

Frequently asked questions

January 2022

Professional capabilities for podiatrists and podiatric surgeons

The Podiatry Board of Australia's (the Board) new *Professional capabilities for podiatrists and Professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons* came into effect on 1 January 2022. To help practitioners understand the professional capabilities, the Board has prepared some useful FAQ.

General questions about the professional capabilities

What are the professional capabilities?

The Podiatry Board of Australia's (Board) *Professional capabilities for podiatrists and Professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons* (professional capabilities) identify the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon in Australia.

They describe the threshold or minimum level of professional capability needed for registration as a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon.

The professional capabilities are relevant throughout a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon's career across all areas of practice.

Why are they called professional capabilities rather competencies?

Professional capabilities integrate the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as a registered health practitioner in Australia. Professional capabilities are sometimes called professional competencies, professional standards or competency standards. Regardless of the name, in the context of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, they generally describe the knowledge, skills and professional attributes required for registration.

Traditionally, the format of competency standards described a minimum level of knowledge or skill and the application of that knowledge and skill at the standard of performance required in a particular job role.

The format of professional capabilities better recognises the integration of knowledge and skills with professional attributes. This integration reflects the higher-order skills such as judgement and problem solving needed to practise safely and effectively. The term professional capability recognises that the knowledge, skills and professional attributes required will change as a job role evolves, and as practitioners change job roles throughout their career.

When do the professional capabilities commence?

The professional capabilities took effect from 1 January 2022.

How are the professional capabilities used by the Board and others?

Professional capabilities provide the framework for assessing student and practitioner competence.

The Board

The professional capabilities may be used by the Board as a reference point for threshold capability when exercising its statutory functions, including for:

- registration of suitably qualified and competent individuals as podiatrists or podiatric surgeons in Australia,
- re-registration of individuals who were previously registered as a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon in Australia,

- assessment of overseas qualified practitioners seeking registration in Australia, and
- assessing registered podiatrists or podiatric surgeons who need to show they are competent to practise.

They are also used by practitioners who supervise podiatrists or podiatric surgeons when the Board requires a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon to undertake a period of supervised practice, such as when they are returning to practice after an extended absence.

The accreditation committee

Accreditation standards are used by the Podiatry Accreditation Committee (Committee) to assess whether an education provider and its program of study provide graduating students with the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as a podiatrist or podiatric surgeon in Australia.

The accreditation standards require education providers to design and implement a program where the curriculum maps to the professional capabilities.

The committee accredits education programs that meet the accreditation standards. The Podiatry Board of Australia then considers the Committee's decision and their report on the accreditation and decides whether or not to approve an accredited program as providing a qualification for registration or endorsement.

Education providers

Education providers design and implement programs where the learning outcomes and assessment tasks map to the professional capabilities.

Their role is to make sure students in an approved podiatry program demonstrate the enabling components for the key capabilities in the clinical setting, before they complete their program of study.

This ensures that graduates have the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed for safe and competent podiatry practice in Australia.

Registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons

Registered podiatrists and podiatric surgeons need to maintain at least the threshold level of professional capability in all areas relevant to their practice and maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge through continuing professional education.

Podiatrists and podiatric surgeons may use the professional capabilities when planning their professional development activities. They can use the professional capabilities to reflect on their practice; identify any areas where their knowledge and skills may not meet the minimum level of capability and develop and implement their continuing professional development learning plan that addresses the gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Patients and members of the public

Patients and the general public can use the professional capabilities to understand what they can expect from a registered podiatrist or podiatric surgeon.

Employers and insurance companies

Employers and insurance companies can use the professional capabilities to determine what should be expected of a competent podiatrist or podiatric surgeon.

Questions about the professional capabilities for podiatrists

Why are there new professional capabilities for podiatrists?

The *Podiatry competency standards for Australia and New Zealand* were last updated in 2015 and were due for review.

The Board's accreditation authority, the Podiatry Accreditation Committee (Committee) developed the professional capabilities for the Board. This included benchmarking the professional capabilities against the *Podiatry competency standards for Australia and New Zealand* (2015) and consulting widely with the profession and other stakeholders.

The new professional capabilities reflect contemporary podiatry practice in Australia. They are founded on person-centred, evidenced-based practice, and make cultural safety a key component of safe care, particularly with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

They are designed to be read in conjunction with the Board's standards, codes and guidelines.

What has changed?

