

Policy

October 2025

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety requirements for internationally qualified occupational therapists granted general registration

Purpose

The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia (the Board) requires all internationally qualified occupational therapists (IQOTs) successfully complete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety education.

This policy requires IQOTs to have successfully completed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety education either before, or within six months of being granted general registration.

Who this policy is for

This policy applies to IQOTs who are granted general registration by the Board.

This policy does **not** apply to:

- occupational therapists who are granted general registration by the Board under the Commonwealth [Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997](#), or
- occupational therapists who are granted general registration by the Board and have completed an [approved program of study](#).

Background

Since 2020, the National Scheme has been committed to protecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by making culturally safe practice the norm and eliminating racism from the healthcare system through the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health and Cultural Safety Strategy 2020-2025 (Cultural Safety Strategy). The Occupational Therapy Board of Australia was one of the signatories to the [Cultural Safety Strategy Statement of Intent](#).

The national cultural safety accreditation and continuing professional development and upskilling framework and strategy

As a key initiative of the Cultural Safety Strategy, Ahpra is developing a framework and strategy that aims to protect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples by eliminating racism from the healthcare system.

The upskilling framework and strategy will develop nationally consistent standards, codes, and guidelines for registered practitioners on cultural safety for accreditation and continuing professional development.

While the strategy is being finalised, the Board has endorsed a transitional approach that enables practitioners to show they have completed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety education.

Amendments to the National law

The National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme) has a role in ensuring the development of a culturally safe and respectful health workforce that is responsive to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their health, and that contributes to the elimination of racism in the provision of health services.

This role was acknowledged with the introduction of a new objective and guiding principle to the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law (the National Law) that on 21 October 2022.

What is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety?

The definition of cultural safety is:

Principles

The following principles inform the definition of cultural safety:

- Prioritising the Ministerial Council's goal to achieve healthcare free of racism supported by the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan.
- Improved health service provision supported by the Safety and Quality Health Service Standards User Guide for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health.
- Provision of a rights-based approach to healthcare supported by the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- Ongoing commitment to learning, education and training.

Definition

Cultural safety is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. Culturally safe practice is the ongoing critical reflection of health practitioner knowledge, skills, attitudes, practising behaviours and power differentials in delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

How to

To ensure culturally safe and respectful practice, Occupational therapists must:

- Acknowledge colonisation and systemic racism, social, cultural, behavioural and economic factors which impact individual and community health.
- Acknowledge and address individual racism, their own biases, assumptions, stereotypes and prejudices and provide care that is holistic, free of bias and racism.
- Recognise the importance of self-determined decision-making, partnership and collaboration in healthcare which is driven by the individual, family and community.
- Foster a safe working environment through leadership to support the rights and dignity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and colleagues.

Minimum requirements

The Board expects all new registrants:

- continually critically reflect on their practice, knowledge, skills, attitudes and practising behaviours
- are aware of existing power differentials, and
- are committed to delivering safe, accessible and responsive healthcare free of racism.

To meet the Board's requirements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural safety education, individuals must complete Indigenous Allied Health Australia's (IAHA) [cultural responsiveness training levels one, two and three](#).

We recommend that IQOTs complete this training before applying for general registration.

IQOTs can complete the training at any time, including while their application is being considered.

If an IQOT has not met the Board's requirements, the Board can still grant general registration with a condition that the IQOT must meet those requirements.

Mode of delivery

Cultural safety education

The IAHA cultural responsiveness training is an online and self-paced program of learning that is delivered across three levels. Passing the earlier level is a prerequisite to move on to the next level.

The total duration of the training is equivalent to approximately 16 hours. It can be completed from Australia or overseas.

Continuing professional development

Cultural safety education should continue beyond the IAHA cultural responsiveness training and be incorporated into the individual's continuing professional development (CPD).

All CPD should be carried out and completed in accordance with the Board's [Registration standard: Continuing professional development](#).

Evidence

IQOTs should keep the course completion certificate as evidence they've completed the cultural safety education training.

Document history

Approved by: Occupational Therapy Board of Australia, 28 October 2025

Date commenced: October 2025

Next review due: 3-years

Document control table

Approval date	Version	Reason for change
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