



Occupational Therapy  
Board of New Zealand

TE POARI WHAKAORA NGANGAHAU O AOTEAROA

FOSTERING FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSION

# Guidelines: Supervision Requirements

*Supervision requirements for occupational  
therapists practising in Aotearoa New Zealand*

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***Date: August 2020***

## *Introduction*

Te Poari Whakaora Ngangahau o Aotearoa/ Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) is the Responsible Authority established under the [Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003](#) (HPCAA). The principal purpose of the HPCAA is to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing for mechanisms to ensure that practitioners are competent and fit to practice their professions.

Supervision is considered a critical component of continuing competence by OTBNZ, and is therefore incorporated into the practice of all occupational therapists. In the [glossary of terms](#) provided for interpretation of the HPCAA the following definitions are provided in relation to supervision:

**Supervision** means the monitoring of, and reporting on, the performance of a health practitioner by a professional peer.

**Oversight** means professional support and assistance provided to a health practitioner by a professional peer for the purposes of professional development.

**Professional peer** refers to a health practitioner who is registered with the same authority with which the health practitioner is registered.

All Aotearoa New Zealand occupational therapists are registered within the *General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist*. This scope of practice requires that all occupational therapists practice in accordance with the *OTBNZ Code of Ethics for Occupational Therapists (2015)* and the *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice (2015)*.

The code of ethics presents standards of conduct expected of all occupational therapists registered to practice in Aotearoa New Zealand, and requires that all occupational therapists receive effective professional supervision relevant to their work setting (Principle 1.3.8).

The Code of Ethics defines professional supervision as:

*"A structured intentional relationship within which a practitioner reflects critically on her/his work, and receives feedback and guidance from a supervisor, in order to deliver the best possible service to*

*consumers. Professional supervision may incorporate any aspect of a professional role e.g., clinical, managerial, or cultural, and be one to one, one to group"* (OTBNZ, 2015a).

This is aligned with the Ministry of Health's (2006) definition of professional supervision, which is *"a formal process that provides professional support to enable practitioners to develop their knowledge and competence, be responsible for their own practice, and promote service user health, outcomes and safety"*.

The Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice also require an occupational therapist to utilise and engage in supervision to support competent practice, specifically:

- You recognize your own level of safety, and your legal, ethical and cultural competence, and address any weaknesses. (Competency 4.4)
- You manage your own health and well-being so that you are fit to practice. (Competency 4.13)
- You take responsibility for your own professional development. (Competency 5.1)
- You help to improve occupational therapy knowledge, resources, practices and services. This includes networking with your peers and supervising or mentoring your colleagues or students (Competency 5.4)
- You assess how well your colleagues are supervising, supporting and guiding others. You suggest changes when needed (Competency 5.5).
- You identify gaps in your skills or knowledge. You find ways to learn what you need to know. (Competency 5.7)

The Registrar of the OTBNZ is responsible for ensuring that practising occupational therapists meet the required standards within the Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice and Code of Ethics. In both of these documents there is an expectation that practising occupational therapists receive professional supervision. The OTBNZ also places requirements for supervision on the scope of practice of certain practitioners at the point of registration.

Professional supervision is utilized by OTBNZ in a high trust model. OTBNZ trusts that the

supervision that occupational therapists provide and receive is competent, adheres to OTBNZ requirements and is safe for the practitioner.

## ***OTBNZ supervision requirements***

The OTBNZ requires that all occupational therapists receive professional supervision in accordance with the Code of Ethics and the ePortfolio requirements; and that occupational therapists with a condition or requirement of the recertification programme on their scope of practice receive supervision in accordance with the provisions of the HPCAA.

This document clarifies the different forms of supervision, and the context within which each may be required.

### ***1. Professional Supervision***

A fundamental component of the OTBNZ standards of competence and conduct is the requirement that all practising occupational therapists receive professional supervision as part of their continuing competence, more specifically as set out below.

The scope of professional supervision should include:

- input into client care
- professional development and support
- professional accountability.

The term professional supervision incorporates clinical, managerial and cultural supervision. In line with the high trust model, OTBNZ expects supervision to develop and maintain practitioners' competent professional functioning and well-being, while safe-guarding client care. Supervision should be culturally appropriate and be designed with the practitioner's safety in mind. Power imbalances between supervisor and practitioner should be discussed and mitigated as much as possible before supervision commences.

Supervision should be recorded using a supervision log. These logs can be uploaded to a practitioner's ePortfolio as evidence of receiving supervision. The frequency and mode of supervision may vary according to individual circumstances and practice context. Monthly supervision is recommended as best practice.

## **Cultural competence within professional supervision**

Culturally competent practice is expected by the supervisor when providing supervision.

Supervisors need to have competence to supervise and support the cultural competence expected within the *Competencies of Registration and Continuing Practice*.

