



FAQ: Recency of practice registration standard

2 February 2016

The Board's Recency of practice registration standard provides details of the specific requirements of recency of practice (ROP).

Information about remedial action that may be required for applicants for general registration who do not meet the ROP registration standard is available in the Policy for recency of practice requirements.

Why does the Board have a recency of practice (ROP) registration standard?

The [National Law](#) requires National Boards to develop registration standards about the requirements in relation to the nature, extent, period and recency of any previous practice of the profession by applicants for registration (section 38(e)). Recent practice is an important way that practitioners can maintain their professional skills and knowledge.

When does the revised recency of practice registration standard come into effect?

The revised recency of practice standard comes into effect on 1 December 2016. Commencing with a new standard on the first day of a new renewal cycle – 1 December – ensures a smooth transition for registrants who are required to make a declaration about recency of practice when applying to renew their registration.

Additionally, delaying the effective date until 15 months after approval ensures that applicants and registrants who may be affected by the new requirement for 250 hours of practice within the last five years have sufficient notice and are not disadvantaged. Psychologists who have very low practice hours in the last five years will have plenty of time to consider their options and plan for the new requirements.

What is the evidence for the revised registration standard?

National Boards aim to draw on the best available evidence to inform their regulatory work. In reviewing the recency of practice registration standards, AHPRA worked with National Boards to commission research about recency of practice to ensure that the revised registration standards were as evidence-based as possible. In addition, National Boards drew on their regulatory experience with the previous registration standards and benchmarking with other comparable regulators. The literature on ROP is still developing and doesn't yet provide definitive answers to some issues.

The Board will continue to monitor and respond to developments in the literature in future reviews.

Why has the Board introduced minimum hours for recency of practice?

The review of the Board's recency of practice registration standard included extensive public consultation and a review of relevant research, as well as the Board's experience with its current standard. The majority of professions regulated under the National Scheme currently require minimum hours of practice as part of their recency of practice requirements. Their experience is that a minimum number of hours provides more guidance to registrants about whether they meet the requirements, and also provides more assurance to Boards that a practitioner's skills have been maintained.

The Board considered all these factors in determining that a requirement for minimum hours of practice would strengthen its recency of practice requirements and provide greater clarity for practitioners and the public.

Psychology Board of Australia

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How will the new minimum hours of practice requirement affect me?

Most practitioners will meet the required minimum hours of practice, however as the changes will affect some practitioners the Board decided on a commencement date (1 December 2016) that provides practitioners with lots of time to prepare for the new standard.

In summary -

- If you currently work more than the minimum hours and continue to work in the same scope of practice, you will continue to meet the standard and the changes will not affect you.
- If you are currently practising but have had a recent absence from psychology practice or you are practising infrequently, the introduction of minimum hours for recency of practice may affect whether you meet the revised standard. You may need to start planning to increase your hours of practice to ensure you meet the standard in the next registration period (i.e. from 1 December 2016 – 30 November 2017).
- If you are not currently registered and intend to return to work as a psychologist, the addition of minimum hours may impact whether you meet the revised standard when you submit your application for registration.

The revised standard will not apply to renewal declarations for psychologists in 2016. Psychologists will be asked in their 2017 renewal application to declare whether they have met the revised standard in the last registration period (i.e. from 1 December 2016 – 30 November 2017).

If I have non-practising registration for five years or more will I lose the ability to change back to General registration?

From 1 December 2016, if you have not practised as a registered psychologist for at least 250 hours in the last five years or more when you apply to renew your general registration, your application will be assessed by the Board and you may be required to update your skills, or undertake an assessment.

These applications are considered by the Board, case by case, and factors such as length of absence from practice and professional development undertaken while not practising will be taken into account. The Board may grant provisional or general registration with conditions to allow you to meet the recency of practice requirements.

For more information, please refer to the [Recency of practice registration standard](#).

What happens if I don't meet the new requirements?

If you don't meet the minimum hours requirement in the revised standard, this will not necessarily prevent you from continuing to practise or returning to practice as a psychologist. The Board will consider your past experience and length of absence from practice, among other considerations, and determine if any additional information, examination, assessment or period of supervised practice is required to ensure that you are safe to practice.

The Board's Policy for recency of practice requirements provides more information about options for psychologists returning to practice.

I don't work as a psychologist but my work has a psychological focus e.g. Senior Guidance Officer. Will this work count as practice for the recency of practice requirements?

