



New Zealand Psychologists Board

LEVEL 9, TOURISM AND TRAVEL HOUSE, 79 BOULCOTT STREET, PO BOX 10-626, WELLINGTON

TELEPHONE +64 4 471 4580, FACSIMILE +64 4 471 4581

Returning to Practice after a break of three years or longer¹

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act), the legislation which regulates the psychology profession in New Zealand, requires the Board (under section 27) to be assured that a psychologist who is registered but who has not held a practising certificate in the last three years is competent to practise before issuing an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). To meet this obligation the Board requires those psychologists, referred to here as "returners", to supply additional information and may impose special conditions on the practising certificate, to ensure the safety of the public.

The Board's policy is designed to support and facilitate returners to make a safe transition back into competent practice. While each returner is responsible for their own competence and conduct, the profession has a collective interest in retaining those individuals in the workforce while maintaining high standards to uphold the reputation of psychologists.

The Board is appreciative of the assistance of senior and respected members of the profession as supervisors who may be involved to enable refreshment of skills and oversight of practice. The Board's policy is intended as remedial in focus rather than restrictive and limiting. It is not intended to be a deterrent to returning to psychology practice, nor does it have a disciplinary function.

Return to Practice policy

The Board's Return to Practice (RTP) framework is a guide rather than a set of firm rules. There are many variables to consider when assessing a returner's application. These include, but are not limited to, the length of time after qualifying spent practising to consolidate training, time away from the profession, other relevant experience, prior and intended area of practice and any continuing professional development undertaken while away from the profession.

What information will be requested

Before the Board issues an APC, it will request that an applicant who has been away from practice for longer than three years provide:

1. A letter stating the return to practice intentions, including the nature of the intended work and if possible, the intended practice setting.
2. A supervision plan.
3. A RTP plan which details remedial action considered necessary to address any perceived weakness, based on an up to date appraisal of skills and knowledge as related to the intended area of practice.
4. An up to date Curriculum Vitae, including professional development activities undertaken since an APC was last held.
5. A letter of support from the most recent psychology supervisor or from a proposed supervisor.

¹ Thank you to the Physiotherapists Board of New Zealand for their inspiration and assistance with content in the preparation of this leaflet.

Supervision

The reinstatement of regular supervision with a senior and respected member of the profession is regarded by the Board as a key component of ensuring competence. The supervision plan should name the intended supervisor and show the frequency of meetings planned. It is expected that supervision will offer the platform for returners to review their training needs and to develop their plans for any extra reading, revision and/or professional development activities. Returners should start their supervision process by conducting a self-reflective review to align with the Board's Continuing Competence Programme requirements in discussion with their supervisor. This will generate learning goals to direct their professional development activities throughout the coming APC year. It is likely that returners will need to undertake extra professional development activities to support their revision as compared to the ordinary or routine development activities expected of all active professional psychologists.

The returner's obligation

Each returner is expected to practise only if they feel competent to do so and their supervisor supports him/ her in this belief. Returners are expected to undertake whatever is considered necessary to refresh their professional knowledge and skills. The RTP should set out the planned ongoing revision. The amount of extraordinary professional development required will depend on the length of time away from practice, the relevance of any interim activities to maintaining competence, and whether or not professional development activities have been undertaken in the meantime. The returner's familiarity with the intended professional psychology activities from past experience is also relevant.

The Board's role

The Board evaluates each RTP by taking the individual circumstances into account. Where the RTP seems adequate, the APC will be issued promptly. Where the Board has some concern, there may be a dialogue to fine tune the RTP plan before issuing the APC. The APC may be issued without further conditions or oversight, or there may be ongoing reporting requested of your supervisor.

The supervisor's role

The Board is reliant on the supervisors of returners as key to ensuring safe transitions. The supervisor is expected to give feedback to the returner and engage in frank discussion about any perceived shortfall in current competencies. The supervision for returners is likely to be more frequent than that of a psychologist who has practised continually. The Board may request one or more report on the returner's practice. In the event that the supervisor has serious misgivings about the practitioner's competence, then these should be reported to the Board in accordance with section 34 of the Act.

Contact us

If in this category, you are encouraged to approach the Board earlier rather than later in your steps towards returning to practice so that your efforts are appropriately directed. Please contact Bill King, Deputy Registrar (Registration) at 04 471 4588 or bill.king@nzpb.org.nz. Alternately you may wish to seek advice from Anne Goodhead, Psychology Advisor at 04 471 4584 or anne.goodhead@nzpb.org.nz.