

We are receiving questions from practitioners about the new recertification programme design. We will continue to update the Q&A link below with these questions and our answers.

If you'd like to ask us a question, email recertification@dcnz.org.nz.

Recertification programme Q&As

Updated 17 June 2020

Question 1

What happens if I am not working during an APC cycle because I am taking maternity leave?

For most people there will be two options:

- You can adjust your professional development plan (PDP) to reflect your professional development activities (PDAs) and professional peer interactions before, during and after your maternity leave. The PDP can span several years if necessary.
- If you are taking extended maternity leave or it won't be possible for you to undertake any PDAs or professional peer interactions, you can declare that you have not met that recertification for this year and provide an explanation. This won't prevent you from being issued with an APC.

The new recertification programme has been designed to give you flexibility if your work or personal circumstances change.

A PDP is a living document that can be updated at any time to allow for life changes. As your PDP can span multiple years, it can be adjusted while you take maternity leave or in other situations where you need to take leave from work.

Everyone's situation will be different. Some people will be able to continue to participate in a reduced level of PDAs during maternity leave, but others won't. Similarly, some people will be able to keep in touch with their professional peer, while others may not.

You will be best placed to determine what level of PDAs, if any, are required to ensure you are competent when you return to work.

Once the new recertification programme is in place, you will need to make a series of declarations when you apply for an APC each year. If you had planned to continue PDAs at a low level during maternity leave, then you would likely declare that those requirements had been met.

If you declare that you were not able to complete your planned PDAs or meet some of the other requirements of the recertification programme, that would not on its own result in your APC being withheld. However, during the declaration process you will be asked to provide an explanation, including how you propose to meet the requirements when you return to work, and the Registrar may contact you for further information if required.

Question 2

I work with another dental hygienist whose spouse is also a hygienist. Would it be appropriate for them to nominate each other as their professional peer?

It would be appropriate in some circumstances, but Council would want both practitioners to be aware of and manage any actual or perceived conflict of interest.

One key objective for having a professional peer is to provide you with credible feedback on your professional development. If there is a potential conflict of interest, that may impact on the credibility of feedback you receive.

Our guidance will emphasise the benefit of having a professional peer who is somewhat removed from your personal and business interests. However, Council doesn't want to preclude practitioners from nominating their spouse or business partner, as in some circumstances that may be the best option for a practitioner's professional development.

Council also wants to ensure any conflicts of interest are managed appropriately. So a professional peer will be asked to declare any actual or perceived conflict of interest when they submit their annual confirmation of the practitioner's professional development.

Question 3

You had proposed to include eye health declarations for over 50-year olds in the recertification programme. Has there been a final decision?

Yes, Council has decided to not include eye health declarations in the recertification programme at this time. Instead there will be an additional question on the annual practising certificate (APC) form asking practitioners whether they have had an eye test in the past 2 years. This question is for information purposes only and will allow Council to gather evidence to support future decisions about eye health requirements.

Council continued to receive questions about eye health from practitioners and asked our recertification project team to make further enquiries into the evidence which formed the basis of advice given by optometrists and ophthalmologists.

We found that guidelines on eye testing vary significantly around the world. We also found that the guidelines published by optometrists and ophthalmologists are generally based upon a professional consensus, rather than clinical trials.

We did find some well-designed studies into the eye health of dentists and other oral health practitioners. The results of this research supported the original eye testing regime that Council proposed. However, the research was based upon relatively small sample sizes.

We anticipate that Council's decision will raise awareness amongst practitioners about the importance of eye health, and give Council a view of the extent to which practitioners are complying with voluntary guidelines that all practitioners should have an eye test every 2 years.

Question 4

I have been living and working in the United States for the last few years, but I have kept up with your previous recertification requirements and maintained my registration as "non-practising" to keep the option of returning to New Zealand open. How will the new requirements apply to me?

When you apply for your “non-practising” APC each year you will need to make declarations about having a PDP, completing PDAs and written reflection, and interacting with a professional peer.

In your circumstances the professional peer requirement may be challenging. A professional peer needs to be registered with the Dental Council in New Zealand but does not need to be practising in New Zealand.

You may be able to find a professional peer in the United States who meets that requirement. Alternatively, peer interactions do not need to be face-to-face so it may be feasible for you to maintain a professional peer relationship with a practitioner who is based in New Zealand.

We expect many different scenarios will apply to registered practitioners returning to work in New Zealand from overseas and the new recertification programme has been designed to be flexible enough to take these differences into account.

As was previously the case, you will be required to continue with professional development to ensure you are competent when you return to New Zealand.

Declaring that you were unable to meet some or all requirements of the recertification programme would not necessarily mean that you can no longer continue to be registered with a non-practising status. However, you will be asked to give an explanation, including how you propose to meet the requirements as quickly as is practical for you.

Also, please bear in mind that if you return to New Zealand and have **not practised for more than 3 years**, when you apply for an APC you would need to satisfy the Registrar that you have maintained competence. This may include providing evidence of your PDPs, PDAs, written reflection and professional peer interactions since you last practised.

Question 5

Does the Council need to see a formal record of my PDP and PDAs? If so, what format should these take?

No. You do not need to provide Council with a copy of your PDP, PDAs and written reflection, you just need to declare that you have completed them. However, Council may ask to see a copy in the future, so you need to make sure you keep copies for at least 3 years.

The format of the PDP is up to you, and Council is keen for practitioners to try different approaches that work for them. Council will issue some templates and examples to help people get started. In March 2020 we held a number of focus groups with practitioners to get feedback on some draft templates and examples.

Question 6

How do I go about finding and nominating my professional peer?

If you belong to a peer group or study group, then that would be a good place to start. Otherwise use your professional networks, and if you belong to a professional organisation then branch meetings and conferences will be good options. Once you’ve found someone and they have agreed

to be your peer, then you can nominate them using the Dental Council's online services. We'll send you a reminder email when it's time to nominate a peer.

Council is preparing a recertification handbook for practitioners with guidance on meeting the requirements of the programme, including tips on how to find a suitable peer. There will also be a step-by-step guide on how to nominate your peer using our online services.

Council also plans to invite practitioners to volunteer to make themselves available to be a professional peer for others. The list of volunteers will also be available using our online services.

Question 7

Do the current PDA's and hours I have already completed count towards the new recertification programme?

No, your current recertification programme runs through to 31 December 2021 and any PDAs and hours you have accumulated up to that date will need to be self-declared to Council to mark the end of the old programmes.

Please note that for the new recertification programme there is **no quota of PDA hours**.

Question 8

Can I make a self-declaration about my current verified CPD hours and have them transferred over to the new programme?

Council has decided to waive recertification requirements for 12 months. This means that all practitioners will have until 31 December 2021 to meet their CPD hours and peer contact requirements.

Practitioners will need to submit a self-declaration of their CPD activities and peer contacts after 31 December 2021. The self-declaration template is not yet available, but before it is due we will send you an email with instructions on how to submit your self-declaration electronically.

The most important thing is to ensure that the email address we have on record for you is current and that you can access your CPD records at the appropriate time.

Also, please note that for the new recertification programme there is **no quota of PDA hours**.