

Fact sheet: Re-entry to practice for occupational therapists

Effective from: 24 September 2017

This fact sheet provides supplementary information about how to meet the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia's (the Board's) [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#). You are expected to understand the requirements together with the registration standard for recency of practice.

The public have a right to expect that occupational therapists will provide competent and up-to-date services. The Board's requirements in relation to recency of practice will help you maintain your competency to provide safe and effective health services following a break in practice.

This fact sheet also provides information for people who hold, or have previously held, registration as an occupational therapist in Australia, who are seeking general registration but do not meet the [recency of practice registration standard](#), including those who:

- have had a lapse in practice of five years or more
- have held non-practising registration for five or more years, or
- are no longer on the [Register of practitioners](#).

This fact sheet does not apply to recent graduates from [Board approved programs of study](#) in Australia who are applying for registration for the first time, or who currently hold student registration.

Regulatory principles

The Board has endorsed a set of [regulatory principles](#), which inform the Board's approach to regulatory decision making. In relation to recency of practice, the following principles apply.

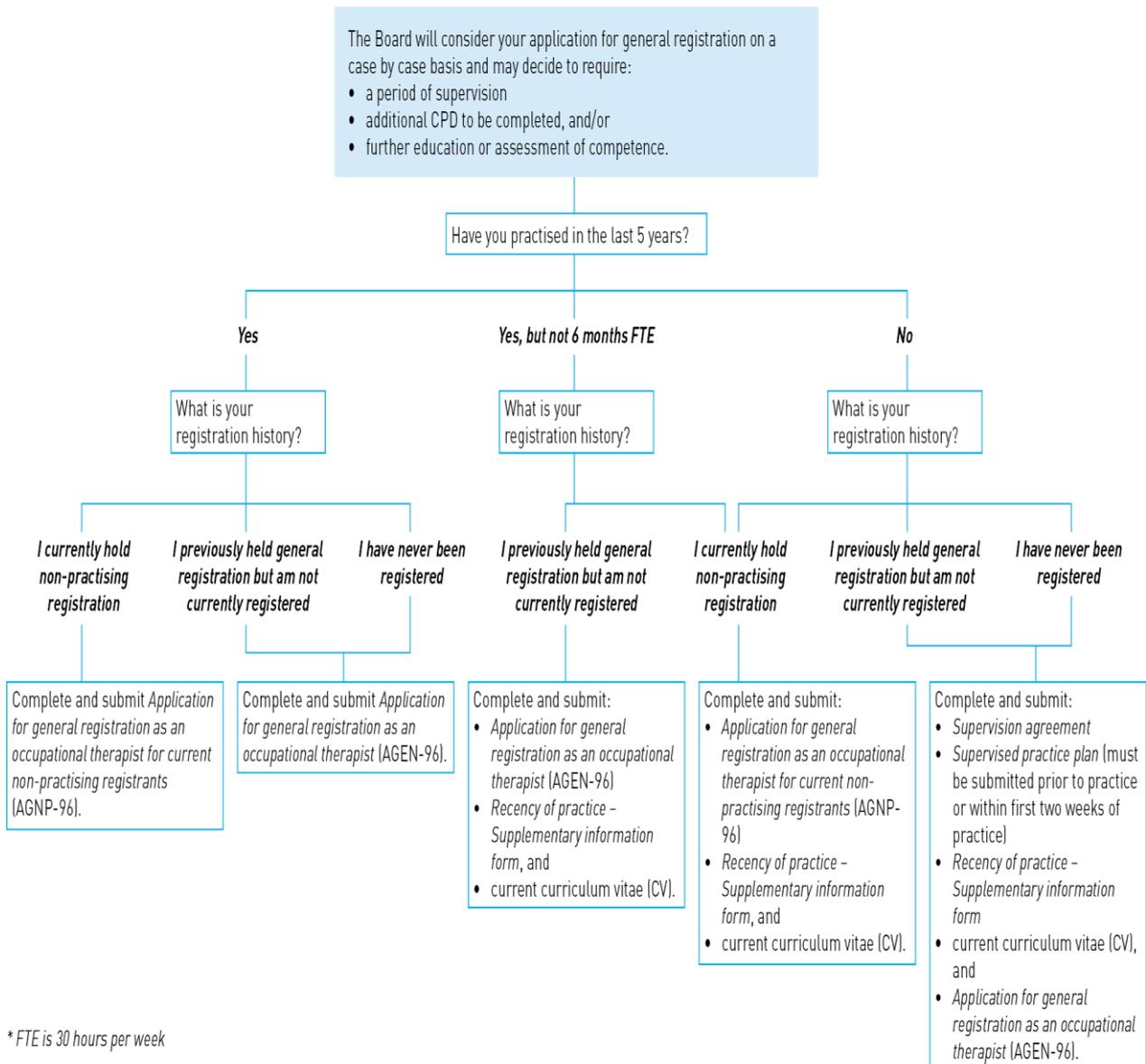
- The general principle is that the longer you have been away from practice the greater the potential risk to the public.
- The Board's primary consideration is the protection of the public.
- Protecting the safety of the public requires informed decision-making about the extent of an individual's time away from clinical practice and the extent to which that is relevant to their ability to practise. To do this, the Board:
 - identifies the risks that it is required to respond to
 - assesses the likelihood and possible consequences of the risks, and
 - responds in a way that manages risks proportionately so the Board can adequately protect the public.
- The Board's response to risk considers the need to uphold professional standards and maintain public confidence in the occupational therapy profession.
- The Board uses the minimum regulatory force necessary to manage the risk.

