



Occupational Therapy  
Board of New Zealand

TE POARI WHAKAORA NGANGAHAU O AOTEAROA

FOSTERING FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN THE PROFESSION

# Competencies for Registration and Continuing Practice



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PLAIN ENGLISH STANDARD

APRIL 2015

# Staying competent and registered as an occupational therapist

This document describes the actions and abilities you need to stay competent as an occupational therapist, and registered with the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand. The document sets out:

- the five broad things you must be competent in
- the outcomes you must achieve
- the specific actions and abilities you must demonstrate

The Occupational Therapy Board is responsible for setting these threshold competence standards under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.

## Your role as an occupational therapist in Aotearoa New Zealand

As an occupational therapist in Aotearoa New Zealand, you work with individuals, families, whānau, communities, organisations, and populations. Your role is to increase and transform people's participation in occupation. This helps to promote and improve wellbeing, health, and social outcomes. You aim to enhance tino rangatiratanga (self-determination), ensure equity, and enable occupational justice.

You practice professionally, with a commitment to addressing both individual and systemic barriers to people's participation in occupation. These barriers

can be cultural, educational, environmental, or social, or related to health, disability, or spirituality.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is the founding document of Aotearoa New Zealand. It shapes the diverse historical and sociopolitical realities of Māori and all other settlers and their descendants. Understanding how Te Tiriti affects all our lives is essential for helping people participate in their desired occupation. Such understanding helps you see how systemic and individual issues can breach people's rights and limit their opportunities to participate in their chosen occupations.

# The five broad things you must be competent in

**AS AN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST, YOU MUST BE COMPETENT IN THE FOLLOWING FIVE THINGS.**

1

Applying occupational therapy knowledge, skills and values

2

Practising appropriately for bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand

3

Building partnerships and collaborating

4

Practising in a safe, legal, ethical and culturally competent way

5

Engaging with and being responsible for your profession

**THESE FIVE THINGS ARE REFERRED TO AS YOUR 'COMPETENCIES'.**



# The outcomes you must achieve

**Each competency has a desired outcome. You must achieve these outcomes in your daily practice, regardless of the setting or your level of experience.**

## 1. APPLYING OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND VALUES

You apply what you know. You engage with people and communities to enable occupations based on rights, needs, preferences and capacities. You work within the context of each client's\* environment to optimise their participation and well-being.

## 2. PRACTISING APPROPRIATELY FOR BICULTURAL AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

You treat people of all cultures appropriately. You acknowledge and respond to the history, cultures, and social structures influencing health and occupation in Aotearoa New Zealand. You take into account Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi and work towards equal outcomes for all your clients.

## 3. BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATING

You collaborate. You work well with other individuals, groups, communities and organisations. You use your own and others' resources, environment and skills to benefit your clients.

## 4. PRACTISING IN A SAFE, LEGAL, ETHICAL AND CULTURALLY COMPETENT WAY

You act with integrity. You include safety, legal, ethical, and cultural requirements and expectations in your professional practice, and apply them to your work.

## 5. ENGAGING WITH AND BEING RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR PROFESSION

You engage with your profession. You ensure your practice is professional, current, responsive, collaborative, and evidence-based.

\*Client' refers to any individual, family or whānau, community, organisation or population you provide a service to.






## The specific actions and abilities you must demonstrate

**You will achieve each competency and its outcome by demonstrating specific actions and abilities. These are referred to as your 'performance indicators', because they indicate whether you are performing to an acceptable standard.**

**You are not required to demonstrate all the performance indicators all of the time.**



# 1. Applying occupational therapy knowledge, skills and values

You apply what you know. You engage with people and communities to enable occupations based on rights, needs, preferences and capacities. You work within the context of each client's environment to optimise their participation and well-being.

