



Te Kaunihera
Rata o
Aotearoa

**Medical
Council of
New Zealand**

Policy on practising certificate applications for doctors who have not held a New Zealand practising certificate or lawfully practised medicine within the previous 3 years

This policy sets out the requirements when considering an application for a practising certificate from an applicant who has not, within the 3 years immediately preceding:

- held a practising certificate, issued by Council; or
- lawfully practised medicine in New Zealand.

This policy sets out the measures and requirements in place to ensure that the applicant has a supported return to practice in New Zealand.

This policy also sets out the requirements when considering a request to return to practice in a vocational scope, which the applicant has not been practising in for 3 years or more.

Reason for the policy

Under section 27 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA), Council is required to consider a range of questions when considering an application for a practising certificate (PC). This includes the need to be assured that a PC can be issued where the applicant has within the 3 years immediately preceding the application, either:

1. not held a PC in New Zealand; or
2. not lawfully practised medicine in New Zealand.

Requirements for doctors applying for a practising certificate after 3 years or more

For any application to which this policy applies, the applicant must provide a CV, with explanations for all gaps of 3 months or more.

If the applicant has practised overseas for more than 3 years, they must also provide:

- certificates of professional status or letters of standing¹;
- at least three satisfactory references, which meet Council's reference policy².

If the applicant has not practised at all for more than 3 years, they must also provide:

- a practice intentions form ([APC2](#));

¹ A [certificate of professional status](#) (COPS) is required from each of the registration or licensing authorities the doctor has been registered or licensed with for the previous 5 years or since the doctor last practised in New Zealand (whichever is shorter). COPS are usually sent from the regulatory authority directly to the Medical Council of New Zealand. Letters of standing are similar documents from organisations in cases where a doctor has practised medicine in any place they were not required to be registered.

² [References](#) must be from senior medical colleagues with whom the applicant has been working overseas for at least 6 months within the last 3 years. References must be dated within 6 months of the applicant's proposed start date and need to be sent directly to Council by the referee. References not sent directly to Council will be verified separately at source. References must be written on a RP6 form.

- evidence of any participation in recertification activities, including continuing professional development (CPD)³;
- a detailed return to practice and orientation, induction and supervision plan; and if the doctor is going to practise medicine clinically, the supervision plan should include time as an observer (up to one week, at the discretion of the Registrar). [More details on individual supervision plans](#).

Conditions for doctors who have not worked in New Zealand in the preceding 3 years

Council considers conditions may be required on the scope of practice of a doctor who has not practised medicine in New Zealand in the preceding 3 years. It is a way to assure Council of the doctor's supported practice and the monitoring of competence.

When placing conditions on a doctor's scope of practice, the context and nature of the applicant's medical practice over the previous 3 years is considered. When a doctor has not practised medicine in New Zealand for 3 or more years, they may be subject to additional conditions to provide assurance of their supported return to practice in New Zealand.

If the applicant has not practised in a comparable health system, Council-approved supervision will be required. The applicant must, as part of their practising certificate application, provide a plan for orientation, induction and supervision for consideration and approval.

The table below sets out the different conditions on the applicant's scope of practice that will be proposed.

A doctor who in the last 3 years <i>has</i> practised in comparable health systems for at least 24 months for at least 20 hours per week.	A doctor who in the last 3 years has <i>not</i> practised in comparable health systems for at least 24 months for at least 20 hours per week.
The doctor will not have conditions on their scope of practice unless there are other concerns about their practice.	Conditions will require that the doctor must: • work under the supervision of an approved vocationally registered doctor practising in the same or similar vocational scope of practice • only work in an approved capacity and place of employment • provide us with supervision reports after 1 month, 3 months and every 3 months subsequently. The required supervision period is 6 months of full-time equivalent satisfactory supervised practice.

³ Recertification activities and CPD can include participation in an internship or training programme, audits of medical practice, peer reviews, attending educational conferences, courses and workshops, or self-directed learning programmes and meeting with senior colleagues to discuss practice.

