



Information for osteopaths

Satisfying recency of practice and returning to practice requirements

November 2017

Background

Osteopaths may have a period of absence from practising for a range of reasons.

Osteopaths who seek to return to practice after an absence are required to comply with the requirements of the Osteopathy Board of Australia's (the Board) [Recency of practice registration standard](#) and the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

This information sheet supports the Board's *Recency of practice registration standard* and provides further information to practitioners returning to practice after an absence.

Osteopaths who have been undertaking some practice, but who have not undertaken enough hours in their main domain of practice in the required period, may still not satisfy recency of practice requirements. This may apply to an osteopath wishing to change domains, for example, from the academic domain where they have sufficient hours to satisfy the registration standard, to the clinical domain, where they have not undertaken 450 hours of clinical practice in the past three years.

The Board's role, as defined in the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), includes protecting the public through the registration and regulation of osteopaths. The Board must be satisfied that osteopaths, including those wanting to return to practice after a period of absence, have the competence to practise safely.

In this document, any reference to 'return to practice' or 're-entry to practice' also includes 'satisfying recency of practice'.

Scope

This information sheet should be read by practitioners who have *not practised for at least 450 hours in the previous three years in their current domain of practice* and who wish to return to practice, whether or not they are already registered.

Procedure and requirements

An osteopath applying for general registration must demonstrate that they are qualified, suitable and eligible for registration, including that he or she:

1. is a suitable person for registration. That is, the practitioner does not have an impairment, a criminal history or professional disciplinary history that may impact or is relevant to his or her ability to practise
2. meets the *Recency of practice registration standard*
3. will meet the *Continuing professional development registration standard* during the period of registration
4. will meet the *Professional indemnity insurance registration standard*, and

5. will meet any other registration standard or requirement of the Board.

When the Board considers an application for registration and where the applicant has been absent from practice for more than three years (or has undertaken less than 450 hours of practice in their current domain of practice in the past three years), the Board will take the following factors into consideration:

- length of absence from practice
- level of experience prior to the absence from practice
- any continuing professional development, education or professional contact maintained during the absence
- the reason for absence,
- other activities undertaken during absence related to osteopathy,
- practice in another domain of osteopathy practice.

Plan for professional development and re-entry to practice

In accordance with the Board's *Recency of practice registration standard*, practitioners who are returning to practice after an absence of three years or more, or have not undertaken 450 hours of practice in their current domain of practice in the previous three years, may be required by the Board to:

- undertake an assessment of their competency to practise,
- practise under supervision,
- undertake specified amounts or types of continuing professional development (CPD) before returning to practice,
- undertake any other activity specified by the Board.

The purpose of a re-entry plan is to ensure that the practitioner meets the requirements for competent osteopathic practice as set out in the [Capabilities for osteopathic practice](#) and is returning to safe practice with appropriate safeguards in place. This is for the safety of both patients and the practitioner.

The plan for professional development and re-entry to practice will be different for each practitioner. It should be tailored to the practitioner's particular circumstances and their individual learning needs.

Assistance in developing a plan for professional development and for re-entry to practice may be obtained from:

- professional associations
- prospective or past supervisors
- prospective employers/ colleagues and mentors.

The plan for professional development and re-entry to practice should take into consideration:

1. the practitioner's specific learning needs, including past education, experience and training, and
2. the requirements of the specific position that the practitioner is proposing to work in.

A plan for professional development and re-entry to practice should:

- define the terms of an agreement between a proposed supervisor and the practitioner
- identify if there is a pre-existing business or personal relationship with the supervisor
- state the previous field of practice and the intended field of practice
- identify any gaps in knowledge and skills
- identify any training or education requirements that will be undertaken to meet learning requirements
- articulate goals, expected outcomes and clear timeframes for achievement of goals
- propose the level of supervision, mentoring or peer review that may be required for a safe return to practice

- allocate time for regular formal feedback or performance reviews by the proposed supervisor, with this feedback or review recorded and signed by the supervisor and the practitioner
- provide the anticipated completion date for the re-entry to practice plan, and
- articulate the measures that will be put in place if the stated goals are not achieved in the stated timeframes.

If an osteopath does not have a proposed supervisor, they are still required to submit a re-entry plan (may include supervision plan) based on self-assessment and the plan should include the relevant elements as outlined above.

To assist practitioners, the Board has developed a *Plan for continuing professional development and re-entry to practice / satisfying recency of practice* template which makes provision for the elements that should be included in the practitioner's plan for professional development and re-entry to practice. The plan, with the exception of the 'Practitioner and Supervisor Agreement', may be modified or adapted to suit individual needs.

Review of the plan by the Board

Osteopaths have a professional responsibility to work within their limits of competence. The Board expects that practitioners have the necessary level of insight to realise those limits of competence.

The individual practitioner's plan for professional development and re-entry to practice is submitted to the Registration and Notifications Committee of the Board (RNC) for review and approval on a case-by-case basis. The RNC may seek further information if it finds the individual practitioner's plan for professional development and re-entry to practice does not provide sufficient information about the safeguards for the individual's return to practice. The RNC will identify any set tasks or supervision levels and may require the practitioner to complete specific education and/or assessment.

The RNC may also decide to formalise the re-entry requirements by imposing conditions or accepting an undertaking from the osteopath.

The RNC will require the individual practitioner's supervisor/s to confirm that the practitioner has complied with the RNC approved plan for professional development and re-entry to practice. Before releasing the practitioner from the obligations of the plan, the RNC may require that their supervisor confirms that the practitioner's performance demonstrates the individual has the knowledge, clinical skills and professional attributes required for competent osteopathic practice in Australia.

Auditing a practitioner's plan for professional development and for re-entry to practice

The Board may audit compliance with the practitioner's plan for professional development and re-entry to practice at any time.

Assessment of competence to practice

If a practitioner has been absent from osteopathy practice for five or more years the RNC may require a competence assessment. Depending on the individual case, the RNC may require a written and/or a clinical assessment or exam to evaluate whether the individual has the knowledge, clinical skills and professional attributes required for competent osteopathic practice in Australia. The requirements for competent osteopathic practice are set out in the [Capabilities for osteopathic practice](#).