



New Zealand Speech-language Therapists' Association

Te Kāhui Kaiwhakatikatika Reo Kōrero o Aotearoa

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) is responsible for the promotion and maintenance of the high standards of education, clinical practice and ethical conduct of its members. Speech Language Therapists who have in the past been eligible for membership of the NZSTA but have not practised for 3 or more 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.

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1. Introduction

Members of NZSTA may be Registered members or student members. There are four registered member categories three of which have extra requirements:

- a) Registered member – Not Dysphagia Trained
- b) Registered member – Return to Practice
- c) Registered member - New Graduate Member

This guide covers the requirements of members who are returning to practice after a significant break.

NZSTA's RTP programme has the same purpose as the Re-entry programme for Speech Pathology Australia:

...to update an applicant's knowledge base, re-establish professional networks and act as a mechanism of support to the applicant 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 (Speech Pathology Australia, 2011 p.1).

Members who have in the past been eligible for membership of the NZSTA are required to participate in a RTP programme if they have not practised in the previous 3 years. During the period from application for the RTP programme and sign off these members shall be known as 'registered members – return to practice' of the NZSTA 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 either registered member status or to the insufficient dysphagia competence category of registered membership, depending on their circumstances. Registered Members - New graduates who have not practised for 3 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 a 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 a RTP programme?

Speech language therapists who have in the past been eligible for registered member status of the NZSTA but have not practised for 3 years or more 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.

Speech Language Therapists who change their specialty or area of practice are not required by NZSTA 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. A Supervision Log and the competency document provided (Appendix A) could be used to record the support received and the competency developed in the first few months working in the new role.

3. Process

Becoming a Registered Member under the Return to Practice sub-category

Upon renewing (or applying for) membership, those members who have been non-practising for 3 years or more are required to contact NZSTA office to indicate they need to complete a RTP programme.

RTP members who have been non-practising for 4 years or more are required to advise NZSTA of the name, membership number and details of their supervisor within one month (4 weeks) of commencing employment.

Learning, Support and Documentation Required

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

- a) Continuing professional development (CPD)
- b) Supervised practice
- c) Signoff of competency

Evidence of 100 CPD points (gained during the first 12 months of practice) is to be submitted by those who return to practice after 3 years or more non-practising. Additionally, a 6-month log of supervision activities (which meet the supervision criteria below) is to be submitted by those who return to practice after 4 years or more. For those who have been non-practising for 5 or more years, evidence of competency, agreed and later signed off by their supervisor, is also required. Competency is to be demonstrated across the range of skills that are required within the RTP member's current employment situation. The different requirements are summarised in Table 1 below. The relevant documentation must be submitted to NZSTA's office via [email](#) or post.

Table 1

Time since most recent practice	Requirements	Documentation to be submitted
3 years or more	100 points of continuing professional development in first 12 months of the return to practice.	Log of CPD using standard CPD form.
4 years or more	100 points of continuing professional development in first 12 months of the return to practice. Supervision for the first 6 months following the return to practice	Log of CPD using standard CPD form. Log of supervision activities.
5 years or more	100 points of continuing professional development in first 12 months of the return to practice. Supervision for the first 6 months following the return to practice Submission of evidence of competency to NZSTA	Log of CPD using standard CPD form. Log of supervision activities. Competency document (Appendix B)
12 years or more	Complete University coursework including clinical placement and assessment to demonstrate up to date knowledge and practice. Fulfill all other requirements of the RTP Framework Guide.	Liaise with NZSTA for guidance

4. Decision making regarding RTP requirements

The supervisor has final sign-off on the achievement of the competencies (required after 5 or more years non-practising). The supervisor must sign 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 occur involving the supervisor, 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 the Professional Standards, Professional Development, and Member Networks sub-committee.

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 which may be off-site. The quality of supervision is at least as important as frequency of supervision. High quality supervision, with full engagement from the RTP member and the supervisor is critical to successful return to practice. Examples of supervisory activities should include:

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

A log must be kept of all supervision activities, with each activity signed by the supervisor. This log is the responsibility of the RTP member and is to be submitted at the end of the 6 month supervisory period.

Who provides the supervision?

A RTP member can only be supervised by an individual who holds current Registered Member status (without caveat) with the NZSTA. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to maintain membership during the entire return to practice period. If the RTP member is supervised by multiple individuals, 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 the name, membership number and details of their supervisor within one month (4 weeks) of commencing employment.

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References

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