

FAQ - Recency of practice

Recency of practice refers to how recently you have practiced your profession, as well as the nature and extent of that practice.

Why is there a recency of practice registration standard?

In accordance with the National Law, the Board may decide that an individual is not a suitable person to hold general registration in the occupational therapy profession if the nature, extent, period and recency of any previous practice of the profession is not sufficient to meet the [Board's recency of practice registration standard](#).

When a practitioner renews their registration, they must also make a declaration that they have met the requirements set out in the recency of practice registration standard.

This registration standard applies to everyone applying for initial registration or renewal of registration. It does not apply to students or practitioners who have non-practising registration.

What are the Board's recency of practice requirements?

The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board) requires practitioners maintain competence to practice.

The Board requires that a minimum of six months full time equivalent (FTE) occupational therapy practice has been undertaken during the five-year period prior to commencement of the registration period.

Practitioners returning to practice following a break longer than five years are required to have completed 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the 12 months before applying for registration, regardless of the other requirements required for re-entry.

How many hours per week is full-time equivalent (FTE)?

Thirty hours per week or more is considered full-time by the Board.

How is six months full-time equivalent (FTE) practice in previous five years calculated?

The Board considers 30 hours per week to be full-time equivalent. Based on this, six months full-time practice in the previous five years would be equal to 720 hours of practice. Full-time equivalent hours can also be accumulated through part-time work.

How does recency of practice apply if you are not in a clinical role? For example, is teaching or research considered 'practice'?

The Board's definition of 'practice' is broad and inclusive. Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which you use your skills and knowledge as a health practitioner in your profession. Practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes working in a direct, non-clinical relationship with clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory,

regulatory, or policy development roles, and any other roles, that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the profession and/or use their professional skills. Based on this definition, there are a number of different ways in which you may be able to demonstrate your competency to practise in your profession.

What should I do if I am planning to take a break from practice?

Practitioners planning a break from practice, should familiarise themselves with the Board's [Recency of practice registration standard](#).

The standard provides important information which will allow you to plan for your return to practice by ensuring you maintain your recency of practice, regardless of your period of absence.

If you are planning a break from practice, but anticipate returning to occupational therapy practice at some point in the future, it is important that you consider the following questions:

- Do I want to return to practice?
- How long will my absence from practice be?
- How quickly will I want to return to practice?
- Can I meet the continuing professional development requirements while I'm taking a break?
- Whether you're taking parental leave, or intending to travel, it's a good idea to plan ahead for an absence.

Where can I get more advice on returning to practice?

If you are a practitioner re-entering the workforce your AHPRA case officers, or the [AHPRA Customer Service Team](#) assist you to navigate the return to work process, understand the Board's expectations in relation to supervised practice or to seek advice when planning a break from practice.

I will be working overseas. Should I keep my general registration current in Australia?

Practising occupational therapy overseas can count for the purposes of meeting the Board's recency of practice and CPD requirements if you keep detailed records.

Evidence could include certificates of service from employers that record details of hours (part-time or full-time).

If you decide to maintain your general registration you are expected to meet all the Board's [registration standards](#).

As an alternative, you might want to consider switching to non-practising registration, which has a lower fee and no CPD or PII requirements. This is a better option than letting your registration in Australia lapse.

I'm taking maternity/parental leave. What should I do to keep my registration and practice current?

If you decide to maintain your general registration during your period of maternity or parental leave, you will need to ensure you meet all the Board's [registration standards](#), including the requirement to complete 30 hours of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) per year.

You may wish to consider applying in advance for a partial exemption from the CPD requirement by submitting a written request to AHPRA before the end of the current registration period (30 November each year)

The Board's position is that even while you are not working, it is reasonable and not overly burdensome to complete a minimum of 12 hours of CPD for the registration period.

You can refer to the [partial exemptions guidance document](#) for further information.

As an alternative, you might want to consider switching to non-practising registration, which has a lower fee and no CPD or PII requirements.

For periods of absence longer than five years, you will need to be mindful of the Board's requirements as set out in the [Board's recency of practice registration standard](#).

