

**RELEASED UNDER THE
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From: Jill Humphreys
Sent: Monday, 13 September 2010 1:21 PM
To: 'fhs.deputydeanrefshauge@sydney.edu.au'
Subject: From the Physiotherapy Board of Australia

Dear Professor Refshauge,

Thank you for your recent email regarding the English language standards required under the new National Law that commenced on 1 July 2010.

The Board appreciates the university's wish to support its students, particularly through the transitional phase of the new National Law.

Each of the 10 health professions under the National Law has the same English language standard. Different systems of training and registration (e.g. internships) allow for slightly different approaches but the standard of 7.0 is the same across all professions. Much consultation into the final Standard was sought and received by each of the National Boards, including from governments, universities and immigration authorities. Membership of the Physiotherapy Board of Australia itself includes university affiliates, who argued the issues you have raised in your email. Whilst it was recognised that some inconvenience to existing students in all professions may be experienced as evidenced by some submissions made to the Board, the overwhelming advice was that the minimum standard for English language in any profession is a score of 7.0 in each category. The Board understands it is also a requirement for permanent residency in Australia. It was also apparent from feedback received that for every 6 months a student is in Australia in active participation in studies in English, the IELTS score improves by 0.5 in each category. Whilst the Boards recognise that there is a cost involved in presenting for IELTS exams, the Boards also understand that this cost is tax deductible.

The issue of transition from several different old laws into the National Law is extremely complex. The Boards, along with their governing bodies under the National Law, agreed not to impose a 'sunset clause' for the transition of English language requirements because of the likely negative unintended consequences particularly for individual cases that would outweigh the negative consequences for imposing a cut-off date start of 1 July 2010. Even under the old law (e.g. NSW), a qualification in physiotherapy would not be the only deciding factor for a Board in considering an application for General Registration. Under the National Law, English language is not the only Standard that requires compliance by an applicant for General Registration post approved qualification. Criminal history, commitment to CPD and Professional Indemnity Insurance are also considerations made during the application process.

The consultation period for the English language Standard commenced in October 2009. The Ministerial Council approved the Standard in March 2010 and the Standard has been published since then, so the Board would disagree that the imposition of the Standard is 'unheralded'.

Please be assured that the Board took into consideration all of the feedback received during the consultation period and made the difficult decision to impose the new Standard from 1 July 2010. It did its best to communicate the change via communiques, its website and presentations.

The Board is not in a position to now amend the Standard or provide exceptions for cohorts of students or particular individuals. The Standard itself, as available on the Board's website, does have some exemptions that may be applicable for some of your students.

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I hope this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,
Glenn Ruscoe

Jill Humphreys

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