



# Re-Entry to Practice Guide

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## Introduction

The mandate of the Nova Scotia Occupational Therapy Regulator is to ensure the public receives safe, effective, and ethical care. One way that NSOTR ensures that applicants for licensure or renewal of a licence possess current knowledge and the skills and judgement to practice safely and effectively is the **Currency** requirement.

Applicants for licensure or renewal of a licence must have either:

- graduated from a recognized Canadian Occupational Therapy program in the past 18 months;  
**OR**
- completed 600 **currency hours** in the 3 years prior to their application. (Currency hours are defined as paid hours of service within the scope of practice of the profession of occupational therapy).

The **Re-Entry to Practice process** provides a mechanism for applicants and registrants who do not meet the Currency requirement to return to practice while protecting the public. To start the Re-Entry to Practice process, an applicant or registrant must meet [all registration and licensure requirements](#) other than the Currency requirement.

NSOTR acknowledges that applicants for Re-Entry to Practice may have previously demonstrated safe and ethical practice; therefore, this process is not a training program but an opportunity to refresh skills and knowledge.

The Re-Entry to Practice process consists of additional requirements and conditions, which are determined based on:

- the applicant's practice experience within the past three to ten years
- the results of a **Registration Competency Evaluation**
- the details of the applicant's intended role(s), practice setting(s), or area(s) of practice

While participating in the Re-Entry to Practice process, a registrant will hold a **Conditional** licence. After completion of all requirements of the process, they may be eligible for a **Practicing** Licence.

## This Document

This Guide includes information for applicants, employers, and supervising therapists, including:

- a description of the Re-Entry to Practice process
- information about the Registration Competency Evaluation
- expectations for participants in the Re-Entry to Practice process
- expectations for Re-Entry to Practice supervised practice

If you have any questions about the contents of this document, please contact NSOTR at [registration@nsotr.ca](mailto:registration@nsotr.ca) or call 902-455-0556.



## Section 1: Re-Entry Program Application Process

### Step One: Application

NSOTR can only formally assess Currency **after** an applicant submits a **complete** application for registration and licensure or renewal of their licence through the NSOTR [online portal](#). NSOTR does not pre-assess applications.

When an applicant is identified (either self-identified or by NSOTR staff) as not meeting the Currency requirement, NSOTR will ask the applicant if they want to participate in the Re-Entry to Practice process.

If an applicant does not meet the Currency requirement and chooses not to participate in the Re-Entry to Practice process, they are not eligible for a licence with NSOTR.

### Step Two: Competence Inventory

In addition to the information on the application for registration and licensure or renewal, the applicant completes a *Competence Inventory Form*. This form collects information about:

- activities and experience related to occupational therapy
- intended area(s) of practice, client population(s), and practice setting(s)
- familiarity with NSOTR Practice Standards and Guidelines
- knowledge of specific practice areas
- potential risks or gaps in competence
- available supports to competence

### ***Arranging Employment for Re-Entry to Practice***

Before completing the Competence Inventory Form, it is recommended, but not required, that the applicant **locate an employment position and supervising therapist(s) to support their Re-Entry to Practice**.

A period of supervised practice is required for almost all participants in the Re-Entry to Practice process. It is the applicant's responsibility to identify and arrange an appropriate employment position and supervisor to meet this requirement. NSOTR cannot assist in locating appropriate employment or a supervising therapist.

A participant in the Re-Entry process must practice occupational therapy frequently and consistently enough to build and renew their knowledge, skills, and competence and ensure they have a regular connection with their supervisor(s). Therefore, NSOTR strongly recommends that a participant in the Re-Entry to Practice process arrange employment within the scope of occupational therapy for **at least 3 days per week**.

To support sufficient supervision in each employment position and/or practice area, a participant who has multiple employers for their Re-Entry to Practice may be required to complete at least 150 hours of supervised practice at **each** employer, regardless of the overall number of supervised practice hours they must complete.

### ***Applicants Who Have Not Located a Position***

If the applicant has not located a position, they may still complete the *Competence Inventory*. However, they must at the very least **clearly decide in which area(s) of practice or practice settings they would be willing to work**.

NSOTR will use the information an applicant provides in their *Competence Inventory Form* to inform their **interim Decision Letter** (see below), which will explain the terms and requirements of your Re-Entry to Practice. The more specific and detailed the information an applicant provides on their *Competence Inventory Form* is, the more likely it is that the interim Decision Letter will closely match the requirements and conditions of the final Decision Letter.

## **Step Three: Registration Competency Evaluation**

Within 30 days of the date that the applicant submits their completed *Competence Inventory Form* and any other information requested by NSOTR to assess their past experience and competence, NSOTR will provide an opportunity for the applicant to complete a **Registration Competency Evaluation (RCE)**. The RCE is intended to identify any learning needs, competence gaps, or areas where the applicant may need support to be successful in their Re-Entry to Practice. More information about the RCE can be found below under “Section 4: Registration Competency Evaluation.”

