



VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS BOARD
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

Currency of Practice Policy

Introduction

From time to time the Board receives applications from veterinary practitioners who have not practised for a prolonged period, or who wish to practise in a different field of veterinary science than that in which they have recently worked - for example, moving from government veterinary work to working in a small animal practice.

This policy sets the framework for the ACT Veterinary Practitioners Board to ensure they are satisfied that veterinary practitioners meet certain practising standards when returning to the workforce or choosing to work in a different field.

A veterinary practitioner must not practise in an area in which he or she is not competent to practise, unless under the supervision of a registered veterinary practitioner who is competent to practise in the specific area, until competency is established.

A veterinary practitioner, when requested, must provide evidence that he or she is competent to provide the services that he or she offers when applying for registration or make a declaration when they renew their registration. A person may declare that he or she is competent if the person has appropriate qualifications, has currency of practice and has complied with the Board's policy on [Continuing Professional Development](#) (CPD).

The Board has prescribed minimum practising standards which include currency of practice requirements. All applicants intending on working in clinical practice are required to provide the Board with information on their currency of practice. In the following situations, the board, after consideration of the individual circumstances of the case, may propose to decline or place conditions on the applicant's registration:

- Applicants who have not practiced for a significant amount of time within the last 3 consecutive years as a veterinary practitioner.
- Applicants who have not practiced as a veterinary practitioner in the specific area in which they intend to practise.
- Applicants who hold a recognised qualification or a pass in a prescribed examination or assessment program but:
 - have not practised as a veterinary practitioner for one (1) or more years subsequent to completing the course requirements for their primary veterinary qualification or passing an approved registration examination or assessment program.
 - have not practised for one (1) or more years in the specific area in which they intend to practise, subsequent to completing the course requirements of their primary veterinary qualification or passing an approved registration examination or assessment program.

The Board may require applicants to complete, to the satisfaction of the Board, training courses and/or supervised practice determined by the Board before approving applications for registration or renewal of registration or may place these conditions on their registration. Under these circumstances, it is a requirement that:

- the supervisor has at least three (3) years' experience in the clinical field that they are supervising; and
- the practice setting must give the maximum opportunity to demonstrate the full spectrum of the respective standards for practice for the intended role or field of practice the veterinary practitioner is seeking to return to/work in.

This may also occur following a finding from an investigation into a complaint against a veterinary practitioner where it is deemed that such course of action is in the public interest.

Board Approach to non-currency of practice

Veterinary practitioners are required to make declarations about their currency of practice when applying for their annual registration.

Veterinary practitioners must contact the board prior to taking up roles in a specific area they have never practised in, or have not practised in during the previous three (3) years. This requirement applies regardless of whether or not the veterinarian holds a current registration.

The Board considers currency of practice cases on an individual basis taking into account all relevant factors including but not limited to:

- the extent of work experience subsequent to completing the course requirements for their primary veterinary qualification, or passing an approved assessment program in the specific area/s in which the veterinarian is intending to work in;
- the date the veterinarian ceased practice in the area/s they are proposing to work in;
- any relevant CPD the veterinarian has engaged in while not practising and the proposed CPD they intend to do to assist their return to practising (or practise in a new area/discipline);
- whether the veterinarian is proposing to resume work/move to a different area of work in an environment where supervision and collegial support is available; and
- whether the veterinarian is returning to veterinary practice after a three year period or is a practising veterinarian seeking to resume or commence practice in a non-recent area.

The Board's focus is on assisting the veterinary practitioner with non-recent practice to return to the workforce, or move to different areas of work, in a supported way, whilst at the same time protecting the public interest.

If the Board is not satisfied with the competence of the practitioner, it considers whether the practitioner should have conditions placed on their registration to ensure that the public interest is protected. Dependent on the circumstances of the case, such conditions may include one or more of the following:

- supervision - where another practitioner/s is required to monitor and report on performance;
- oversight - where another practitioner/s provides support and assistance for the purposes of professional development;
- conditions that the practitioner only practises in a stated capacity e.g. as an employee or in association with other veterinary practitioners;
- practice restrictions;
- auditing requirements;
- CPD requirements, or a period of practical training or experience, or formal course; and

- in circumstances where the practitioner has been away from practice for a significant period, requiring them to sit and pass an approved assessment or examination.

If it is intended that the conditions are publicly notified, the practitioner concerned has the right under the Act to make written comment or to meet with the Board before a final decision is made.