To achieve this competency and its outcome, you must demonstrate the following abilities and actions:

- 1.1 You apply an occupational perspective to your practice.
- 1.2 You work within the scope of occupational therapy practice. You identify the boundaries of the service you can provide, and make appropriate referrals.
- 1.3 You use a range of strategies for communicating. You adapt how you communicate to each context, acknowledging and respecting the values, beliefs, attitudes and practices of your clients / tangata whaiora (Māori clients).
- 1.4 You enable and empower your clients / tangata whaiora to improve their own occupational performance and participation.
- 1.5 You collaborate with people and communities to establish priorities and goals that you all agree on.
- 1.6 You select the appropriate assessments and evaluations when planning your practice.
- 1.7 You use current theory and evidence, as well as sound clinical reasoning, to help you make decisions and use the best processes in your practice.
- 1.8 You identify the individuals, organisations or sections of the community that help, hinder or pose risks to your practice.
- 1.9 You recognise and respect that each individual is unique, and you practise in a way that respects mana (status) and wairua (spirit).
- 1.10 You help your clients live ordinary lives within their natural environments. You engage them in sustainable occupations that they find meaningful and valuable.
- 1.11 You choose and use a range of strategies, including: helping clients to adapt, modifying their environments, developing their skills, and teaching them processes for learning. You consult, advocate, and coach.
- 1.12 You evaluate your practice using appropriate measures and client feedback. You review, modify or complete your practice based on this evaluation.
- 1.13 You identify, express, document and justify the strategies you choose as appropriate for your clients, based on the results of your assessment.
- 1.14 You keep appropriate records of the services you provide. These records are suitable for evaluating your services, your professional performance, and your business.
- 1.15 You promote healthy practices, attitudes, and environments that contribute to occupational well-being.
- 1.16 You understand and recognise key Māori concepts, and you include appropriate tikanga (Māori customs) in your practice.
- 1.17 You facilitate and advocate for occupational justice.



## 2. Practising appropriately for bicultural Aotearoa New Zealand

You treat people of all cultures appropriately. You acknowledge and respond to the history, cultures, and social structures influencing health and occupation in Aotearoa New Zealand. You take into account Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi and work towards equal outcomes for all your clients.

To achieve this competency and its outcome, you must demonstrate the following abilities and actions:

- 2.1 You understand the effects of Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi on Māori health and social outcomes.
- 2.2 You recognise your responsibility as a health professional to ensure equal health outcomes for all your clients / tangata whaiora (Māori clients).
- 2.3 You recognise the effect of structural, systemic and historical decisions on individuals, as well as on their choices and their occupational possibilities.
- 2.4 You understand the factors contributing to rates of Māori mortality, imprisonment, health and social participation. You understand why Māori outcomes differ to those of non-Māori.
- 2.5 You understand the factors contributing to the occupational and health needs of specific clients, including Māori, tau iwi (non-Māori), Pacific peoples, refugees, new settlers and others.
- 2.6 You develop strategies and practise in ways that promote equal outcomes for Māori and other groups that are occupationally compromised.
- 2.7 You recognise that different communities need different resources. You make sure these resources are available or developed.
- 2.8 You adapt your services to each client. You acknowledge and respect that a client's culture or ethnicity may affect how they wish to be treated.
- 2.9 You acknowledge diversity across and within all groups, whether Māori or tau iwi.
- 2.10 You identify your own cultural values, beliefs, attitudes and assumptions about what people are entitled to. You understand the effect these ideas have on the decisions you make in your practice.
- 2.11 You recognise that your peers, colleagues and clients all bring different realities and identities to your practice.
- 2.12 You understand sociopolitical, governmental and organisational processes for making decisions and setting policies. You understand the effects of these decisions and policies on services for different cultural groups.
- 2.13 You take your responsibilities under Te Tiriti o Waitangi The Treaty of Waitangi seriously. You meet and develop relationships with local iwi and with people who work in Māori health, welfare and education.
- 2.14 You identify your own role in building and sustaining relationships with whānau, hapū, iwi, Māori organisations and tangata whenua as a whole.
- 2.15 You understand power imbalance between different cultures. You negotiate appropriately when collaborating, consulting or partnering with Māori.