Assessment for applicants seeking general registration as an occupational therapist

The Board's [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#) requires that a minimum of six months full-time equivalent occupational therapy practice has been undertaken during the five-year period immediately prior to commencement of the registration period.

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.

The diagram below indicates which form and the supporting documentation you are required to submit when returning from a break in practice:



Where you have not met the requirements of the [Registration standard: Recency of practice](#), the Board may consider the following factors in assessing your application for [general registration](#).

If you are unsure whether you meet the Board's standard, it is helpful to provide as much additional evidence as possible so that your AHPRA case officer can make an informed assessment of your recency of practice.

Consideration	Examples of evidence that may be submitted
Practice history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum Vitae (CV) certified true and correct, that outlines the extent your experience, any positions held, the time employed within any position held, the hours employed within each position, and any academic qualifications. • Statements of service from an employer that indicates the period of service, the number of hours employed and the capacity in which you were employed. • Position descriptions. <p>Any other documents or material that describes the type of practice you have been involved in and the time you have spent in practice.</p>
Period of absence	Length and time away from practice should be noted on the submitted CV.
Activities related to the practice of occupational therapy undertaken in the previous five years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statement of activities and alignment to the competency standards for occupational therapy practice. <p>Please note: The Board's advice on When should an occupational therapist be registered.</p>
Continuing Professional Development (CPD) completed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPD portfolio including documentation of how the activity relates to your occupational therapy practice. • Certificates of completion, attainment or attendance. <p>Notes from non-formal CPD activities.</p>
Any additional study undertaken or qualifications obtained during the period of absence from practice	Evidence of postgraduate or vocational training programs or qualifications.
Return practice setting	Evidence of employment offer.

Your application will only be considered if it has been submitted:

- on the correct form
- with correct payment of both the application fee and registration fee, and
- with all relevant supporting documentation (correctly certified and translated if required).

CPD requirements and returning to practice

If you have returned to practice after an absence of five or more years you will be required to complete a minimum of 30 hours continuing professional development as set out in the [Registration standard: Continuing professional development \(CPD\)](#).

This must be completed in the 12-month period prior to applying for registration.

If you have not completed the required CPD before applying to re-enter, the Board reserves the discretion to impose a condition on your registration requiring you to complete CPD in addition to the required 30 hours for General registrants).

Further information on CPD can be found [here](#).

Supervised practice and supervision requirements

If you do not meet the Board's recency of practice requirements you may be required to undertake a minimum three (3) month period of supervised practice in accordance with the Board's [Supervision guidelines supervised practice](#).

The Board will determine the level of supervision required on a case-by-case basis. Supervision requirements will be tailored to the purpose of the supervision, the practitioner's circumstances, practice setting, experience and learning needs. The commencement level of supervision will usually be set out as a condition of your registration that has been imposed by the Board.

Supervision is likely to encompass a minimum of 360 hours, or three (3) months full-time equivalent of supervised practice to be completed at different supervision levels as determined by the Board. Typically, you will be required to progress through each of the following levels of supervision:

- **Level 1 direct supervision:** your supervisor must be physically present at the workplace and be providing direct supervision when you are providing occupational therapy services
- **Level 2 indirect supervision:** your supervisor must be physically present at the workplace for the majority of the time when you are providing occupational therapy services. When the supervisor is not physically present they must always be accessible by phone or other means of communication.
- **Level 3 remote supervision:** you are permitted to work independently provided your supervisor is readily contactable by phone or other means of telecommunication.

In most cases, supervision is likely to commence at a higher level of supervision (Level 1) and progress to a lower level of supervision (Level 3) following the submission of an acceptable supervisor report.