It will be specified that any conditions placed on the practitioner relate only to re-entry requirements and are not an adverse disciplinary action.

Specific requirements for new graduates and holders of a pass in an approved assessment program

New graduates from Australia, New Zealand and overseas and those seeking registration after having passed an approved assessment program such as the National Veterinary Examination (NVE), have particular needs for support and oversight in making the transition from the university or overseas practising environment.

Sufficient measures need to be in place to protect the public interest and support those who do not commence practice upon graduating or passing an approved assessment program such as NVE.

As such the requirements for individual board consideration apply in circumstances where the person:

- has not practised within one (1) year of graduating; or
- has not practised within one (1) year of passing an approved registration examination or assessment program.

Switching to a new field of veterinary work

This section applies to those who have not practised at all and to registrants who are seeking to practise in a specific area that they have never or not recently practised in for three (3) or more years.

The Board has noted that those seeking to switch to a new area of veterinary work are more likely to have maintained generic competencies required for veterinary practice, than those who have not practised at all. The Board will take this into consideration in deciding what, if any, conditions on the veterinarian's registration might be required in circumstances where the veterinarian is:

- seeking to resume practice in a specific area in which they have not practised for three (3) or more years; or
- seeking to practise in a specific area in which they have not practised in their first or subsequent years of practice.

Guidelines for Implementation of Policy

Veterinary practitioners who have not practised within one (1) year of graduating; or have not practised within one (1) year of passing an approved registration examination or assessment program then:

1. the veterinary practitioner should complete the CPD requirements that would have been required had registration been maintained prior to the commencement of practice or, if already registered, then for the relevant field of practice;
2. CPD requirements are pro-rata (5 structured and 15 unstructured points per year of absence);
3. CPD must be completed in the specific areas relevant to the intended role and field of practice; and
4. direct veterinary supervision will be required for the first three (3) months of practice.

Veterinary practitioners with two (2) years or more prior experience and absent from practice for less than three (3) years then:

1. the veterinary practitioner must complete the CPD requirements that would have been required had registration been maintained prior to the commencement of practice or, if already registered, then CPD requirements must be completed for specific area of practice;
2. CPD requirements are pro-rata (5 structured and 15 unstructured points per year of absence); and
3. CPD must be completed in the specific areas relevant to the intended role and field of practice.

Veterinary practitioners with two (2) years or more prior experience and absent from practice for more than three (3) years then:

1. the veterinary practitioner must complete the CPD requirements for one three (3) year CPD cycle prior to the commencement of practice;
2. CPD must be completed in the specific areas relevant to the intended role and field of practice;
3. the veterinary practitioner must submit a plan for professional development to cover completion of an additional three (3) year CPD cycle within the next 12 months after which the veterinarian will enter the standard three (3) year CPD cycle;
4. the veterinary practitioner may be required to work under the direct, indirect or general supervision of another veterinarian with full registration for a period of up to 12 months; and
5. the veterinary practitioner must complete other requirements as directed by the board e.g. undertake a formal course, working in approved practices under approved supervision and provide case reports.

Veterinary practitioners with less than two (2) years prior experience and absent from practice for more than three (3) years then:

1. the veterinary practitioner must complete the CPD requirements prior to the commencement of practice as per points 1. and 2. and 3. above depending upon the length of absence from practice;
2. CPD must be completed in the specific areas relevant to the intended role and field of practice;
3. the veterinary practitioner must work under the direct, indirect or general supervision of another veterinary practitioner with full registration for a period as determined by the board; and
4. the veterinary practitioner must complete other requirements as directed by the board e.g. undertake a formal course work, working in approved practices under approved supervision and provide case reports.

Veterinary practitioners supervising veterinary practitioners under these circumstances above must submit a report detailing the supervised veterinary practitioner's competence in the required areas for employment every three (3) months. For the field of clinical practice these areas must include:

1. medical and surgical case management;
2. communication skills with clients and colleagues;
3. compliance with record keeping requirements;
4. compliance with practice protocols; and
5. other requirements as approved by the board.

Other

Veterinary practitioners who are returning to practice in the ACT after practising in another jurisdiction within the last 12 months without compulsory CPD will meet the requirements for registration or restoration through the submission of a satisfactory Letter of Professional Standing by the relevant Board.

The Board strongly recommends that practitioners changing from one specific area of practice to another develop a CPD Plan to cover their first three (3) years in this new field.

NOTES:

- The Board may consider variations to these guidelines on an individual case-by-case basis.
- All costs for the administration will be borne by the applicant.