

FAQ: Return to practice

Why do I need to complete 450 hours of practice in three years?

National Boards have drawn on their regulatory experience to set requirements for recent practice. The Optometry Board of Australia (the Board) considers that 450 hours of practice over three years provides an appropriate balance between ensuring that practitioners have undertaken sufficient recent practice to maintain the knowledge and skills to safely practise the profession, and providing reasonable flexibility for situations such as part-time work, study leave and parental leave.

How do I ensure I meet the recency of practice registration standard?

If you are registered¹ you must complete a minimum of 450 hours of practice within your regular scope of practice over the past three years. The following example shows some of the ways that you can meet this requirement:

Year	Practitioner A	Practitioner B	Practitioner C	Practitioner D	Practitioner E	Practitioner F
1	150 hours	100 hours	450 hours	0 hours	50 hours	400 hours
2	150 hours	100 hours	0 hours	0 hours	50 hours	0 hours
3	150 hours	250 hours	0 hours	450 hours	350 hours	50 hours

Why do I need to have graduated from an approved program of study or have successfully completed a competency assessment or examination approved by the Board within the previous 24 months, when applying for registration for the first time?

Occasionally, graduates do not make an application for registration within 24 months of graduating from a Board-approved course that leads to a qualification in optometry. Likewise, some overseas-trained applicants who successfully complete a competency assessment or examination approved by the Board do not make an application for registration within 24 months of the final assessment/examination.

During this period, these individuals may not have had the opportunity to consolidate the skills and knowledge needed to practice in the profession safely. In this situation, the Board would review the individual's application on a case-by-case basis and consider options such as a period of supervised practice to support the practitioner and protect the public in the transition to the role of a practising registered optometrist.

What do I need to do if I don't meet the recency of practice registration standard requirements?

If you don't meet the requirements of the *Recency of practice registration standard*, you must declare this on your application for registration or renewal of registration.

Depending on the length of time since you last practised and other identified risk factors, the Board may require you to undertake one or a combination of the following; supervised practice, successful completion of a program of study or a competency assessment.

You will need to submit a return to practice plan for consideration by the Board along with your application for registration. The return to practice plan involves assessing any gaps in your competence and identifying your learning needs. The Board's professional development plan template will help you to undertake a learning needs analysis. When you are proposing to undertake supervised practice to safely

¹ Except those with non-practising or student registration.

return to practice, you should also submit a supervised practice plan with your professional development plan.

Where do I find information on completing a return to practice plan to submit to the Board?

The Board has developed an [Information sheet on returning to practice or significantly changing scope of practice](#) to help you to prepare a return to practice plan. To ensure that you are competent to return to practice, you may need to undertake supervised practice. The *Supervision guidelines for optometrists* also contains information to assist you to develop your return to practice plan.

How will my return to practice plan be reviewed by the Board?

The Board will consider your application prior to you returning to practice. Each application is considered on an individual case-by-case basis and the Board may seek further information if it is not satisfied that the submitted plan for return to practice provides enough information about the safeguards for your return to practice. The Board may decide to formalise your professional/return to practice development plan by placing conditions on your registration.

For more information about the factors that the Board takes into consideration when assessing risk and what you may be required to do to become or remain registered see the Board's [Information sheet on returning to practice or significantly changing scope of practice](#).