## **Step Four: Decision Letter**

Within 30 days of the RCE, NSOTR will provide the applicant with a **Decision Letter** that lists the terms and requirements of their Re-Entry to Practice.

The minimum requirements for Re-Entry to Practice are determined by applicant’s recent practice experience of occupational therapy, as specified in *NSOTR Registration and Licensing Policy Schedule 4: Re-Entry to Practice*. However, the exact requirements may vary depending on the results of the RCE.

### ***Interim Decision Letters***

If the applicant has **not** yet located an employment position for supervised practice, NSOTR will issue an **interim Decision Letter**. This letter will list the *expected* terms and requirements of their Re-Entry to Practice, based on the information they provided in their *Competence Inventory Form* and the results of their RCE.

This interim Decision Letter will be valid for a specific period of time, as indicated in the letter, and the applicant must locate an employment position before their the letter expires. Once the applicant has

found a position, NSOTR will review the proposed employment and supervision arrangement (see below). NSOTR will then issue a **final Decision Letter**. NSOTR may change the terms and requirements in this final letter from the interim Decision Letter based on the details of the employment position. Please note that the terms and requirements of the final letter may be different from the interim letter if:

- the proposed employment position does not match the practice settings, roles, or practice areas identified on the *Competence Inventory Form*
- NSOTR considers the proposed position to include an increased or decreased level of risk to public safety

If the interim Decision Letter expires, the registrant may need to complete a new RCE and/or a new application for licensure before they can participate in the Re-Entry to Practice process.

### ***Review of Decision***

If the applicant disagrees with the requirements in the Decision Letter, they may request a review of these decisions by the Registration and Licensing Review Committee.

## **Step Five: Consent and Approval of Supervised Practice**

The applicant must next confirm their agreement with the terms, conditions, and/or restrictions in the Decision Letter.

They must submit a completed *Re-Entry Supervision Application*, signed by the employer, applicant, and supervising therapist(s). NSOTR will review this form and provide written approval if the supervision arrangement is acceptable.

## **Step Six: Approval of Conditional Licence**

If all other registration and licensing requirements are met, the Registrar will now grant the applicant a **Conditional Licence**. The applicant may now begin their period of Re-Entry supervised practice.

## Section 2: Re-Entry Program Requirements

Re-Entry Program requirements are described in the Decision Letter. They are personalized to the applicant, depending on the applicant's experience and practice scope and situation.

The minimum requirements for Re-Entry to Practice are determined by applicant's recent practice experience of occupational therapy, as specified in *NSOTR Registration and Licensing Policy Schedule 4: Re-Entry to Practice*. However, the exact requirements may vary depending on the results of the RCE and the details of the applicant's proposed employment and practice setting.

Possible requirements include:

**Annual E-Learning Modules:** the applicant must review and successfully complete all Practice Education Modules ("eLearning") which are available through the Regulator, except for any module which they completed in the past 3 years.

**Standards Reflection:** the applicant must review all current Regulator Practice Standards, Practice Guidelines, and the Code of Ethics, and write a reflection paper that explains how the Standards apply to their practice, to the satisfaction of the Registrar.

**Supervised Practice:** a period of supervised practice under the supervision of a qualified occupational therapist in an employment setting approved by NSOTR. The Decision Letter will state the specific number of hours that must be completed and the deadline for completion. Further information on supervised practice can be found below.

**Learning Contract:** the applicant will create a Learning Contract (as described in the Guide to Supervised Practice) with their supervising therapist based on the results of the Registration Competency Assessment (RCA).

- The applicant must submit a copy signed by themselves and their supervising therapist to the Regulator for approval.
- The Learning Contract must address all learning needs identified in the RCA.
- To complete this requirement, the Supervising Therapist must confirm that the supervised registrant has successfully completed all Learning Goals identified in the Learning Contract.

**Competency Assessment:** Complete the Regulator's Competence Review process within 18 months of being notified of the requirement. If the Competence Review identifies any learning needs, the applicant/registrant must address these or complete Competence Improvement to complete Return-to-Practice.

**National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE):** The Registration and Licensure Committee will consider whether the registrant/applicant must re-write the NOTCE. If required, the registrant/applicant provide proof they are registered for the next available sitting of the NOTCE before they can be licensed and begin supervised practice. The registrant /applicant must complete the NOTCE

within 18 months of being notified of the requirements. The registrant/applicant may show proof they passed the NOTCE by providing a copy of their NOTCE exam certificate to the Regulator as a PDF document.

