RELEASED UNDER THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (Cth)

Medical Board of Australia

English language skills registration standard

Authority

This standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 31 March 2010 pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* (2009) (the National Law) with approval taking effect from 1 July 2010.

Summary

All internationally qualified applicants for registration, or applicants who qualified for registration in Australia but did not complete their secondary education in English, must demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes. All applicants must be able to demonstrate English language skills at IELTS academic level 7 or the equivalent, and achieve the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module, OET or specified alternatives (see 'Definitions', below).

Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration. The Board may grant an extension in specified circumstances.

Scope of application

This standard applies to all applicants for initial registration as a medical practitioner or medical specialist. It does not apply to students.

Requirements

1. An applicant for registration who is
   - an internationally qualified applicant; or
   - an applicant who has graduated from an approved program of study, but did not undertake and complete their secondary education in English in any of the countries specified in Exemption E1, below.

   must submit evidence or, in the case of test results, arrange for evidence to be provided to the Board, of their competency in English language.
2. The following tests of English language skills are accepted by the Board for the purpose of meeting this standard:
   a) The IELTS examination (academic module) with a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking); or
   b) completion and an overall pass in the OET with grades A or B only in each of the four components; or
   c) successful completion of the NZREX; or
   d) successful completion of the PLAB test.
3. Results must have been obtained within two years prior to applying for registration. An IELTS (or approved equivalent) Test Report Form more than two-years old may be accepted as current if accompanied by proof that a candidate:
   a) has actively maintained employment as a registered health practitioner using English as the primary language of practice in a country where English is the native or first language; or
   b) is a registered student and has been continuously enrolled in an approved program of study.
4. Results from any of the abovementioned English language examinations must be obtained in one sitting.
5. The applicant is responsible for the cost of English tests.
6. The applicant must make arrangements for test results to be provided directly to the Board by the testing authority; for example, by secure internet login.

Exemptions

1. The Board may grant an exemption from the requirements where the applicant provides evidence that:
   a) they undertook and completed secondary education that was taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed below where English is the native or first language; and
   b) the applicant's tertiary qualifications in the relevant professional discipline were taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed below, where English is the native or first language:
      - Australia
      - Canada
      - New Zealand
      - Republic of Ireland
      - South Africa
      - United Kingdom
      - United States of America
2. The Board may grant an exemption where an applicant applies for limited registration in special circumstances, such as:

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- to perform a demonstration in clinical techniques
- to undertake research that involves limited or no patient contact
- to undertake a period of postgraduate study or supervised training while working in an appropriately supported environment that will ensure patient safety is not compromised.

These special circumstances exemptions will generally be subject to conditions requiring supervision by a registered health practitioner and may also require the use of an interpreter.

3. The Board reserves the right at any time to revoke an exemption and/or require an applicant to undertake a specified English language test.

Definitions

IELTS means the International English Language Testing System developed by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, The British Council and IDP Education Australia (see http://www.ielts.org/).

OET means Occupational English Test (OET) administered by the Centre for Adult Education

(see http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/).

NZREX means New Zealand Registration Examination administered by the New Zealand Medical Council.

PLAB test means the test administered by the Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board of the General Medical Council of the United Kingdom.

An **internationally qualified applicant** means a person who qualified as a medical practitioner outside Australia.

One sitting means the period of time set by the testing authority for completion of the test. For example, IELTS states that the listening, reading and writing components of the test are always completed on the same day. Depending on the test centre, the speaking test may be taken up to seven days either before or after the test date.

Review

This standard will commence on 1 July 2010. The Board will review this standard at least every three years.

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