



SUPERVISION OF VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS

VETERINARY PRACTITIONERS REGISTRATION BOARD OF VICTORIA POLICY

CONTENTS

Introduction.....	3
Scope	3
Purpose of supervision	3
Determining the Requirement for supervision.....	4
Minimum criteria for supervisors.....	4
Principal and temporary supervisors.....	5
Levels of supervision.....	5
Direct supervision	5
Indirect supervision.....	6
Responsibilities	6
Supervisor’s responsibilities.....	6
Supervised veterinary practitioner’s responsibilities.....	7
Expectations of employers	8
Acknowledgement.....	9
Version history	9

INTRODUCTION

This policy states the Board's approach to the imposition of conditions requiring supervision on veterinary practitioners granted registration by the Board under the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* (the Act).

The policy sets out requirements for the supervision of veterinary practitioners, and explains

- what the Board expects of veterinary practitioners on whose registration the Board has imposed a condition that they are to be supervised by another veterinary practitioner
- what the Board expects of a veterinary practitioner who has agreed to supervise a veterinary practitioner and has been approved by the Board to provide that supervision, and
- what the Board expects of the supervised veterinary practitioner's employer.

This policy aims to be flexible. Individuals can propose arrangements that do not fit within this policy to the Board. The Board will consider each proposal on its individual merits and will only approve supervision arrangements that it considers to be safe.

SCOPE

This policy applies where the Board has imposed supervision by another veterinary practitioner as a condition of a veterinary practitioner's registration. The Board may impose conditions on a veterinary practitioner's registration under the following sections of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* (VPA):

Section VPA	Description
Section 6(3)	as a requirement of general registration granted under section 6 of the Act
Section 7(2)	as a requirement of specific registration granted under section 7(1) of the Act
Section 7A(2)	as a requirement of non-practising registration granted under section 7A of the Act
Section 29(b)	as a result of an impairment investigation
Section 31(2)	at the request of a practitioner with an impairment
Section 45(2)(f)	as a determination of a formal hearing
Section 46(2)(a)	as a determination of an impairment formal hearing
Section 46(3)	as a determination of an impairment formal hearing upon re-application for registration

This policy does not apply to veterinary practitioners on whom the Board has not imposed a condition relating to supervision on their registration. This policy does not extend to private supervision arrangements between an employer and a veterinary practitioner.

PURPOSE OF SUPERVISION

In all cases, the support and monitoring provided by supervision gives assurance to the Board, the veterinary profession, and the public that the practice of a veterinary practitioner is safe and is not putting the public and the health and safety of animals at risk.

Supervision may also:

- provide support to international veterinary graduates with qualifications that are not recognised by the Board to undertake training to achieve the competencies required for general registration
- assist veterinary practitioners who have not practised recently to re-gain the competencies required to practise without supervision
- monitor and assist veterinary practitioners who are the subject of an investigation into or determinations about their health, fitness to practise and/or professional conduct, to maintain or re-gain the competencies required to practise without supervision.

DETERMINING THE REQUIREMENT FOR SUPERVISION

The Board considers the following factors when deciding whether supervision is required, and if so, which level of supervision is appropriate:

1. The section of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* under which the person has been (or will be) granted registration by the Board.
2. The position that the person has been offered (or holds), including:
 - the requirements of the position including the type of skills required for the position
 - the seniority of the position, e.g. at a tertiary institution or hospital
 - the location of practice and the availability of supports, e.g. other practitioners
 - the level of risk of the position.
3. The qualifications, training and experience of the person, including:
 - their previous experience in the type of position for which they have applied
 - their experience and familiarity with the regulation of the veterinary profession in Victoria
 - their experience or familiarity with veterinary practice in Victoria or other jurisdictions in Australia or New Zealand
 - whether they have practised recently, and the scope of their recent practice.
4. Matters relating to the fitness to practise or professional conduct of the veterinary practitioner, including:
 - any ongoing disciplinary proceedings or investigations
 - any impairment which may affect the person's ability to practise
 - a finding of unprofessional conduct which may affect practice.
5. The availability of a veterinary practitioner who meets the minimum criteria for a supervisor and is able and willing to provide the required level of supervision.

MINIMUM CRITERIA FOR SUPERVISORS

A person proposed as a supervisor:

- must be on the Register of Veterinary Practitioners (Victoria) and must have been practising as a veterinary practitioner in Victoria for at least 3 years (full-time equivalent practice)
- must be appropriately qualified, preferably in the same field of veterinary practice as the position proposed for the person they will be supervising
- must have good standing in the profession. Factors the Board may consider to assess the professional standing of a proposed supervisor include:
 - whether the Board has imposed conditions on their registration or undertakings accepted by the Board as a result of health or conduct issues
 - the past complaint or notification history of the proposed supervisor, and any disciplinary action or conviction resulting from proceedings under the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* (or the relevant law in other jurisdictions where the proposed supervisor was registered previously)
- must **not** be an employee, relative, or domestic partner of the person they will be supervising, and
- must **not** be providing direct supervision to more than three other veterinary practitioners.

