



# Return to Practice Policy

Version 3

**ESSA:**  
EXERCISE & SPORTS SCIENCE AUSTRALIA

[www.essa.org.au](http://www.essa.org.au)

# Return to Practice Policy

<b>Approval Authority</b>	<i>Board</i>
<b>Date Approved</b>	<i>August 2017</i>
<b>Date Effective</b>	<i>January 2018</i>
<b>Date of Next Review</b>	<i>January 2021</i>
<b>Level of Policy</b>	<i>Governance</i>
<b>Related Policies/ Procedures</b>	<i>Recency of Practice Policy Practitioner Accreditation Policy Scope of Practice Policy Mandatory Declarations Policy</i>
<b>Designated Authority</b>	<i>Professional Standards Advisory Council (PSAC)</i>
<b>Responsible Officers</b>	<i>Policy and Advocacy Unit Manager</i>
<b>Policy Overview</b>	<p><i>The Return to Practice Policy provides a way for exercise and sports science professionals to show current knowledge, skills and competence when they seek to return to practice following a leave of absence, suspension, or period of lapsed accreditation. This policy document should be read in conjunction with the Recency of Practice Policy.</i></p> <p><i>Non-compliance with this Policy and associated policies and procedures may breach the ESSA Code of Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice and attract disciplinary action.</i></p>
<b>Scope</b>	<p><i>This Policy applies to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><i>• previously accredited exercise and sports science professionals returning to practice from a leave of absence, period of lapsed accreditation or suspension, where the provisions of the Recency of Practice Policy are not met or do not apply.</i></li><li><i>• practicing exercise and sports science professionals seeking to reinstate a category of accreditation following a period of lapsed accreditation or suspension.</i></li></ul> <p><i>This Policy does not apply to member-only individuals.</i></p>
<b>Definitions</b>	<p><b><i>Accredited individuals</i></b> – means and includes all individuals who hold an accreditation from ESSA.</p> <p><b><i>AEP</i></b> – means Accredited Exercise Physiologist.</p> <p><b><i>AES</i></b> – means Accredited Exercise Scientist.</p> <p><b><i>ASpS</i></b> – means Accredited Sports Scientist.</p> <p><b><i>AHPM</i></b> – means Accredited High Performance Manager.</p> <p><b><i>Clinical</i></b> – means relating to the observation and treatment of clients rather than theoretical or laboratory studies.</p> <p><b><i>CPD</i></b> – means continuing professional development.</p> <p><b><i>CPR</i></b> – means cardio-pulmonary resuscitation.</p>

**ESSA governing bodies** – means the Board, ESSA Accreditation Council and Professional Standards Advisory Council.

**Exercise and Sports Science professional** – means an ESSA-accredited exercise and sports science professional and/or a member of ESSA.

**Full accreditation** – means an individual has met all the requirements for professional competence and personal attributes to provide safe and effective services to members of the public in an ESSA accreditation category.

**Lapsed accreditation** – means non-renewed accreditation.

**Leave of absence** – means a formal break from membership and/or accreditation. Leave of absence may be taken for study, travel, parental leave or other reasons.

**Mentor** – means an accredited person with a minimum of 3 years full time equivalent professional practice in the exercise and sports science industry. .

**Non-practising** – means a period of time where the accreditation status is not current due to lapse, leave of absence, suspension, or failure to meet the recency of practice threshold.

**Practice** – means any role, whether remunerated or not, in which the individual uses their skills and knowledge as a practitioner in their profession. Practice includes the direct provision of services to clients, and the use of professional knowledge and/or skill in a direct clinical or non-clinical way. This includes non-direct relationships with clients, such as working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles; and any other roles that impact on safe, effective delivery of exercise and sports science services.

**Provisional accreditation** – means an individual who has met the core requirements for professional competence and personal attributes in one or more ESSA accreditation categories to provide safe and effective services to members of the public, but whose ongoing accreditation is subject to timely completion of specified accreditation activities and/or defined practice parameters (boundaries).

**Recency of practice threshold** – means the practitioner has accrued at least 1000 hours of practice over the previous five years or part thereof, where practice is less than 5 years, with not more than 2 consecutive years without any practise. Maintenance of certification and CPD does not constitute practice.

**Return to practice program**– means a structured plan of continuing professional practice requirements and professional practice requirements that may be required of an individual exercise and sports science professional in order to maintain their eligibility for accreditation on returning to practice. For the purpose of applying a return to practice program, the year of return is considered year 1.

**Suspension** – means membership and/or accreditation status is temporarily withdrawn by the Board because of actions of the member/accredited individual.

## 1. Governance Responsibilities

- 1.1 Under the ESSA Constitution, the Board is responsible for ensuring that ESSA admits only fit and proper persons as members of ESSA.
- 1.2 Under delegation from the Board, ESSA Accreditation Council is responsible for determining outcomes for applications for accreditation with ESSA.
- 1.3 This Policy helps the Board and ESSA Accreditation Council deliver on these responsibilities.