### 3. Building partnerships and collaborating

**You collaborate. You work well with other individuals, groups, communities and organisations.  
You use your own and others' resources, environment and skills to benefit your clients.**

To achieve this competency and its outcome, you must demonstrate the following abilities and actions:

- 3.1 You work well both alone and with others to ensure the best outcomes for your clients / tangata whaiora (Māori clients).
- 3.2 You act with integrity, building and maintaining respectful relationships with your clients, colleagues, peers and other professionals.
- 3.3 You recognise when the boundaries between personal and professional relationships are not clear enough, and how this affects your team or your clients.
- 3.4 You contribute to developing and achieving the objectives of your team.
- 3.5 You work well with people in other professions, making sure you treat clients consistently to achieve common goals.
- 3.6 You engage with the principles and processes of quality improvement.
- 3.7 You practise within the established standards, policies, guidelines, procedures and expectations of the organisation, agency or funding body you work for.
- 3.8 You create, monitor or challenge standards, policies and procedures to ensure they meet professional competencies.
- 3.9 You work with your colleagues to recognise and address any cultural assumptions that affect the quality of your services.
- 3.10 You contribute to supporting, guiding, and developing your team members.
- 3.11 You look out for legitimate, evidence-based developments in the field of occupational therapy that could be applied to your practice.
- 3.12 You promote occupational therapy to services, organisations, communities and agencies.





## 4. Practising in a safe, legal, ethical and culturally competent way

You act with integrity. You include safety, legal, ethical, and cultural requirements and expectations in your professional practice, and apply them to your work.

To achieve this competency and its outcome, you must demonstrate the following abilities and actions:

- 4.1 You understand, justify and promote that all clients deserve equal services.
- 4.2 You understand, explain and promote personal choice and control for your clients.
- 4.3 You practise in ways that show you appreciate the complexity of cultures, identity, ethnicity and how people relate to and connect with their natural environment.
- 4.4 You recognise your own level of safety, and your legal, ethical and cultural competence, and address any weaknesses.
- 4.5 You acknowledge, identify and safely respond to the values, beliefs, attitudes and practices of your clients / tangata whaiora (Māori clients).
- 4.6 You identify cultural differences and how these might affect communication.
- 4.7 Your relationships with your clients are ethically sound and culturally safe.
- 4.8 You use reasoning and reflection to make and justify your decisions on ethical issues.
- 4.9 You promptly identify, explore and address potential conflicts of interest.
- 4.10 You recognise and address issues that compromise your own or others' safety.
- 4.11 Your actions comply with the legislation, regulations, service standards, and professional and ethical guidelines relevant to your area of practice. You can justify your actions.
- 4.12 You develop and maintain a safe environment. You balance safety, risk and participation when treating your clients.
- 4.13 You manage your own health and well-being so that you are fit to practice.



## 5. Engaging with and being responsible for your profession

You engage with your profession. You ensure your practice is professional, current, responsive, collaborative, and evidence-based.

To achieve this competency and its outcome, you must demonstrate the following abilities and actions:

- 5.1 You take responsibility for your own professional development.
- 5.2 You critically appraise and use professional literature to update your knowledge of current theories, techniques, technology, outcomes and practice. You use current developments in your practice.
- 5.3 You understand and contribute to research that furthers occupational therapy practice.
- 5.4 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.
- 5.5 You assess how well your colleagues are supervising, supporting and guiding others. You suggest changes when needed.
- 5.6 You reflect on your own and others' competence, knowledge, skills and attitudes, and work to improve them.
- 5.7 You identify gaps in your skills or knowledge. You find a way to learn what you need to know.
- 5.8 You reflect on how your professional abilities, attitudes, strengths and limitations affect your practice and the services you provide.
- 5.9 You support new areas of practice and knowledge.
- 5.10 You are aware of how sociopolitical trends – including funding, delivery, education, staffing and career choices – affect occupational therapy services.



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