The Board may decide not to approve a proposed supervisor, or may revoke approval of a supervisor, if it receives a serious allegation about the supervisor's conduct, performance or health.

After the Board approves a nominated supervisor, the approved supervisor must sign a supervisory agreement consenting to provide supervision at the required level.

If supervision is a condition of registration, the Board will not grant registration to an applicant for registration until it receives a supervisor's agreement signed by the approved supervisor.

PRINCIPAL AND TEMPORARY SUPERVISORS

All veterinary practitioners on whose registration the Board has imposed a condition requiring supervision will have a Board-approved principal supervisor.

The principal supervisor may delegate supervision to up to two temporary supervisors to cover personal or annual leave and other absences. If the principal supervisor delegates supervision to a temporary supervisor, they must ensure that any temporary supervisor has the necessary skills and experience to provide supervision.

The principal supervisor must inform the Board of the arrangements that will be made when the principal supervisor is absent.

Multiple principal supervisors

Veterinary practitioners to whom the Board has granted registration under section 7(1)(c) of the *Veterinary Practice Act* may have a condition on their registration that allows them to undergo training under direct supervision at more than one veterinary practice, e.g. a small animal practice and a large animal practice.

In such cases, the Board may appoint a principal supervisor to supervise the veterinary practitioner at each veterinary practice where they will be undergoing training.

LEVELS OF SUPERVISION

The Board may impose either **direct supervision** or **indirect supervision** on a veterinary practitioner's registration, as defined below.

The Board decides the level of supervision required for a veterinary practitioner, considering the factors set out in the section in this policy, [Determining the requirement for supervision](#). The Board may change the level of supervision that applies to a veterinary practitioner's practice at any time in the period during which supervision is imposed, unless a level of supervision is prescribed by the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997*.

Supervision arrangements approved by the Board must be in place at all times when the supervised veterinary practitioner is practising. The supervised veterinary practitioner must not practise if the supervision arrangements cannot be met.

DIRECT SUPERVISION

When a condition requiring direct supervision is imposed on a veterinary practitioner's registration, the supervisor must be physically present at the workplace at all times the supervised veterinary practitioner is practising, including any after hours or on-call practice. The supervisor must accompany the person being supervised if practice occurs elsewhere, e.g. a home or farm visit.

The supervising veterinary practitioner has principal responsibility for the standard of care provided to each individual patient seen by the person under their supervision.

The level of responsibility the supervised veterinary practitioner is allowed to take for patient management will be based on the supervisor's assessment of their knowledge and competence. The supervisor will ensure that the supervised veterinary practitioner consults their supervisor as directed. The supervised veterinary practitioner must consult their supervisor as directed.

The supervised veterinary practitioner must also seek early guidance and assistance if they have a problem or recognise that they have reached the limits of their professional competence.

Imposition of direct supervision

The Board may decide that direct supervision is appropriate for a veterinary practitioner who:

- has not practised recently, or has only worked in a very limited field of practice
- is subject to Board disciplinary proceedings or a determination relating to their professional conduct or fitness to practise.

The *Veterinary Practice Act 1997* prescribes supervision for veterinary practitioners to whom the Board grants specific registration under section 7(1)(c) of the Act, 'to enable [them] to undergo training, under the direct supervision of a registered veterinary practitioner, to acquire the competencies required [for general registration] under section 6.'

INDIRECT SUPERVISION

When a condition requiring indirect supervision is imposed on a veterinary practitioner's registration, the supervisor does not have to be physically present, but must be able to be consulted (e.g. by telephone or email) if the supervised veterinary practitioner requires assistance while practising.

While the supervised veterinary practitioner takes primary responsibility for each individual patient, the supervisor has broad responsibility for the standard of care provided by the person under their supervision.

The supervisor oversees the supervised person's practice and ensures that there are mechanisms in place to monitor whether the supervised veterinary practitioner is practising safely.

Imposition of indirect supervision

The Board may decide that indirect supervision is appropriate for a veterinary practitioner to whom it has:

- granted specific registration under section 7(1)(b) of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997*, to enable that applicant to fill a veterinary teaching or research position at a tertiary institution approved by the Board, or
- granted specific registration under section 7(1)(d) of the *Veterinary Practice Act 1997*, to meet an identified need for a veterinary practitioner.

The Board may decide that indirect supervision is appropriate for a veterinary practitioner who:

- has not practised recently, or has only worked in a very limited field of practice
- is subject to Board disciplinary proceedings or a determination relating to their professional conduct or fitness to practise.