The new professional capabilities for podiatrists have a contemporary style and:

- reflect contemporary podiatry practice in Australia
- describe the key features of safe and competent podiatry practice in a range of contexts and situations of varied complexity and uncertainty
- identify the knowledge, skills and attributes a podiatrist needs to practise independently in Australia and to provide safe, high quality, culturally responsive, person-centred care
- make cultural safety a key component of safe healthcare particularly with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

What are the key features of the professional capabilities?

The professional capabilities:

- are structured around five integrated domains, that are supported by key capabilities and enabling components that cover the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as a podiatrist in Australia. The five domains are thematically arranged and describe the essential characteristics of a safe and competent podiatrist:
 - The podiatrist.
 - The professional and ethical practitioner
 - The communicator and collaborator.
 - The lifelong learner
 - The quality and risk manager
- are founded on person-centred and evidenced-based practice
- are for all podiatrists across all areas of practice
- are designed to be read in conjunction with the Board's standards, codes and guidelines, and
- include a glossary to help understand how key terms are used in the capabilities.

Do the new capabilities apply to all areas of podiatry?

Yes. Podiatrists work in a range of public and private settings, including in health, disability and aged care. Podiatrists provide care for people of all ages and through different stages in a person's life. The professional capabilities apply to all contexts of podiatry, irrespective of setting, location, environment, field of practice or workforce role.

They apply to practice in clinical as well as non-clinical roles, as defined by the Board's Code of Conduct.

Podiatrists need to maintain at least the threshold level of professional capability in all areas relevant to their practice and maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge through continuing professional education.

What does this mean for me as a podiatrist?

Most podiatrists are already practising at or above the threshold professional capabilities.

The professional capabilities can provide a framework that enables podiatrists to reflect on their practice and plan their professional development activities. The capabilities enable reflection opportunities for podiatrists to identify any areas where their knowledge and skills may not meet the minimum level of capability. Podiatrists can then identify their learning needs and professional development activities to address the gaps in their knowledge and skills.

Questions about the professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons

Why are there new professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons?

Until now, we haven't had national professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons.

The new professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons reflect contemporary podiatric surgery practice in Australia. These capabilities identify the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as podiatric surgeon. They describe the threshold or minimum level of professional capability needed for registration as a podiatric surgeon.

The professional capabilities are founded on person-centred and evidenced-based practice and make cultural safety a key component of safe care, particularly with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The new professional capabilities were developed by the Board's accreditation authority, the Podiatry Accreditation Committee (Committee). This included consulting widely with the profession and other stakeholders. They were approved by the Board in July 2021 and took effect on 1 January 2022.

The professional capabilities are relevant throughout a podiatric surgeon's career across all areas of their practice.

Podiatric surgeons need to maintain at least the threshold level of professional capability in all areas relevant to their practice and maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge through continuing professional education.

What are the key features of the professional capabilities for podiatric surgeons?

The professional capabilities:

- are structured around the following five integrated domains, that are supported by key capabilities and enabling components that cover the knowledge, skills and professional attributes needed to safely and competently practise as a podiatric surgeon in Australia. The five domains are thematically arranged and describe the essential characteristics of a safe and competent podiatric surgeon:
 - The podiatric surgeon.
 - The professional and ethical practitioner
 - The communicator and collaborator.
 - The lifelong learner
 - The quality and risk manager
- are founded on person-centred and evidenced-based practice
- are for all podiatric surgeons across all areas of practice
- are designed to be read in conjunction with the Board's standards, codes and guidelines, and
- include a glossary to help understand how key terms are used in the capabilities.

Do the new capabilities apply to all areas of podiatric surgery?

Yes. The professional capabilities apply to all contexts of podiatric surgery, irrespective of setting, location, environment, field of practice or workforce role.

They apply to practice in both clinical as well as non-clinical roles, as defined by the Board' Code of conduct.

Podiatric surgeons need to maintain at least the threshold level of professional capability in all areas relevant to their practice and maintain the currency of their skills and knowledge through continuing professional education.

What does this mean for me as a podiatric surgeon?

Most podiatric surgeons are already practising at or above the threshold professional capabilities.

The professional capabilities can provide a framework that enables podiatric surgeons to reflect on their practice and plan their professional development activities. The capabilities enable reflection opportunities for podiatric surgeons to identify any areas where their knowledge and skills may not meet the minimum level of capability. Podiatric surgeons can then identify their learning needs and professional development activities to address the gaps in their knowledge and skills.