**Additional Requirements:** Re-Entry Program requirements may also include completion of learning activities or bridging education, **at the registrant/applicant's expense**. These additional requirements address specific learning needs, competency gaps, or potential risks that are identified during the RCE. In the case of substantial learning needs or gaps, these learning activities may be substantial. These learning activities may include, but are not limited to:

- auditing or participating in **formal academic programming**, such as certificates, degrees, etc.
- **professional development activities**, such as training sessions, workshops, and courses, etc.
- formal **mentorship arrangements** with another occupational therapist (in addition to supervised practice)

The registrant/applicant must provide NSOTR with proof of completion of any additional required learning activities to complete the Re-Entry to Practice process.

## Completing the Re-Entry to Practice Process

A registrant can complete the Re-Entry to Practice process by completing all of the requirements in their Decision Letter while holding a Conditional licence with NSOTR.

Once NSOTR receives evidence that the registrant has met all the requirements in their Decision Letter, NSOTR staff will assess the registrant's eligibility for a Practising Licence.

If all requirements are met and no further information or evidence is required, the Registrar will grant the registrant a **Practising** licence and notify them in writing.

After completing the Re-Entry Program, the applicant will have **18 months** to obtain sufficient currency hours to maintain licensure under the NSOTR *Registration and Licensure Policies*.



## Section 3: Re-Entry to Practice and Supervised Practice

A period of supervised practice is often part of the Re-Entry Process. This supervised practice must meet the requirements of **Level 2 Supervised Practice**, as described in the NSOTR [Guide to Supervised Practice](#). As is the case for all supervised registrants, a registrant who is in the Re-entry to Practice Process may not engage in supervised practice as a contractor or through self-employment.

All registrants in the Re-Entry to Practice process will have a condition of **“Re-Entry to Practice”** on their licence, indicating that they must meet certain terms and requirements as a condition of their licensure.

A registrant who requires supervision will have also have condition of **“Supervised Practice: Re-Entry”** on their licence. While this condition is on their licence, the registrant may only practice occupational therapy in an **employment** setting and under the supervision of an occupational therapist approved by NSOTR. Please note that a registrant in the Re-Entry to Practice process may not practice occupational therapy as an independent contractor or through self-employment.

The **“Supervised Practice: Re-Entry”** condition will remain on the registrant’s licence until they have completed all requirements of the Re-Entry process. This means that **even if the registrant completes the required number of hours of supervised practice, they must continue practicing under supervision** if other requirements are still incomplete (for example, a course or an assessment). NSOTR will inform the registrant in writing when the supervised practice condition is lifted.

### Proving Completion of Supervised Practice

Upon completion of the required period of supervised practice, NSOTR must receive a final evaluation from the supervising therapist(s) using NSOTR’s *Supervision Evaluation Form*, including an attestation of the number of hours completed. The final evaluation must be signed by the supervised registrant and supervising therapist(s).

The Registrar may also require the supervised registrant and supervising therapist(s) to provide a mid-term report if the total number of required hours is 300 or more, or if the supervised practice will take place over more than two calendar months.

### Requirements for Supervisors

To act as a supervising therapist for a participant in the Re-Entry Program, an occupational therapist must meet the requirements stated in the *Guide to Supervised Practice*, which include:

- hold a practicing licence with NSOTR in good standing\*
- reside in Nova Scotia\*\*
- practice at the same physical site as the supervised OT during approximately the same hours they will be practicing there\*\*
- be engaged in a similar scope and area of practice to the supervised OT

- have a minimum three (3) years of full-time practice experience, with at least one year in Nova Scotia

In addition to the above, a Supervisor for the Re-Entry to Practice process must:

- commit to providing appropriate supervision for the duration of the Re-entry to Practice process
- not be placed in conflict of interest by providing supervision to the applicant, as described in the NSOTR *Standards for Conflict of Interest*.

\* **“Good standing”** means a registrant who holds a licence, is current in their continuing competence requirements, does not owe any outstanding fees or costs to the Regulator and is not subject to any licensing sanction or ongoing regulatory process that impacts their ability to act as a supervisor.

\*\* these requirements can be waived at the discretion of the Registrar.

A supervising occupational therapist also agrees to:

- comply with any additional requirements concerning the supervision or practice arrangement of the supervised OT which are specified by the Registration and Licensing decision maker or an authorized committee;
- promptly report to NSOTR in writing concerning the performance and conduct of the supervised OT upon request;
- notify NSOTR promptly if they are concerned about the practice of the supervised OT or if any change occurs in supervision;
- remain in good standing with NSOTR for as long as they act as a supervising therapist and notify NSOTR immediately if they are no longer eligible to be a supervising therapist; and
- if necessary, enter into a written agreement with NSOTR that defines additional obligations, procedures, or conditions for them to act as a supervising therapist for Re-Entry to Practice Supervision.

## Supervision Plans

A Supervision Plan explains how and when supervision will take place and sets clear expectations and procedures for supervised practice. It is often combined with a mentorship plan.

