



Competence to Practise Policy

The Occupational Therapists' Board of Western Australian (the Board) under the Occupational Therapists Act 2005 (the Act) has a duty to protect the public by ensuring occupational therapy services are provided by registrants in a safe, professional and competent manner. As such the Board requires all occupational therapists to satisfy certain continuing professional development requirements when seeking registration or re-registration.

At the present time, this policy only applies to persons applying for registration for the first time, or persons who are applying to be re-registered following the voluntary removal of their name from the Register, from 1 April 2008. These persons will be required to comply with the policy on an annual basis in accordance with the Act.

This policy reflects the Board's intention to meet its legislative responsibility to ensure safe and competent practice, and thereby assist in maintaining the public's confidence in the profession.

Section 27(2)(e) of the Act requires the Board to ensure each occupational therapist has sufficient knowledge and practical experience to enable them to perform efficiently the duties of an occupational therapist. It is the Board's expectation that occupational therapists will only engage in activities with which they are competent.

Additionally under Section 41(1)(b) the Act requires the Board to cancel the registration and remove from the Register the name of any occupational therapist who has not maintained current knowledge and skills in occupational therapy at an approved level.

Current Knowledge and Skills

At the time of registration or renewal, registrants must be able to demonstrate, since their last registration, they have:

- maintained ongoing compliance with a recognised Continuing Professional Development (CPD)/Maintenance of Professional Standards (MOPS) programme run by the profession; or
- undertaken self-directed CPD/MOPS to a level that is equivalent to the requirements of a recognised association of which the registrant is eligible to be a member that is relevant to the registrant's current work; or
- undertaken a recognised course of study or undertaken sufficient CPD activities to satisfy the Board.

Occupational therapists, including those in rural and remote areas, are encouraged to make use of technology such as the internet and video conferencing to undertake CPD activities.

The Board recognises there may be valid reasons (such as family leave, long term illness, or any other valid reason acceptable to the Board) why a registrant is not be able to complete the requirements of CPD in the 12-month period prior to renewal of registration.

The Board, therefore, will allow exemption from this requirement for a one-year registration period, provided the registrant has not been exempted in the past three years.

Registrants seeking an exemption should contact the Board as soon as the need for exemption is known, particularly in circumstances where the Board needs to determine whether the registrant has sufficient reason for applying. Prior notice of bona fide family leave is not required, and any registrant may take bona fide family leave for one year.

Each year, a minimum of 5 per cent of registered occupational therapists, the subject of this policy, will be randomly audited and required to provide evidence of competency to practise.

Remedies for non-compliance with CPD

Therapists not meeting the CPD requirements may be directed by the Board to:

- undertake specified remedial CPD within a certain time frame;
- not practise in certain areas until the CPD deficiency is remedied; or
- practise under formal and agreed supervision until the CPD deficiency is remedied.

Summary

- The requirement to complete CPD in the twelve (12) month period since last registration includes a proviso that an occupational therapist may take one (1) year off in the last three (3) years, without being required to complete the required CPD in that year, if related to leave taken for bona fide family care, prolonged illness, or other reason acceptable to the Board.
- Registrants seeking an exemption should contact the Board as soon as the need is known, particularly where the Board needs to determine whether the exemption will be approved.

Occupational therapists undertaking self-directed CPD/MOPS should also note they will be required to:

- Provide evidence of activities undertaken, eg record of articles read, receipts for courses and conferences attended; and
- Be able to show the number of hours of CPD undertaken.