Supervision which supports bicultural practice and the expectations of practising in Aotearoa New Zealand under Te Tiriti o Waitangi is required. If a supervisor does not have the competence to provide this, additional supervisory arrangements need to be organised to ensure the practitioner does receive the supervision they require. Kaupapa Māori Supervision may be the most appropriate form of supervision for occupational therapists who identify as Tangata Whenua.

There is no limit to the number of supervisors a practitioner has. Organising supervision which suits individual professional needs is part of maintaining competence. Other supervision arrangements should be documented within the ePortfolio.

## **Distance supervision**

It is becoming increasingly common for health professionals to utilise distance supervision due to the varying and isolated nature of many workplaces. Distance supervision is commonly occurring via online video-conferencing or telephone. Planning to supervise in this way is particularly important if distance supervision is used for the recertification programme or a Board imposed condition. A supervision agreement is essential to lay out the responsibilities of both supervisor and supervisee in these situations and how these will be met within the supervision arrangement.

Ensuring there are good professional networks in place can provide additional support to isolated practitioners (noting that these can be via e-groups, through blogs and other forms of media sites such as Facebook). Please note care must be taken if these applications are used as some information may be private and of a sensitive nature. OTBNZ has guidance about the

use of social media on our website.

## **2. Who can be a professional supervisor?**

In the Code of Ethics OTBNZ has stated a supervisor must be:

*"A person who has sufficient self-awareness, interpersonal competence, and knowledge of processes relevant to the area of practice of the practitioner to facilitate that person's professional development" (OTBNZ, 2015a).*

OTBNZ strongly recommends that therapists wishing to undertake the provision of professional supervision participate in further training to enhance their skills in this area. The OTBNZ recommends that practitioners looking for a supervisor consider the importance of appropriately trained supervisors, and the supervisor's capacity to foster critical reflection as well as challenge and support growth in practice.

All supervisors need to be familiar with the practitioner's practice and ongoing competency.

Supervision must be provided by an occupational therapist with a current practising certificate and no conditions/requirements on their own scope of practice for:

- occupational therapists on a recertification programme
- occupational therapists with conditions on their scope of practice.

Occupational therapists who are on a recertification programme or have conditions on their scope of practice cannot provide ePortfolio supervision, mandatory supervision for the recertification programme or for Board imposed conditions on scope of practice.

OTBNZ recognizes that there are practice situations where there are inherent power imbalances, particularly when there is a limited choice of supervisor for the practitioner. Examples of this may be rural or small service providers, through internal organisational policies of how supervision is provided or when supervision is mandatory or ordered by OTBNZ. Supervisors need to be mindful of these dynamics when providing supervision and mitigate them as much as possible. Ensuring practitioner safety and wellbeing

is an essential element of professional supervision and is part of competent supervisory practice.

## **3. Categories and expectations of OTBNZ required Supervision**

### **ePortfolio Supervision**

As the OTBNZ competence assurance programme, the ePortfolio fulfils the HPCAA requirement "...to adopt and undertake a systematic process for ensuring that the services provided by the practitioner meet the required standard of competence" (section 41 (3)(f) of the HPCAA).

The ePortfolio allows practising occupational therapists to provide evidence of their continued competence by providing a practical, online living tool to record professional development over time. ePortfolio supervision is expected to support this process through active coaching, feedback and guidance of how to make best use of the ePortfolio for this purpose.

ePortfolio supervisors are expected to support practitioners to complete appropriate selfassessments of their competence every two years. ePortfolio supervisors need to provide feedback and guidance about the planned professional development in the ePortfolio to ensure it is maintaining and progressing the competence of the practitioner.

ePortfolio supervisors are required to acknowledge they have provided this support by making two supervisor statements within the ePortfolio platform. These statements need to be made after six months of practice in the ePortfolio cycle. Further information and guidance related to the ePortfolio can be found on the OTBNZ website.

ePortfolio supervision can be provided by an external supervisor who is not an occupational therapist if the practitioner has no conditions or requirements on their scope of practice. Only one ePortfolio supervisor is required to meet OTBNZ requirements but there is the ability to nominate more than one ePortfolio supervisor if this is desired.

ePortfolio supervision is expected to involve:

- Discussion and explanation of the Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice and Code of Ethics.
- Ensuring the practitioner understands the expectations of, and how to use the ePortfolio platform.
- Support for reflective self-assessments of competence.
- Advice and monitoring of the content of goals and developmental activities to ensure they are at the appropriate level for the practitioners experience and practice setting.
- Monitoring engagement and progression of goals and developmental activities through the two year cycle.
- Making the required supervisor statements within the first six months of practice.
- Being available to discuss outcomes and critical reflections with the practitioner.
- Challenge and discuss planned professional development so there is an appropriate progression of competence over time.
- Advice and facilitation of additional supervision if the practitioner's supervisory needs are not being met.
- Support for when a practitioner is chosen for an ePortfolio audit.
- Ethical practice which is supportive, culturally appropriate and mindful of the power differentials inherent in the ePortfolio supervisor position.
- Seeking advice from OTBNZ if concerned about the competence of a practitioner.

