



AUSTRALIAN  
PHYSIOTHERAPY  
ASSOCIATION

# APA Career Pathway: Standards – Recency of Practice & Continuous Practice Experience

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# Contents

Introduction.....	3
Recency of Practice Standards .....	3
Continuous Practice Area Standards .....	4
References .....	5

## Introduction

The APA has consistent standards in place to guide the profession, which follow the external health regulatory requirements for clinical practice, and the standard higher education requirements for non-clinical aspects.

There are two different types of 'recency' that are incorporated in the seven roles or domains and competence framework – in simple terms these are:

- recency of practice – which relate to clinical recency and are set by AHPRA and the Physiotherapy Board of Australia
- recent experience – this relates to non-clinical aspects such as leadership, management, etc.

'Experience' is used as an umbrella term, and may include demonstration of competence or skills, professional development, etc.

## Recency of Practice Standards

There are different time periods that relate to clinical roles and competencies and non-clinical roles and competencies. The standards are:

- recency of practice – APA uses the AHPRA and Physiotherapy Board of Australia registration standards
- recent experience – APA uses post-graduate education leadership and management/business course standards

As at February 2020 these standards are:

- recency of practice): 450 hours in three years or 150 hours of practice in one year (AHPRA July 2019)
- recent experience: 10 years.

These are updated from time-to-time, and the current external standards will apply.

# Continuous Practice Area Standards

Members will enter a milestone level, progress through it, and then exit the milestone level. Across the seven roles and competencies, a physiotherapist may enter and exit these levels at quite different points in their career journey.

The Career Pathway has flexibility built in to enable physiotherapists to undertake the most relevant learning for them at the appropriate career points. The guidelines on entry level minimum practice area experience are set as realistic and achievable minimum entry points to ensure that members are not unnecessarily delayed in progressing their career journey.

The APA aligns to the Australian Qualifications Framework and Career Pathway for continuous practice area experience.

Explanations:

- Practice area experience relates the specific national group practice-area – for example, Gerontology or Paediatrics
- Continuous practice area experience – similar in concept to continuous employment service. For example, maternity or paternity leave doesn't break your period of continuous practice area experience, however it doesn't count towards it either

In many cases, physiotherapists will have several years work experience before moving into a particular national group practice area. For example, a physiotherapist may have five years full-time experience, however only two years continuous practice area experience in neurology. They may also have many years more continuous practice area experience than the minimum requirements. Reasons vary and anecdotally this includes:

- undertaking an APA course as CPD refresher or evidence update
- the APA course includes particular topics of interest for their role or work setting
- the member is at a point in their career journey where they wish to progress through the APA credentialing pathway of titling and Fellowship.

There is a difference between the continuous practice experience to enter a milestone level and to complete it. For example, it takes a minimum of one year's continuous practice experience to progress from the start of level 2 through to completion of level 2.

The following table indicates the generally accepted minimum continuous practice area experience to enter and exit a milestone level.

**Table 1. Minimum continuous practice area experience to enter and exit levels**

Milestone Level	Minimum continuous practice area experience to enter or 'start' a level	Minimum continuous practice area experience to complete or 'exit' a level
Milestone Level 1 – Foundation	Nil	1 year
Milestone Level 2 – Intermediate	1 year	2 years
Milestone Level 3 – Highly Developed	2 years	3 years

## References

APA Career Pathway - Competence Framework V6.0, retrieved 2 February 2020,  
<https://australian.physio/pd/career-pathway>

AHPRA – Physiotherapy Board of Australia Recency of Practice, July 2019,  
<https://www.physiotherapyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines/Recency-of-practice-guidelines.aspx>

APA's Education Principles of Access, Equity and RPL

APA's Credit Pathways Policy