## 2. Return to practice pathways

- 2.1 The return to practice requirements increase as the period of time of non-practice or period of absence from an accreditation category increases; [see Table 1.](#)
- 2.2 The return to practice requirements may be mitigated by:
  - 2.2.1 other accreditation categories currently held (if any)
  - 2.2.2 recent practice in exercise and sports science.

# Table 1. Return to Practice Pathways

	Length of absence from accreditation/practice		
	≤ 3 years	> 3 years ≤ 5 years	> 5 years
<b>BEFORE RETURNING</b>			
Complete 10 Continuing Professional Development (CPD) points prior to applying to return to practice. At least five of the CPD points must be from category 2 further education.*  (*For AEP only, the five points from category 2 further education must be clinical, see <a href="#">CPD points system</a> .)	✓	✓	✓
Complete and submit a CPD plan for the year of return for ESSA's approval, with specific learning goals related to the planned domain(s) of practice on return to practice.	✓	✓	✓
Enter into a mentoring relationship with an experienced practitioner (with a minimum of 3 years' experience in the exercise and sports science industry in the planned area of practice)	—	✓ For a minimum of 25 hours mentoring	✓ For a minimum of 25 hours mentoring
<b>AEP only</b> – Successfully complete: - a theoretical examination - an in person practical examination	—	—	✓
<b>AFTER RETURNING</b>			
<b>AEP only</b> — Successfully complete the mandatory 'Standards and Compliance' professional development is required within 4 months of returning to practice, unless previously completed. 5 CPD points from category 2 further education is awarded if this professional development is completed as part of a return to practice program  This PD is required to be completed only once.	✓	✓	✓
From year 2 of the return to practice program, complete the annual CPD points (20 CPD points per year) plus an additional 5 CPD points from category 2 further education category for each year of non-accreditation, as required, to maximum of five years.	✓	✓	✓  (AES, ASpS, AHPM only)

### 3. Return to Practice Program

- 3.1 The Return to Practice Program is:
  - 3.1.1 a provisional parameter, see Practitioner Accreditation policy that applies to an exercise and sports science professionals accreditation on return to practice where recency of practice cannot be demonstrated. See Recency of Practice policy.
  - 3.1.2 is a structured plan that may include any or all of the following:
    - 3.1.2.1 supervised practice
    - 3.1.2.2 mentorship
    - 3.1.2.3 pro rata continuing professional development for the year of return
    - 3.1.2.4 continuing professional development loading for the number of years not accredited, up to a maximum of five years, see table 1
    - 3.1.2.5 online theoretical examination (AEP only)
    - 3.1.2.6 in-person practical examination (AEP only)
    - 3.1.2.7 first-aid training
    - 3.1.2.8 CPR training
    - 3.1.2.9 English language requirement, see English language policy
    - 3.1.2.10 other activities as determined by ESSA's governing bodies from time to time.
- 3.2 With the exception of 3.1.2.4, the Return to Practice Program must be completed as defined in the return to practice application. Extension may be granted in extenuating circumstance and at the discretion of ESSA.
- 3.3 The [ESSA Continuing Professional Development Point System](#) outlines suitable substantiating evidence and the categories of continuing professional development:
  - 3.3.1 category 1 presenting and publication
  - 3.3.2 category 2 further education
  - 3.3.3 category 3 self-education
  - 3.3.4 category 4 community service.
- 3.4 Mentors of a Return to Practice Program:
  - 3.4.1 should have a minimum of 5 years full-time equivalent professional practice experience in the exercise and sports science industry, but must have a minimum of 3 years full-time equivalent professional practice experience in the exercise and sports science industry
  - 3.4.2 must be a current AEP to mentor return to practice in the AEP accreditation category
  - 3.4.3 must be an ESSA-accredited individual of good standing, with no outstanding annual audit or ethics outcomes in the past 3 years
  - 3.4.4 must meet the ESSA recency of practice requirements.
- 3.5 Exercise and sports science professionals on a return to practice program self-assess, at accreditation renewal, whether they meet their individual continuing professional development and professional practice requirements, see Mandatory Declarations policy.

### 4. Record retention

- 4.1 Evidence of completion of the Return to Practice Program must be:
  - 4.1.1 kept for a minimum of 7 years
  - 4.1.2 made available to ESSA upon request.

### 5. Auditing Return to Practice

- 5.1 ESSA annually audits a selection of exercise and sport science professionals return to practice programs.

**Policy Modification History** *This section will be managed by the Operations Manager*

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Version no.</b>	<b>Details:</b>
<b>December 2012</b>	<b>1</b>	New policy
<b>January 2016</b>	<b>2</b>	Updated to reflect AES and international/RTP examination details
<b>August 2017</b>	<b>3</b>	Updated to reflect AES, ASpS and AHPM requirements, and NASRHP compliance