While this Supervision Plan Template provides a guide on the structure of the supervision, it is also important to **communicate clear expectations to all parties** on how supervision will occur during the period that this Supervision Plan is in place.

For this reason, NSOTR strongly encourages that the Supervision Plan be developed in dialogue between the supervised registrant, their supervisor, and the employer and account for the fit of all parties' learning and communication styles and support needs.

**A Supervision Plan should include:**

- The frequency and duration of meetings between the supervisor(s) and the supervised registrant
- If there are multiple supervisors, the periods during which each person will be responsible for supervising the supervised registrant
- When and if in-person or direct observations of practice will occur
- How the registrant will contact their supervisor(s) in urgent or emergency situations
- How the supervisor(s) plans on monitoring practice while off-site (for example, evaluation of charting, caseload management, file review, etc.)
- Any restrictions or additional safeguards in place to ensure the safety of clients and the supervised registrant (for example, not using a specific higher-risk practice approach without supervision or oversight appropriate to the situation and the supervised registrant's competencies)

**A Template for a Supervision Plan is included in the *Re-Entry Supervision Application Form*.**



## Section 4: Registration Competency Evaluation

The Registration Competency Evaluation (RCE) is conducted in an interview format and may take up to two (2) hours. The interview is conducted by an NSOTR staff member or trained peer assessor, who will be asking about 30 scripted questions. This is a behavioral-based interview which means that the questions ask you to provide specific examples from your practice or to explain in detail how you would handle a hypothetical situation for each response.

The RCE is not an examination, and it is not possible to “fail” the RCE. It is an opportunity to reflect on your practice and demonstrate how you incorporate the *Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada* (“Competencies”) and Standards of Practice (“Standards”) into your daily work. The purpose of the RCE is to identify areas of strength as well as areas for professional growth and development and potential learning needs or gaps in competence that need to be addressed to support your successful Re-Entry to Practice.

### Scoring

Based on your responses to the questions, your assessor will assign a score for each question. Response options are:

- Meets expectations
- Learning need identified
- High risk response

For each question, your assessor will also write several sentences that summarize your response. They will also comment on your overall strengths and areas for learning.

### Results

The results of the RCE will not be shared with you immediately. However, at the end of the interview, your assessor may offer brief coaching and share resources with you.

The results of the RCE, including all responses and information you provide, will be treated as confidential personal information and will be used, protected, and stored in line with the [NSOTR Privacy Policy](#). The results of the RCE will be reviewed by NSOTR staff and may also be reviewed by the Registration and Licensing Committee if requested by the Registrar.

NSOTR will use the results of your RCE to inform the terms and requirements of your Re-Entry to Practice process, as indicated in your Decision Letter (either interim or final). If learning needs or competence gaps are identified, NSOTR may suggest or require specific learning activities to meet those needs as part of your Re-Entry to Practice process. The complete results of your RCE will be shared with you along with your Decision Letter. If you wish, you may request a meeting with NSOTR staff to review the results.

## Preparing for the Interview

Preparation is important. Here are some of the ways to prepare for the RCE:

- Review your answers on the *Competence Inventory Form*
- Be prepared to describe specific examples from your practice.
- Set aside specific preparation time in your schedule
- Review the “required reading” resources below and consider how they apply to your practice
- Contact NSOTR’s Regulatory Program Coordinator if you have any questions: [practice@nsotr.ca](mailto:practice@nsotr.ca)

## Required Reading: NSOTR Documents

- [Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada](#)
- [NSOTR Practice Standards and Guidelines](#)
- [NSOTR Code of Ethics](#)
- *Personal Health Information Act*
- *NSOTR New Registrant Guide*
- *NSOTR Guide to Supervised Practice*

Other important resources to review include relevant legislation to your area of practice and recent publications or research on best practices in occupational therapy.



## Checklist for Virtual Assessments

This checklist is intended to support peer assessors and occupational therapists who are participating in a virtual Registration Competency Evaluation. Please review the checklist prior to your assessment.

### Technology

- I have access to technology including a laptop with a camera and sound
- I have tested my technology – video, sound, and internet connection
- I have downloaded the required software (example: MS Teams) and tested it
- I have a plan in place if I have any issues with technology during the competency assessment (i.e. I will use my phone to call in if my computer audio is not working or if I am disconnected)

### Confidentiality and Privacy

- I am in a private room free of distractions
- I will inform the assessor if anyone else enters the room I am in, and understand that the assessor shall do the same.
- I agree that I will not record, copy, or retain details of the Competence Review.
- I agree that I will **not share the details** of the Competence Review with others.

### Declarations

- I agree that I will not be assisted by others during the assessment; for example, I will not receive assistance from another person or use technology, including Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- I agree not to make false statements.