What happens if I don't meet the Board's recency of practice requirements?

The Board's assessment of applications and renewals that do not meet the recency of practice requirement will take into account a range of items. The Board may decide, based on the evidence and circumstances, to:

- grant or renew general registration
- grant general registration, but require the completion of a period of supervised practice in addition to other conditions to ensure competency, or
- grant provisional registration to complete supervised practice, noting that this option will typically be reserved for applicants who have had extensive breaks from practice of between 10 and 20 years.

How do I apply for registration with the Board when I want to return to practice

If you currently hold non-practising registration, you can submit an application for [general registration as an occupational therapist for current non-practising registrants \(AGNP-96\)](#).

If you do not currently hold registration you can submit an application for [general registration as an occupational therapist \(AGEN-96\)](#).

You must also provide:

- the [Recency of Practice – Supplementary Information Form](#)
- a [Supervision agreement](#)
- a [Supervised practice plan](#), and
- a [Curriculum Vitae \(CV\)](#), certified true and correct, that outlines amongst other things the extent of your experience, any positions held, the time employed within any position, the hours practised within any position, and any academic qualifications.

If the Board decides that a period of supervised practice is required, does the Board help me find a supervisor?

It is the responsibility of the individual to seek their own supervision arrangements, including finding an appropriate supervisor. If you require further guidance on the process please contact the [AHPRA Customer Service Team](#).

The supervisee and proposed supervisor should also ensure that they are familiar with the [Supervision guidelines for occupational therapy](#).

I want to be/I am a supervisor. What do I need to do?

To be a supervisor you must be a suitably qualified and experienced occupational therapist with general registration who will assess, monitor and report about the performance of the practitioner under supervision to the Board. Supervisors will preferably have more than two years experience as an occupational therapist. Supervisors should not themselves be subject to Board-related supervisory arrangements and their registration should not be subject to conditions or undertakings that would affect their ability to effectively supervise the practitioner.

The Board does not consider that it is overly burdensome for a practitioner to undertake the role of being a supervisor. Instead, it is expected that the role of a supervisor, would be no different from a standard mentor relationship that would exist in most work environments for new employees.

A supervisor must formally consent to act as a supervisor and must be approved by the Board.

If you are approved as a supervisor, it is your responsibility to assess, monitor and report about the performance of a practitioner undertaking supervised practice to the Board.

Where can I get more advice on supervising someone returning to practice

If you are a supervisor supporting a practitioner to re-enter the workforce, the [AHPRA Customer Service Team](#) can help you understand the Board's expectations in relation to supervised practice.

Does my supervisor have to be an Occupational Therapist

The Board may consider other registered health practitioners as supervisors in exceptional circumstances. If you are requesting that the Board consider other health practitioners as your proposed supervisor, this should be accompanied with an explanation for this request to assist the Board in making an informed decision for the proposed supervision arrangement.

How does the Board approve my supervisor?

You and the proposed supervisor must provide the following to the Board.

- a [signed supervision agreement](#), which is available, and
- any other supporting documentation, such as your registration application, position description, fees, completion of an orientation to the Australia health care system report (if your qualification was obtained outside of Australia).

What do I need to submit prior to practice or within two weeks of commencement of practice?

If you haven't already, you and your approved supervisor must provide a supervised practice plan that sets out the objectives, levels, type and amount of supervision proposed and how supervision is to occur. A supervised practice plan template and guidance on how to complete a supervised practice plan is available on the [Board's website](#).

The Board may exercise its discretion in requiring different levels of supervision to those proposed in the supervised practice plan and make other amendments to the plan as it sees fit.

I currently hold non-practising registration. How long will it take to process a request for renewal of registration?

The main cause for delay in processing applications is when the information provided by an applicant is incomplete. To facilitate the quick processing of applications, applicants are encouraged to lodge their application early and to thoroughly check their application to ensure that they have provided full and complete information.

All things being considered and with a straightforward application, applicants would normally expect applications to be processed within a month although this may be longer during peak periods (for example, during the annual renewal period).