

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

### Explanatory Notes English Language Skills

From 1 July 2010 practitioners applying for registration as a nurse or midwife for the first time in Australia are required to meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA or the Board) *English Language Skills Registration Standard* (with the exception of Western Australia which is yet to join the national registration and accreditation scheme).

The Board is committed to best practice regulation that will protect the public through ensuring nurses and midwives have the necessary English language skills required to practise safely within the Australian context. For this reason all first time applicants for registration must be able to demonstrate English language proficiency.

#### **Applicants who have completed both their secondary education and nursing or midwifery education program in Australia.**

If an applicant is able to provide sufficient evidence that they have completed **both** their secondary education **and** nursing or midwifery education within Australia they are not required to undertake a test of English language proficiency.

However on application, applicants are required to provide documentary evidence that their secondary education and nursing or midwifery education were completed in Australia. Evidence of secondary education may include documentation that states the name of the secondary education provider, the years in which an applicant attended their secondary education and the final year of secondary education completed. Evidence may include but is not limited to a school leaving certificate or a Year 12 certificate.

In circumstances where an applicant is unable to provide the necessary documentary evidence of their secondary education, a statutory declaration is required.

#### **All other applicants applying for registration for the first time in Australia.**

All other applicants are required to demonstrate English language competence to the required standard.

That is:

Applicants must arrange for evidence to be provided to Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) of competency in English language skills as demonstrated by having completed the following tests of English language proficiency:

- a) the IELTS examination (academic module) with a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking);
- b) or completion and an overall pass in the OET with grades A or B only in each of the four components.

Results must be obtained in one sitting of assessment and within two years prior to applying for registration. The applicant is responsible for the cost of the testing and for ensuring the test results are provided directly to AHPRA from the testing authority.

Contact details to be provided to the testing authority:

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency  
GPO Box 9958  
IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY

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Under the *Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997*, the Board is required to recognise the status of a nurse, midwife or enrolled nurse from New Zealand and grant registration with no additional requirements for English language proficiency.

The Board may grant an exemption where an applicant applies for limited registration in special circumstances, such as:

- a) to perform a demonstration in clinical techniques
- b) to undertake research that involves limited or no patient contact
- c) 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.

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 ([www.occupationalenglishtest.org/](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/)).

**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.

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For students currently undertaking (or those who have recently completed) an education program in Australia leading to registration as a registered nurse, registered midwife or an enrolled nurse

### 1. To whom does the **NMBA English language skills registration standard** apply?

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

### 2. Will I be required to demonstrate English language proficiency for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?

All applicants must be able to demonstrate English language skills.

If you have completed your secondary education in Australia you are not required to undertake a test of English language proficiency. However, you will be required to provide documented evidence that your secondary education was completed in Australia.

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to which you are lodging your application for registration. The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and

OET. Test results must be obtained within two years of applying for registration.

### 3. What evidence is acceptable in order to demonstrate English language proficiency?

Completion of your secondary education in Australia, is considered acceptable for the demonstration of English language proficiency. The evidence provided as completion of secondary education in Australia will vary amongst applicants depending upon the State or Territory in which the education was undertaken. Applicants are required to provide evidence to demonstrate the name of the education provider, the years in which an applicant undertook their secondary education and the final level of secondary education achieved. Evidence may include but is not limited to a school leaving certificate or a Year 12 certificate.

In circumstances where an applicant is unable to provide the necessary documented evidence of their secondary education, a statutory declaration must be provided which states the name of the secondary education provider, the years that the applicant attended their secondary schooling and the final level of secondary education achieved.

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration. The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and OET. Test results must have been obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

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- 4. The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration standard* states that the standard does not apply to students. Does that mean I do not have to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

The term 'student' refers to those who are currently enrolled in an NMBA approved program that leads to registration as a registered nurse, registered midwife or an enrolled nurse.

Students are not expected to undertake an English language proficiency test whilst completing their studies. However, once you have completed your course and you are eligible to apply for registration, you will need to meet the English Language Skills Registration Standard.