The definition of practice in the Board's Recency of practice registration standard which was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council is:

...any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a registered psychologist in the profession. Practice in this context is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct nonclinical relationship with patients or clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of services in the health profession.

Practice involving activities of a non-psychological nature will not count towards recency of practice, even if they are performed by a registered psychologist.

If I renew my registration during the 2016 late period will I have to declare I meet the requirements of the revised standard?

Yes, if you renew during the late period for the next renewal (1 December to 31 December 2016) your ROP declaration must be about the version of the standard that is in place on the day you make the declaration which will be the revised version from 1 December 2016.

Can I apply to undertake a re-entry program in accordance with the new policy before it comes into effect?

No, the policy has been revised to support and further explain the requirements of the revised standard that comes into effect on 1 December 2016. The current recency of practice policy that has been in effect since 1 August 2011 was written to support the current registration standard that has been in effect since 1 July 2010; the 2011 version of the policy therefore remains in place while the 2010 standard remains in place.

However, you can start planning to return to practice in accordance with the new policy if you are planning to apply after 1 December 2016. The Board has made the new policy available to assist anyone who wishes to plan ahead. Additionally the new template form for planning professional development re-entry to practice is being developed and will be made available on the website soon. Knowing what the requirements will be in the future may also be helpful for psychologists making decisions about taking time off from practice now.

The Board will start accepting and deciding applications under the revised standard and policy from 1 December 2016.

Will overseas psychology practice in a country where registration is not required be recognised for recency of practice requirements when the revised standard comes into effect?

As is the case with the current (2010) standard, unregistered practice will not automatically be recognised for meeting the revised ROP standard. Applications from individuals who have not practised as a registered psychologist in the last five years are referred to the Board for individual assessment. Any overseas practice in a country where registration is not required or available is taken into account as part of that assessment and in determining remedial requirements.

In accordance with the current policy, unregistered overseas practice will be considered and remedial requirements may be reduced accordingly, but a minimum of six months full time (or part-time equivalent) practice as a provisional psychologist in the 4+2 internship program will still be required.

When the revised standard and revised policy come into effect on 1 December 2016 there will be more flexibility to vary remedial requirements taking into account the nature of the unregistered overseas practice. For example if your overseas practice was in a country where there is no registration or licensure, but your practice was subject to other forms of regulation including a mandatory code of conduct, practice, or ethics for psychologists, and you continued to meet CPD requirements of your professional association or society to maintain membership, then the Board could see fit to significantly vary the standard remedial requirements.

Refer to the Policy for recency of practice requirements for more information.

Are there any restrictions on how the 250 hours within five years may be accumulated?

No, the Board will accept any practice that falls within the definition of practice and has not set any restrictions such as minimum hours per week or continuity requirements. So you could complete one hour per week for five years; or 8 ½ hours a day for 30 days or you could accumulate 250 hours in small blocks of practice at any time over five years.

Psychologists are reminded however, that meeting the minimum hours alone doesn't guarantee ongoing competence. You are responsible for maintaining your professional skills and knowledge and only practising within the limits of your professional competence. When returning to practice after a period of not practising you should always undertake self-assessment, consider the role you are returning to, identify areas where you may need to refresh or update your skills, and undertake appropriate preparation for return to practice or change in scope of practice.

I am applying for early general registration while still completing my doctoral thesis, how can I meet the recency of practice standard?

You can meet the standard on the basis of 250 hours practice as a provisional psychologist in your degree. 'Practice' includes your practical placements and other activities in your degree including research – refer to the definition of 'practice' in the registration standard for details.

You can also meet the standard on the basis of successful completion of another Board-approved program of study within the last five years – e.g. your undergraduate/honours psychology degree.

I completed a Board-approved program of study or internship within the last five years, but less than 250 hours of it was within the last five years, do I meet the standard?

Yes, the 250 hours only applies to option a) of the three options for meeting the standard that are listed. Option b) – study and option c) supervised practice do not have a minimum hours requirement.

Will I be audited on the old or new registration standard requirements?

If you are selected for audit, you will be audited against the registration standard that was in effect at the time the audit relates to. For example, if you are audited in February 2017 for a declaration about ROP you made when you renewed your registration in November 2016 then you will be audited against the 2010 version of the standard which was in place at the time.

If selected for an audit you will receive written notice advising exactly what you are being audited for and what you need to provide.