### **Supervision for Recertification Programme on Scope of Practice**

The OTBNZ places requirements on the scope of practice of certain practitioners at the point of registration.

OTBNZ's requirements for a recertification programme for registration are:

- **New graduate:** practice is subject to weekly supervision for the first 12 months of practice
- **Return to practice in New Zealand:** practice is subject to fortnightly supervision for the first six months of practice
- **Overseas qualified registrant:** practice is subject to fortnightly supervision for the first six months of practice.
- **Restoration to the register:** Decision on a

case by case bases.

OTBNZ expects supervision for the recertification programme to involve:

- Familiarity with the OTBNZ [recertification programme – Induction and orientation](#) (found on the website)
- Use of the current forms and templates provided on the OTBNZ website to document supervision
- Completion of the supervisor report at the end of the recertification programme
- Discussion and explanation of the Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice and Code of Ethics with practitioners
- Education and orientation of the practitioner to the context of practice in Aotearoa New Zealand. This should include:
  - o Health system and funding models
  - o Legislative environment
  - o ACC
  - o Te Tiriti o Waitangi
- Support to complete the Te Rito online bicultural competency course and other appropriate formal Te Tiriti o Waitangi training and education opportunities
- Explain and assist meeting the expectations of the ePortfolio. This includes:
  - o Acting as the practitioner's ePortfolio supervisor
  - o Making the required ePortfolio supervisor statements within the first six months of practice
  - o Support for reflective self-assessments which focus on competence
  - o Advice and monitoring of the content of goals and developmental activities to ensure they are appropriate for the practitioner's experience and practice setting
  - o Support practitioners undergoing an ePortfolio audit
- Provide advice and support so the practitioner can meet any additional requirements described in their registration letter.
- Monitor professional development and

competence over the period of mandated supervision (six or twelve months)

- Challenge and extend practitioner's to ensure there is a progression of competence over time
- Advise and facilitate additional supervision if practitioner requirements cannot be met
- Provide ethical supervision that is supportive, culturally appropriate and mindful of the power-differentials inherent in supervisory relationships
- Seek advice from OTBNZ if concerned about the competence of a practitioner.

### **Personalised additional reporting requirements**

In some cases, a practitioner may have personalised requirements for their recertification programme. In such cases, the practitioner is advised in writing of the OTBNZ's requirements.

These requirements can involve mandatory supervision and reporting requirements. It is essential to incorporate personalised requirements in the initial supervision agreement.

Supervisors are expected to specifically address any personalized requirements within supervision and report on these in their supervisor report at the end of the recertification programme.

Practitioners with the recertification programme – with induction and orientation on their scope of practice, must receive supervision from a registered occupational therapist with a current license to practice, and no condition /recertification programme requirement on their own scope of practice.

### **Supervision for Board imposed conditions**

In some circumstances the Board imposes a condition/s on a practitioner's scope of practice as a result of an Order of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, a competence, conduct or health issue. Supervision in these circumstances is a requirement of the Board imposed condition.

Typically in these scenarios the supervisor is also approved by the Board. Similarly a Professional Conduct Committee may make a determination or recommendations to the Board that supervision is required.

When the Board imposes a condition of mandated supervision on a scope of practice the OTBNZ will communicate with the supervisor and the

practitioner the reason for the supervision.

The practitioner will be required to undergo the period of specified supervision with the Board approved supervisor, directly related to the condition(s) placed on their scope of practice. This supervision is in addition to any supervisory arrangements the practitioner has in place to meet ePortfolio, recertification programme requirements or other professional needs the practitioner may have.

Board imposed supervision will include compulsory monitoring, evaluating and reporting that is in line with the HPCAA definition of supervision. The supervisory activity is different to other forms of supervision described above. The Board required supervision is usually the result of Board imposed condition/s. This alters the supervisee / supervisor relationship as the supervisor is required to formally report to the Board.

A supervision contract will be provided by the OTBNZ detailing the expectations between OTBNZ, the supervisor and the practitioner. These expectations will include the purpose, functions and requirements of the supervision.

The Board approved supervisor could, if approved, be the same person used for other forms of professional supervision. If this is the case this will be documented in the supervision contract prepared by the OTBNZ, and agreed to by all parties.

Supervision of practitioners with a condition/ requirement on their scope of practice encompasses the expectations of competent professional supervision. It should incorporate elements of professional development, support and reflective practice.

