

Contents

Message from the Presiding Member	1	Revised standard for recency of practice takes effect from 1 December 2016	3
Reminder to renew online, on time	2	Approved programs of study	3
2015/16 annual report now published	2	For more information	3
Online graduate applications now open	2		
Board and AHPRA publish health profession agreement	2		

Message from the Presiding Member

Welcome to the latest edition of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia newsletter, the final one for 2016. We hope that the information included is helpful and we would be pleased to receive your feedback, including suggestions as to what you'd like to hear about from the Board.

In the last newsletter, we included information about advertising and the National Law. This month, I would like to highlight one of the basic tenets of the National Law¹, which provides the regulatory framework for all physiotherapists in Australia.

Fundamentally, and most importantly, the National Law protects titles rather than acts, a significant change from previous laws that were in place in the various state and territories. The National Law intentionally does not define the scope of practice that a physiotherapist can perform. Only practitioners who are registered with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia (and consequently have met the initial registration and ongoing professional obligations), may use the protected titles 'physiotherapist' or 'physical therapist'. By not defining the scope of practice the physiotherapy workforce can be flexible in the roles undertaken and innovation in practice can be fostered. Essentially this means that a physiotherapist can define their own scope of practice but must be able to provide evidence that they are qualified and competent to perform any intervention used, should they be asked to do so through audit or if a complaint is made against them.

The Board's *Code of conduct* (the code) is the 'go-to' document for physiotherapists. It is used when evaluating the professional conduct of physiotherapists. If professional conduct varies significantly from the code, physiotherapists should be prepared to explain and justify their decisions and actions. Serious or repeated failure to meet the code may have consequences for registration. It is also a guide to the public and consumers of health services about what good practice is and the standard of behaviour they should expect from health practitioners.

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

The code is not an exhaustive study of professional ethics or an ethics guide. It does not address the standards of practice within individual health professions or disciplines. However, no matter where a physiotherapist works, they continue to be obliged to meet the requirements of the National Law, which include the registration standards and the Code of conduct.

Given that the National Law protects titles rather than defining scopes of practice, the following broad definition of practice is published in all registration standards. I raise it again here to help those physiotherapists querying whether their chosen scope would be considered physiotherapy practice and therefore guide whether they should be registered (and can therefore use the title 'physiotherapist'):

Practice means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a practitioner in their regulated health profession. For the purposes of this code, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also includes using professional knowledge in a direct non-clinical relationship with patients or clients, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles and any other roles that have an impact on safe, effective delivery of health services in the health profession.

Whatever scope of practice may be chosen, it is up to the physiotherapist to undertake the minimum required 20 hours of continuing professional development that is relevant to their chosen scope of practice. See the Board's Continuing professional development registration standard for more details.

The Board, in conjunction with the other National Boards which share the same code, will begin a review of the *Code of conduct* in 2017. We will seek your feedback when revisions are drafted and will provide you with an update on progress of the review in the next newsletter.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish all physiotherapists and their families a safe and peaceful festive season. This year seems to have flown by but we look forward to communicating with you again in 2017.

Charles Flynn
Presiding Member, Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Reminder to renew online, on time

Physiotherapists with general or non-practising registration are due to renew online by **30 November 2016**.

Under the National Law, registered health practitioners are responsible for renewing their registration on time each year.

A series of new-look reminders to [renew online](#) are being sent to practitioners by AHPRA on behalf of the Board. The email reminders include a helpful information box with links to the [password reset function](#) and to a [video](#) explaining how to renew online.

Further information

Useful information for physiotherapists is on the Board's website:

- [Registration standards](#)
- [Registration renewal](#)
- [Renewal FAQ](#)

2015/16 annual report now published

The AHPRA and National Boards' annual report covering the financial year to 30 June 2016 was tabled in parliament on Friday 11 November.

The report provides a nationwide snapshot of the work of AHPRA and the National Boards, including the Physiotherapy Board of Australia, in implementing the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme (the National Scheme). It also includes Board-specific data and highlights a multi-profession approach to risk-based regulation with a clear focus on ensuring that Australians have a safe and competent health workforce.

Insights from the year include:

More practitioners: There were almost 20,000 more registrants in 2015/16 than there were last year, totalling 657,621 health practitioners across the 14 regulated health professions. Student registrations increased by more than 11,000 registrants year-on-year, to 153,710.

Growth in notifications: There were 10,082 notifications received during the year, an increase of 19.7% nationally (representing 1.5% of the registration base). The top three notifier complaints related to clinical care (41.8%), medication issues (11.5%) and health impairment (10.7%). This may be attributed to greater awareness of the National Scheme, due to a nationwide campaign aimed at employers, practitioners and the general public.