Conditions for a doctor who has not practised medicine for between 3 and 10 years

Doctors who have not practised medicine for more than 3 years will have conditions imposed on their scope of practice.

The conditions will require the doctor to:

- work under the supervision of an approved vocationally registered doctor practising in the same or similar scope practice
- only work in an approved capacity and place of employment
- provide Council with supervision reports after 1 month, 3 months, and every 3 months thereafter
- if returning to clinical practice, achieve advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certification at the level required⁴ within 3 months of resuming practice in New Zealand.

The supervision period is dependent on the time out of practice and can be calculated using the table below.

Between 3 and 5 years out of practice and where satisfactory CPD <i>has</i> been completed	Either: • between 3-5 years out of practice and satisfactory CPD has <i>not</i> been completed; or • between 5 and 10 years out of practice
The doctor must: • complete 6 months FTE of satisfactory supervised practice • provide a supervision report after 1 month, 3 months, and every 3 months subsequently.	The doctor must: • complete 12 months FTE of satisfactory supervised practice • provide a supervision report after 1 month, 3 months, and every 3 months subsequently.

For the purposes of calculating full-time equivalent (FTE), Council considers **30 hours** a week to be full-time.

Conditions for doctors practising in New Zealand who have not worked in a vocational scope they are registered in for 3 years or more

Doctors practising in New Zealand will have supervision requirements placed as a condition on their scope of practice if they wish to practise in an area of medicine that they:

1. Hold a vocational scope⁵ in; **and**
2. Have not practised in for 3 years or more.

If a doctor has not been working in their vocational scope of practise in the preceding 3 years, Council-approved supervision will be required.

The following conditions on the applicant's scope of practice will be proposed:

- Work under the supervision of an approved vocationally registered doctor practising in the same or similar vocational scope of practice.
- Only work in an approved capacity and place of employment.
- Provide us with supervision reports after 1 month, 3 months and every 3 months subsequently.

⁴ Doctors returning to practice in a hospital must complete advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) certification at the level of New Zealand Resuscitation Council Core Advanced. Doctors returning to practice in a primary care setting must complete cardiac life support (ACLS) certification at the level of New Zealand Resuscitation Council CORE Immediate.

⁵ Council recognises [36 vocational scopes of practice](#). These are areas of specialised medical practice, each one is defined by an accredited postgraduate training programme and qualification.

- The required supervision period is 6 months of full-time equivalent satisfactory supervised practice.
- Enrol in appropriate CPD relevant to the area of medicine.

Proposing conditions on a doctor's scope of practice

The doctor will be asked to agree in writing to the proposed conditions. If the doctor agrees in writing, their application can then be approved. If the doctor does not agree to the proposed conditions, the doctor has the right to make submissions to, and be heard by, Council.

Removing conditions on a doctor's scope of practice

Conditions may be removed from a doctor's scope of practice if Council is satisfied that the required supervision period has been completed satisfactorily and that the doctor is able to practise competently and safely without conditions.

Doctors who have not practised medicine for 10 years or more

Any application for a practising certificate from a doctor who has not practised medicine for 10 years or more must be considered at a full meeting of Council.

Related information

- [Practising certificates](#)
- [Reference requirements for applications for registration](#)
- [Certificates of professional status](#)
- [Registration in New Zealand](#)

Version management	
Date	Details
March 2021	Approved by Registrar
	Replaces the following • DM301343 Policy on applications for practising certificates where applicant has been practising overseas, but has not held a New Zealand practising certificate within the last 3 years – September 2017 • DM301284 Policy - (superseded) Applications for practising certificates where applicant has not practised medicine within the last 3 years - September 2017
May 2025	Amendment approved by Registrar
July 2026	Amendment approved by Registrar
July 2031	Scheduled for review
Policy – Practising applications for doctors who have not worked in New Zealand for 3 years or more – March 2021 DM#12220896	