.

Standards of relevant professions: National search

The search of other New Zealand health professions' regulatory frameworks provided a general context of practice standards. The search included occupational therapy, oral health, physiotherapy, nursing, medicine and pharmacy.^(6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11) Relevant literature was also included.⁽¹²⁾

Analysis

The wide variation across international documents precluded a thematic analysis. However, the frameworks tended to be lengthy, detailed and multi-layered. The New Zealand frameworks showed a degree of consistency in the aspects of practice addressed, although there was variation in the way frameworks were organised. A range of terms were used but there was a trend towards the term 'competencies'.

Stage 2: Review of current OCNZ framework

The main finding arising from the review of the current OCNZ framework was that it was detailed, multi-layered and complex. It was considered beneficial to use a simpler, higher-level and more strategic approach. This will also assist in ‘future-proofing’ the framework by providing a degree of flexibility needed to address continuing changes in the health and professional contexts, while still defining the required minimum or threshold competence.

The key points considered were:

- shifting to the general use of ‘competencies’ rather than ‘capabilities’
- reducing the multi-layered approach by changing to two layers: domain and competencies
- simplifying the framework by using a less detailed approach
- using the UK General Osteopathic Council’s themes as the main organising framework.⁽³⁾
- highlighting Te Tiriti o Waitangi responsibilities in a separate domain
- strengthening the focus on culture, cultural safety and diversity

Stage 3: Development of draft practice competencies

The current OCNZ framework was revised to reflect the key points arising from Stage 2. The intent and wording of the ‘elements’ in the current framework were retained wherever possible, while reducing repetition, simplifying the overall structure and shifting to a higher-level approach.

Stage 4: Consultation

The OCNZ consultation process sought views from the profession and relevant stakeholders through both remote presentations and a written submission process.

There was overall support for the draft domains and competencies. Respondents supported the simplification, the shift from capabilities to competencies and that these were at a high level.

Feedback suggested competencies were explained clearly and could be used in designing education programmes. There was some division over whether wording should state absolute requirements or should be aspirational and encourage development, however the Council considered more enabling language was appropriate.

Osteopathic scope of practice

The Osteopathic Council has a responsibility under the Act to specify scopes of practice for osteopathic practice. The primary reference for the osteopathic scope of practice is the most recent notice describing this in the New Zealand Gazette. The full scope of practice is also available on the Osteopathic Council website.

Osteopaths are primary healthcare practitioners who provide holistic, person-centred care across the lifespan, utilizing evidence-based approaches for both the management of specific conditions and for promoting overall wellbeing. Osteopaths treat people and conceptualise health and disease within a broad holistic bio-psycho-social and environmental context.

Osteopathy is a form of manual therapy informed by osteopathic principles and incorporating broad diagnostic competencies. Although osteopathic practice is often defined by osteopathic manual treatment (OMT), the practice of osteopathy is not limited to a structural diagnosis and OMT.

Competencies

This document presents the minimum or threshold competencies for osteopathic practice in New Zealand.

The competencies are organised in five domains:

1. Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership responsibilities
2. Communication and patient partnership
3. Knowledge, skills and performance
4. Safety and quality in practice
5. Professionalism

Domain 1: Te Tiriti o Waitangi partnership responsibilities

Competencies

- 1.1** Understands the responsibilities of tangata whenua and tangata Tiriti under te Tiriti o Waitangi and demonstrates a commitment to meeting these responsibilities in the provision of health services
- 1.2** Understands the factors giving rise to the specific health needs of Māori and applies professional knowledge to work for equitable health outcomes
- 1.3** Understands Māori models of health, health promotion and health practices
- 1.4** Ensures the development of working relationships with key Māori stakeholders, where appropriate

Domain 2: Communication and patient partnership

Competencies

- 2.1** Considers socio-cultural factors in communication, recognises diversity and practises in an inclusive and culturally safe manner
- 2.2** Communicates clearly and ensures patient and/or care-giver comprehension
- 2.3** Ensures that patients are appropriately informed about the osteopathic clinical encounter, and that appropriate informed consent is gained for all aspects of care
- 2.4** Demonstrates a commitment to working in partnership with patients and ensures their goals and concerns are identified and integrated into the clinical analysis and treatment plan

Domain 3: Knowledge, skills, and performance

Competencies

- 3.1** Recognises and acts within the scope of osteopathic practice and personal osteopathic capability
- 3.2** Understands and appropriately employs and adapts a range of osteopathic knowledge, skills and techniques in practice
- 3.3** Demonstrates an appropriate level of clinical science knowledge and clinical reasoning, including diagnostic processes, patient management and prognosis
- 3.4** Maintains an appropriate level of recordkeeping, including communication with other health services or agencies where required, and manages records in accordance with relevant legislation.
- 3.5** Uses reputable evidence to inform practice
- 3.6** Maintains a commitment to the principles of health education, disease prevention, rehabilitation and amelioration of pain
- 3.7** Monitors and critically reflects on practice, and maintains professional currency and competence through appropriate educational and research strategies

Domain 4: Safety and quality in practice

Competencies

- 4.1** Acts with integrity and ensures the provision of care and services in a safe, legal, ethical, sustainable and culturally safe way
- 4.2** Demonstrates a professional commitment towards patient and/or care-giver trust, confidentiality, dignity and safety, and patient-oriented care
- 4.3** Maintains an appropriate physical environment for safe provision of services and for patient privacy, comfort and confidentiality
- 4.4** Ensures care of self and others engaged in provision of services
- 4.5** Manages risk effectively and responsibly in a way that minimises impact on all concerned
- 4.6** Ensures awareness of costs associated with healthcare, and the principles of efficient and equitable allocation and use of finite resources
- 4.7** Provides for continuing professional learning for self and employees

Domain 5: Professionalism

Competencies

- 5.1** Practises as part of a network of osteopaths and other providers through respectful, effective and efficient communication, to provide best patient care
- 5.2** Maintains a multidisciplinary approach through referral and co-management, and intra and inter-professional education
- 5.3** Maintains a strong understanding and critical review of osteopathic philosophy and professional ethos and its place in general healthcare systems
- 5.4** Maintains an awareness of, and adherence to, regulatory and legal requirements and engages appropriately with regulatory, governmental, and other relevant agencies

References

- (1) American Osteopathic Association (AOA), *Code of Ethics*, AOA, Chicago, 2016
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- (3) General Osteopathic Council (UKGOC), *Osteopathic Practice Standards*, UKGOC, London, 2012
- (4) Osteopathy Board, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (OBAHPRA), *Capabilities for Osteopathic Practice*, OBAHPRA, Melbourne, 2019
- (5) World Health Organisation (WHO), *Benchmarks for Training in Osteopathy*, WHO, Geneva, 2010
- (6) Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ), *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice for Occupational Therapists*, OTBNZ, Wellington, n.d.
- (7) Dental Council New Zealand (DCNZ), *Standards Framework for Oral Health Practitioners*, DCNZ, Wellington, n.d.
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- (9) Nursing Council of New Zealand (NCNZ), *Competencies for Registered Nurses*, NCNZ, Wellington, 2007.
- (10) Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ), *Good Medical Practice*, MCNZ, Wellington, 2021.
- (11) Pharmacy Council of New Zealand, *Competence Standards for the Pharmacy Profession*, Wellington, 2015.
- (12) Came H, Kidd J, Heke D & McCreanor T, Te Tiriti o Waitangi compliance in regulated health practitioner competency documents, *New Zealand Medical Journal*, 2021, 134 (1535), 35-43.