



NZSTA Registered Member Return to Practice Framework

A guide to support members returning to the profession

Policy Statement

The New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) promotes and maintains its members' high standards of education, clinical practice and ethical conduct. Speech-language therapists who have in the past been eligible for membership of the NZSTA but have not practised for three or more years or do not meet the recency of practice criteria of 1000 clinical hours within the last five years are required to complete a Registered Member - Return to Practice (RTP) programme to ensure these high standards are maintained. The programme is increasingly rigorous as the time since the most recent practice increases.

Document Control

Date	Version	Approved by	Amendments made
2015	1.0	NZSTA Board	
2022	2.0	Executive Director	Minor amendments to make it consistent with the CPD Framework 2022
2023 – July	4.0	Executive Director	Clarifying unit requirements within a calendar year.

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1. Introduction

This guide covers the requirements of members who are returning to practice after a significant break or who do not meet the recency of practice requirement of 1000 hours in the last five years.

To maintain registered member status, you must;

- meet the criteria for membership
- sign an annual declaration
- meet the recency of practice requirements, and
- meet professional development requirements.

There are three common conditions on a Registered Member category that have added requirements or restrictions on the scope of practice:

Registered member – Not Dysphagia Trained

Registered member – Return to Practice

Registered member - New Graduate Member

NZSTA's RTP programme has the purpose of:

- updating the member's knowledge base
- re-establishing professional networks and
- acting as a mechanism of support to the member when returning to the profession.

It is intended that people wishing to re-enter the profession will be supported to achieve this goal to enrich and strengthen the speech-language therapy workforce in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Members who have in the past been eligible for membership of the NZSTA are required to participate in an RTP programme if they have not practised in the previous three years or if they do not meet the recency of practice criteria of 1000 clinical hours within the last five years. During the period from application for the RTP programme and signing off, these members shall be known as Registered Member with the condition of 'return to practice' on their scope of practice and will be referred to in this document as 'Return to Practice members' or 'RTP members'.

Following successful completion of the RTP programme, RTP members may move to the Registered Member category either with no conditions on their scope of practice or with the condition of insufficient dysphagia competence, depending on circumstances.

New graduates who have not practised for three or more years following graduation would move to the RTP category of registered membership upon securing their first job, fulfilling all requirements of the RTP Framework Guide.

All members seeking to undertake an RTP process should be familiar with the [Competency-Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathology \(CBOS\)](#) document and its terminology.

2. Who is required to complete an RTP programme?

Speech-language therapists who have in the past been eligible for registered member status of the NZSTA but have not practised for three years or more or do not have sufficient recency of practice (1000 clinical hours within the previous five years) are required to complete a 'Return to Practice' programme to ensure high standards of practice are maintained. The programme is increasingly rigorous as the time since the most recent practice increases. Requirements for each timeframe are shown in Table 1 below.

NZSTA does not require speech-language therapists who change their speciality or area of practice to undergo a Return to Practice programme. The NZSTA recommends that speech-language therapists in this situation negotiate with their employer to ensure sufficient support is in place to

ensure safe practice. The online supervision log (within the CPD module) and the competency document provided (Appendix A) could be used to record the support received and the competency developed in the first few months of working in the new role.

3. Process

Becoming or maintaining Registered Member status under the Return to Practice sub-category

Upon renewing (or applying for) membership, those members who have been non-practising for three years or more or who do not have sufficient recency of practice (1000 clinical hours within the previous five years) are required to contact NZSTA office to indicate they need to complete an RTP programme.

RTP members are required to advise NZSTA of the name, membership number and details of their supervisor within one month (four weeks) of commencing employment.

Learning, Support and Documentation Required

Requirements for RTP members reflect the three aspects of the RTP framework:

- a) Continuing professional development (CPD)
- b) Supervised practice
- c) Competency sign-off.

An RTP plan must be developed and approved by the professional standards portfolio holder. Depending on the number of years out of clinical practice, requirements are summarised in Table 1. Evidence of 60 CPD units per calendar year is to be submitted by those who return to practice after three years or more of non-practising or who do not meet the recency of practice criteria of 1000 clinical hours within the last five years. Additionally, a six-month log of supervision activities (which meets the supervision criteria below) is to be submitted by those who return to practice after four or more years. For those who have been non-practising for five or more years, evidence of competency, agreed upon and later signed off by their supervisor, is also required. Competency is to be demonstrated across the range of skills required within the RTP member's current employment situation. The relevant documentation must be submitted to NZSTA's office via [email](#) or post.