Improved monitoring and compliance to ensure public safety: 2,532 practitioners were being monitored for health, performance and/or conduct in 2015/16. A National Restrictions Library was launched, which currently contains 73 restrictions (conditions and undertakings) to improve national consistency.

Further highlights are included in the Physiotherapy Board of Australia [news item](#). To view the 2015/16 annual report in full, along with supplementary tables that break down data across categories such as registrations, notifications, statutory offences, tribunals and appeals, and monitoring and compliance, see www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2016.

In the coming months, AHPRA and the National Boards will also publish summaries of our work regulating health practitioners in every state and territory, which will be released in late 2016. Expanded, profession-specific summaries will also be released and progressively published from early 2017.

Online graduate applications now open

AHPRA is now calling for final-year students of physiotherapy to apply for registration online.

An email sent to students on the Student Register urged individuals who will complete their approved program of study by the end of 2016 to [apply online](#) for provisional or general registration four to six weeks before finishing their course.

All applicants need to post hardcopies of [supporting documents](#) to AHPRA to complete their application. Information about the supporting documents is included in the *Next steps checklist* which is emailed to each student upon receipt of their online application.

The Board has published a PowerPoint presentation on its website to assist final-year students who will be seeking registration: this is published on the [Student registrations](#) page.

Students are encouraged to read the information on AHPRA's website under [Graduate applications](#). Graduates can start practising as soon as their name is published on the [national register of practitioners](#).

Board and AHPRA publish health profession agreement

The Physiotherapy Board of Australia (the Board) and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) have published the health profession agreement (HPA) for 2016-20.

The HPA sets out the partnership between the Board and AHPRA, and the services AHPRA will provide in supporting the Board to carry out its functions within the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, (National Scheme) in the public interest.

The 14 National Boards and AHPRA are committed to working together to ensure not only transparency and accountability in financial reporting, but also in the role both play in protecting the public through the regulation of the professions under the National Law.

The 2016-20 Physiotherapy Board of Australia and AHPRA Health Profession Agreement is available on the [Health Profession Agreements](#) page.

Revised standard for recency of practice takes effect from 1 December 2016

The revised registration standard for recency of practice takes effect from 1 December.

The Physiotherapy Board of Australia has previously published the revised standard and supporting materials to help physiotherapists to understand the new requirements.

This standard applies to all registered physiotherapists except those with non-practising registration. Practitioners will need to meet the obligations of the revised standard by the time they renew their registration in 2017.

What's changed?

The key change to the Board's recency of practice requirements is that a requirement for minimum hours of practice has been introduced.

To meet the standard, physiotherapists must practise within their scope of practice at any time for a minimum total of:

- 450 hours in the previous three years (approx. three months full time), or
- 150 hours in the previous 12 months (approx. one month full time).

Most practitioners who are currently practising will meet the revised standard.

This change may affect those physiotherapists who are currently practising infrequently, or who have had a recent absence from practice, or who are currently taking a break from practice and wish to return to practice. The revised standard was published well in advance of its date of effect to give practitioners adequate time to prepare for the changes to the recency requirements.

The Board encourages all practitioners to review the new registration standard to check whether they will be affected by these changes.

If a physiotherapist cannot meet the minimum hours of practice in the revised standard, this will not necessarily prevent them from returning to practice as a physiotherapist. The standard sets out the options for physiotherapists who don't meet the standard, including those with non-practising registration and physiotherapists who are not registered and wish to return to practice after 1 December 2016.

The Board has also published [guidelines](#) and [FAQs](#) to support the standard and to help practitioners understand its requirements.

More information

The revised standard was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 27 August 2015 and was reviewed as part of a scheduled review of standards. A public consultation was held as part of the review, and the submissions to the public consultation **are published on the Board's website**. A brief consultation report which outlines the public consultation and rationale for any changes has also previously been published by National Boards.

Please refer to AHPRA's [registration standards page](#) for additional information and resources.

Approved programs of study

One of the Board's roles under the National Law is to consider reports from the Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC) about its accreditation decisions of physiotherapy programs of study and the providers of those programs of study.

Approved programs of study are published on a searchable database on the [Board's website](#). In accordance with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law), a program of study becomes an *approved* program of study once it is published on the Board's website and only then can it be used for registration purposes.

Further information about the accreditation process can be found at the [APC website](#).

For more information

- Visit the [Board's website](#) for the mandatory registration standards, codes, guidelines and FAQ.
- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#).
- For registration enquiries, call 1300 419 495 (from within Australia) or +61 3 9275 9009 (for overseas callers).
- Address mail correspondence to:
Charles Flynn, Presiding Member, Physiotherapy Board of Australia,
GPO Box 9958, Melbourne, VIC 3001.