RESPONSIBILITIES

SUPERVISOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the supervisor's responsibility to:

- agree to provide supervision at a level determined by the Board, and maintain the prescribed level of supervision throughout the period of supervision
- discuss supervision requirements with the supervised veterinary practitioner before practice commences
- where there are multiple supervisors, ensure they maintain communication about the supervised veterinary practitioner with other supervisors
- ensure the supervised veterinary practitioner is practising safely and is not placing the public or the health and welfare of animals at risk. This includes ensuring that the supervised person does not undertake activities unassisted without having the competence to undertake them at the standard expected of a registered veterinary practitioner. Competencies for providing safe care include:
 - how to assess an animal accurately
 - how to recognise the sick animal
 - how and when to refer an animal
 - safe prescribing
 - appropriate ordering of investigations and interpreting the results of investigations
 - treatment and management protocols
 - effective communication with animal owners and other staff, and
 - an understanding of relevant legislation
- give clear instructions to the supervised veterinary practitioner about how the supervisor can be contacted while the supervised veterinary practitioner is practising
- provide constructive feedback to the supervised veterinary practitioner, for example on any limitations the supervisor perceives may be affecting the supervised veterinary practitioner's practice
- address any problems identified
- notify the Board immediately if they have concerns that the supervised veterinary practitioner's performance, conduct or health is placing the public at risk
- ensure there are mechanisms in place to ensure the supervised veterinary practitioner complies with the conditions, limitations or restrictions imposed on their registration, e.g. to work in a specific field of practice or at a specific location
- notify the Board as soon as they become aware that the supervised veterinary practitioner is not complying with the conditions, limitations or restrictions imposed on their registration
- provide reports on the supervised veterinary practitioner's work performance to the Board in an approved format at intervals determined by the Board, e.g. every 6 or 12 months

- notify the Board within a period of seven days if they are no longer able, or willing, to provide supervision, or supervision at the prescribed level
- cooperate with any investigation into the supervised veterinary practitioner's professional conduct.

SUPERVISED VETERINARY PRACTITIONER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

It is the supervised veterinary practitioner's responsibility to:

- consult their supervisor about the management of patients as directed by their supervisor, and not provide veterinary services without the knowledge and consent of their supervisor
- consult their supervisor early if they have a problem
- recognise the limits of their professional competence and seek guidance and assistance from their supervisor when required
- comply with all conditions, limitations or restrictions on their registration
- obtain approval from the Board for any proposed changes to supervision arrangements or registration conditions, or practice limitations or restrictions, before any changes are implemented
- notify the Board if their supervision arrangements are not being met, e.g. if their supervisor is unable to provide the agreed level of supervision
- notify the Board if their supervisor indicates directly or indirectly that they are unable or unwilling to provide continued supervision (within 7 days of becoming aware of this), and
- notify the Board within 7 days if their employment circumstances change, including
 - a change of nominated supervisor
 - a substantive change to the supervised veterinary practitioner's position or duties
 - a change to the name and location of the workplace
 - termination of employment, and/or
 - a change of employer.

Consequences of inadequate supervision

A registered veterinary practitioner who has agreed to provide supervision may be considered to have engaged in unprofessional conduct if they do not provide an adequate level of supervision and/or fulfil their responsibilities as set out in this policy.

Consequences of inadequate conduct by a supervised veterinary practitioner

A veterinary practitioner on whose registration the Board has imposed a condition requiring supervision may be considered to have engaged in unprofessional conduct if they do not:

- comply with the requirements of the condition, and/or
- fulfil their responsibilities, as set out in this policy.

Depending on the type of registration held, failure to comply with the conditions of registration may result in registration being cancelled.

A veterinary practitioner on whose registration the Board has imposed a condition requiring supervision is subject to:

- the same statutory obligations as other registered practitioners, including the requirement to meet appropriate standards of veterinary practice
- the same proceedings as other registered veterinary practitioners if a complaint were to be made to the Board about their professional conduct.

EXPECTATIONS OF EMPLOYERS

The Board expects the supervised veterinary practitioner's employer to:

- ensure supervision is provided according to this policy
- ensure the supervised veterinary practitioner is provided with an orientation before they start practising in the position
- ensure that, where a supervised veterinary practitioner has multiple supervisors, all supervisors maintain adequate communication about the supervised veterinary practitioner with each other, and
- advise the Board if they have any concerns that supervision arrangements are not adequate, or the supervised veterinary practitioner's performance, conduct or health is placing the public or the health and welfare of animals at risk.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This policy was broadly influenced by the Guidelines produced by the Medical Board of Australia, **Supervised practice for international medical graduates** (4 January 2016).

VERSION HISTORY

Document	Responsible persons	Revision number	Dates
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