Table 1

Time since the most recent practice	Requirements	Documentation to be submitted
Three years or more or do not have sufficient recency of practice	60 units of continuing professional development per calendar year as per NZSTA CPD policy. Prepare a plan for professional development for the next 12 months, and submit it to the professional standards portfolio holder for approval.	Log of CPD using NZSTA online CPD Module. RTP Plan approval and sign-off from professional standards.
Four years or more	60 units of continuing professional development per calendar year as per NZSTA CPD policy. *Supervision for the first six months following the return to practice and as per NZSTA supervision policy thereafter. Prepare a plan for professional development for the next 12 months and submit it to the professional standards portfolio holder for approval.	Log of CPD using NZSTA online CPD Module Log of supervision activities using NZSTA online CPD Module RTP Plan approval and sign-off from professional standards.
Five years or more	60 units of continuing professional development per calendar year as per NZSTA CPD policy. *Supervision for the first six months following the return to practice and as per NZSTA supervision policy thereafter. Submission of evidence of competency to NZSTA. Prepare a plan for professional development for the next 12 months and submit it to the professional standards portfolio holder for approval.	Log of CPD using NZSTA online CPD Module Log of supervision activities using NZSTA online CPD Module. Competency document (Appendix B) RTP Plan approval and sign-off from professional standards.
Twelve years or more	Complete university coursework, including clinical placement and assessment, to demonstrate up-to-date knowledge and practice. Fulfil all other requirements of the RTP Framework Guide.	Liaise with NZSTA for guidance. RTP Plan approval and sign-off from professional standards.

4. Decision-making regarding RTP requirements

The supervisor has the final sign-off on the achievement of the competencies (required after five or more years of non-practising). The supervisor must sight and sign off the RTP member's portfolio of evidence and their summary table. The portfolio summary table must then be submitted to the NZSTA Office. The sign-off documentation by the clinical supervisor will be regarded as a determining factor in accepting that competencies have been maintained and/or developed in this period of return to practice. If the supervisor and/or the RTP member have queries about evidence, either party may contact the [office](#) for support.

5. Appeal

If the RTP member disputes the decision by the clinical supervisor regarding sign-off, they should contact the [office](#). A mediation process will involve the supervisor, the RTP member and a member of the Board. If necessary, an independent review of the RTP member's evidence will be requested. The final decision will sit with a committee comprising professional standards, professional development, and member networks portfolio holders.

6. Supervision

What constitutes supervision?

There are guidelines about the amount of supervision that should occur during the return to practice timeframe. It is recommended that the RTP member participates in approximately one supervision session every two weeks (for full-time – this can be reduced for part-time workers, but there is a minimum expectation of one supervision session per month for all RTP members regardless of hours of practice). This supervision could include peer or group supervision but should include 1:1 supervision sessions with the named supervisor. Supervisory activities should include a combination of on-site observations as well as monitoring activities that may be off-site. The quality of supervision is at least as important as the frequency of supervision. High-quality supervision, with full engagement from the RTP member and the supervisor, is critical to a successful return to practice. Examples of supervisory activities should include:

- Directly observing the RTP member during the delivery of speech-language therapy services and giving feedback
- Conferring with the RTP member concerning assessment and/or treatment strategies and issues arising from the practice
- Observing the RTP member participating in case conferences
- Evaluating clinical records of the RTP member
- Evaluating the RTP member on the basis of consultation with professional colleagues or employer

A log of all supervision activities must be kept, with each activity signed by the supervisor. This log is the RTP member's responsibility and will be submitted at the end of the six-month supervisory period.

Who provides the supervision?

An RTP member can only be supervised by an individual who holds current Registered Member status (without caveat) with the NZSTA. The supervisor is responsible for maintaining membership during the entire return to practice period. If multiple individuals supervise the RTP member, it is the responsibility of the RTP member to collate the evaluations of all supervisors to verify that all procedures have been met. Supervisors earn continuing education points for their efforts. (Refer to the CPD Framework.)

Please note:

The RTP member must contact the NZSTA Office with their supervisor's name, membership number and details within one month (four weeks) of commencing employment.

To be read in conjunction with

Appendix A: RTP Planning Sheet

Appendix B: RTP Framework Competencies

References

Speech Pathology Australia. (2011). Re-entry to Practising Membership Policy. Policy and Procedure Manual. Policy number 11.3 Accessed 1 March 2014 from www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au/library/policies_and_procedures/11.03_Re-entry_to_Practising_Membership.pdf

The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Limited. (2011). Competency-based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists: Entry Level. <https://speechtherapy.org.nz/assets/Uploads/CBOS-2011-Revised-ATSI-Content-Web-8-1-v2.pdf>