A Board imposed condition can also require that the occupational therapist undergo other evaluative monitoring processes and activities, such as (but not limited to) peer review, specific course attendance, article reviews, practice audit, written reflections. These processes and activities are decided on a case by case basis by the Board.

The OTBNZ is also investigating what other

activities (other than supervision) might be used, to both monitor and gather feedback, regarding the competence of a practitioner.

Practitioners with a condition on their scope of practice must receive supervision carried out by a registered occupational therapist with a current license to practice, and no condition /recertification programme requirement on their own scope of practice.

## **4. Supervision Framework**

### **A supervision agreement**

A supervision agreement is an important founding document in supervision and it is important that the supervisor and practitioner discuss the expectations and boundaries of supervision and document these in a supervision agreement.

Examples of areas to be considered when drawing up an agreement are details of the intended supervision, such as frequency and length of supervision sessions and where or how supervision will take place, including provision for cancellations.

Any agreement will also need to provide terms for the agreement, make provision for payment of supervision charges, and address supervisor and practitioner, responsibilities, confidentiality, record keeping, boundaries of supervision, what functions are included when supervision entails a report to another entity (e.g. the OTBNZ in the case of supervision of those practitioners with conditions). A supervision agreement example can be found on the OTBNZ website.

### **A supervision log**

A log should be maintained that records the details of the nature and frequency of professional supervision. A supervision log template can be found on the OTBNZ website. The log is particularly important to maintain if supervision is mandated as part of the recertification programme – induction and orientation, or for a Board imposed condition. As a guiding framework professional supervision should ensure:

- confidentiality within the limits of a specified supervision agreement or contract, except as required by OTBNZ reporting policy, or by agreement (e.g. the need for disclosure to protect a client, the public or practitioner safety; which should be included in the

supervision agreement)

- evaluation of the supervision agreement or contract on a regular basis
- planning and documentation of how any potential conflicts and power imbalances occurring between the supervisor and practitioner will be addressed
- facilitation of an open and transparent relationship between the supervisor and the practitioner; taking note of the regulatory requirements under the HPCAA
- individual and professional requirements of the practitioner is incorporated
- is in accordance with Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice and the Code of Ethics
- cultural competence of supervisor and practitioner is acknowledged
- cultural models of supervision identified as appropriate by the practitioner are facilitated and supported
- support for bicultural practice appropriate for Aotearoa New Zealand context is incorporated into supervisory practices
- includes regular review of ePortfolio content if the supervisor is the nominated ePortfolio supervisor.

## **5. Supervision and Training**

Safe and competent supervision is a highly skilled practice and requires additional knowledge and training. The OTBNZ recommends any potential supervisor undertake post-graduate training to develop the necessary supervision skills. There are a number of training options available which cater for different levels of competence. These can be tertiary level academic papers, online courses or dedicated workshops and courses.

OTBNZ recommends that practitioners are informed of the competence and experience of potential supervisors as part of establishing the supervisory relationship.

Supervision is used by OTBNZ in a high trust model. It is expected that supervisors meet the *Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice* and *Code of Ethics* within their supervisory practice as well as any other guidance or legislative requirements that may apply.

Evidence of competence in supervisory practice

should be documented through the ePortfolio. For external supervisors who are not practising occupational therapists the practitioner can upload any relevant documentation into their own ePortfolio to provide this evidence.

### **Accessing Supervision**

Supervision is provided as part of standard employment conditions in some workplaces. There are organisations who may not routinely provide for the cost of regular supervision. The cost of supervision varies and it is worthwhile considering negotiating the cost of supervision with your potential employer.

OTBNZ recognises the cost of supervision can be a significant barrier to accessing the professional supervision that may be required. OTBNZ encourages practitioners to discuss such issues with supervisors and managers to problem solve how this can be addressed.

Possible solutions may involve:

- reciprocal supervision arrangements between organisations
- organising mixed forms of supervision such as group, 1:1, virtual or peer review to provide the required frequency of supervision
- developing national supervision networks between occupational therapists who practice in the sector.

OTBNZ currently holds a directory of supervisors who have experience and training in supervision on its website. The Occupational Therapy New Zealand-Whakaora Ngangahau Aotearoa (OT-NZ-WNA) also provides resources to support occupational therapy supervisors.

### **Interested in providing professional supervision?**

OTBNZ provides a public list of potential supervisors on its website for practitioners to access. To be eligible to be placed on this list you must be a registered occupational therapist with a current license to practice and no conditions or requirements on your scope. You must have completed appropriate levels of training in the provision of professional supervision.

All supervisors must have completed the online bicultural competency course Te Rito (funded by OTBNZ) and provide a statement explaining their

experience and/or approach to supervising appropriate bicultural practice. If you would like the OTBNZ to place your name on this list, please complete a supervisor expression of interest form found on the OTBNZ website.

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