Completing a period of supervision requires you and your supervisor to provide reports to the Board during the period of supervised practice to ensure adequate progression. A report is required when you have completed the required hours for supervision for each level of supervision, and the supervisor considers that you are ready to progress to the next level of supervision.

It is expected that your supervision reports clearly articulate and reflect on your progress against your supervised practice plan. Supervision reports must be submitted at intervals agreed to in the supervised practice plan

Further information on the required content of a supervision report can be found in the [Supervisor's Report Template](#).

Upon successful completion of supervised practice, you can apply to have conditions removed from your registration by submitting an [Application for review of conditions or undertakings by an occupational therapist – ARCD-96](#).

Examples

Generally, the longer you have been absent from practice, the longer your period of supervision will be, particularly at those levels that require more direct supervision, for example:

- If you are just short of meeting the recency of practice requirement, you may be required to commence supervision at Level 2 for 12–30 hours and then complete a further 180 hours at Level 3 supervision.
- If you have 10 years absence from practice, but can demonstrate more than five years of practice before your break, you may be required to commence supervision at Level 1 for 6 hours, Level 2 for 90 hours and then Level 3 for 300 hours.

- If you have had a 10–20 year absence from practice, and less than 2 years experience before your break, you may be required to commence supervision at Level 1 for 20 hours, Level 2 for 120 hours and 360 hours at Level 3.

The above periods of supervised practice are indicative only, and each application is considered on a case-by-case basis.

Advice for supervisors

The Board's [Supervision guidelines for occupational therapy](#) is an important reference tool for supervisors.

Supervisors supporting a practitioner to return to practice are required to be approved by the Board and must consent to act as your supervisor.

It is expected that a proposed supervisor:

- holds general registration and is not subject to any conditions or undertakings, and
- has at least two years experience as an occupational therapist.

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 supervisory relationship that would exist in most work environments for new employees.

The Board approves supervisors following the submission of:

- [a signed supervision agreement](#), and
- any other supporting documentation.

In exceptional circumstances, the Board may approve other registered health practitioners as supervisors. In these cases an explanation for this request would need to be provided to the Board.

You cannot commence practice until your application for registration and supervisory arrangements are approved by the Board.

Prior to practice, or within two weeks of commencing practice, you and your approved supervisor must provide:

- a supervised practice plan setting out the objectives, levels, type and amount of supervision proposed and how supervision is to occur. A template supervised practice plan and guidance on how to complete a supervised practice plan is [available on the Board's website](#).

Assessment for persons who have not practised for a period of ten years or more

In some cases, the Board may require you to undertake:

- an assessment or examination of competence
- further education by completing a Board approved program of study or CPD, and/or
- a period of supervised practice while holding provisional registration.

Whether you are required to undertake any of the above will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

Planning a break from practice

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?

The Board's video presentation, [Career breaks and recency of practice - registration as an occupational therapist](#), provides important information to assist you in planning a break from practice.

Additional resources

- [Recency of Practice Registration standard](#).
- [Continuing Professional Development Registration standard](#).
- [Return to Practice Frequently Asked Questions](#).
- [Supervision guidelines for occupational therapy](#).
- [Supervision agreements, plans and report templates](#).
- [Application for general registration as an occupational therapist](#).
- [Application for review of conditions or undertakings by an occupational therapist](#).
- [Career breaks and recency of practice webinar](#).

Definitions

Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a health practitioner in their profession. For the purposes of the recency of practice registration standard, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge 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.

Recency of practice means that a health practitioner has maintained recent practice in the profession since qualifying or obtaining registration.

Supervisor means a suitably qualified and experienced occupational therapist with general registration will assess, monitor and report about the performance of a practitioner undertaking supervised practice to the Board. It is preferred that supervisors 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 impact on their ability to effectively supervise the practitioner (supervisee).

Supervisee means an occupational therapist holding limited registration or registration with conditions, or who has entered into an undertaking that requires supervision, who is practising under the oversight and direction of a supervisor to meet the objectives of a supervised practice plan.

Supervision agreement means a written agreement between the supervisor and supervisee that is submitted to the Board. The supervision agreement identifies the supervisor/s and the supervisee, the place of practice and outlines the agreed responsibilities of all parties.

Supervised practice plan means a plan that is agreed between the Board, the supervisor and the supervisee that sets out the objectives for, levels, type and amount of supervision required and how the supervision is to occur.

Supervision report means a document submitted in the format approved by the Board at intervals agreed in the supervised practice plan that details progress against the supervised practice plan. Additional supervision reports may be submitted at any time and are mandated if there are changes proposed to the supervised practice plan or if there are concerns about the supervisee.