- 5. The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* requires applicants to make arrangements for English language proficiency test results to be provided directly to the Board by the testing authority. What contact details should I provide the testing authority to ensure that my results are provided to the Board?**

Evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test must be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

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Australian Health Practitioner Regulation  
Agency  
GPO Box 9958  
IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

For applicants who have completed their secondary education in Australia

### 1. To whom does the NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard apply?

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

### 2. I completed my secondary education in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language competence for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?

If you completed **both** your secondary education **and** nursing or midwifery education program in Australia you are not required to undertake a test of English language proficiency. However, you will be required to provide evidence that both were completed in Australia.

### 3. I completed only part of my secondary education in Australia. What qualifies as having completed secondary education in Australia?

If you have only completed part of your secondary education within Australia, you will need to provide details of the education provider, the years in which you completed your secondary education and a document to verify the last year of secondary school completed. Evidence may include but not limited to a leaving school certificate or a Year 12 certificate.

If an applicant has completed less than three years of their secondary education in Australia they must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant

testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

### 4. What evidence is necessary to demonstrate that my secondary education was completed in Australia?

Documentary evidence of secondary education should include the name of the education provider, the years in which an applicant attended their secondary education and the final year of secondary education achieved. Evidence may also include but is not limited to a leaving school certificate or a Year 12 certificate.

In circumstances where an applicant is unable to provide the necessary documentary evidence of their secondary education, a statutory declaration must be provided stating the name of the education provider, the number of years that the applicant attended their secondary schooling and the final level of secondary education achieved.

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For applicants who have **not** completed their secondary education in Australia

**1. To whom does the *NMBA English language skills registration standard* apply?**

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

**2. I did not complete my secondary education in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration. The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**3. I completed my secondary education in English, but not in Australia (E.g. Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America). Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

All applicants for nursing and midwifery registration are required to have completed **both** their secondary education **and** nursing or midwifery program in Australia.

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration. Test results will generally need to be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**4. What evidence is acceptable in order to demonstrate English language proficiency?**

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration. The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**5. The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* requires applicants to make arrangements for English language proficiency test results to be provided directly to the Board by the testing authority. What contact details should I provide the testing authority to ensure that my results are provided to the Board?**

Evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test must be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the

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same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

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## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

For applicants who have completed their nursing or midwifery program in Australia.

### 1. To whom does the *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* apply?

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

### 2. I completed my nursing or midwifery qualification in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?

All applicants for nursing and midwifery registration are required to have completed both their secondary education and nursing or midwifery program in Australia.

If you have completed both your secondary education and nursing or midwifery program in Australia you are not required to undertake a test of English language proficiency. However, you will be required to provide evidence that both were completed in Australia.

If you have not completed your secondary education in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

The *NMBA English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of

the IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

### 3. What evidence is acceptable for demonstrating that my nursing or midwifery program was completed in Australia?

For new graduates of a nursing or midwifery program in Australia, advice of your successful program completion will be received by the State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application

All other applicants who have successfully completed a nursing or midwifery program in Australia are required to provide an original or certified copy of their academic transcript issued by relevant education provider.



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For applicants who have not completed their nursing or midwifery program in Australia.

**1. To whom does the NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* apply?**

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

**2. I did not complete my nursing or midwifery education in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

If you have not completed your nursing and midwifery program in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**3. I completed my nursing or midwifery qualification in English, but not in Australia (Eg Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America). Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum**

**score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

If you have not completed your nursing and midwifery program in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**4. The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* requires applicants to make arrangements for English language proficiency test results to be provided directly to the Board by the testing authority. What contact details should I provide the testing authority to ensure that my results are provided to the Board?**

Evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test must be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

Contact details to be provided to the testing authority:

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## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

### Other Applicants

**1. To whom does the NMBA *English language skills registration standard* apply?**

All applicants, applying for registration for the first time within Australia must meet this Standard.

**2. I did not complete my secondary education in Australia. However, I have undertaken more than one tertiary or TAFE qualification (including my nursing or midwifery qualification) in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

All applicants for nursing and midwifery registration are required to have completed both their secondary education and nursing or midwifery program in Australia.

If you have not completed your secondary education and nursing and midwifery program in Australia you must arrange for evidence of successful completion of an IELTS or OET English language proficiency test to be provided directly from the relevant testing authority to the same State or Territory office of AHPRA to which you are lodging your application for registration.

The NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard* identifies the requirements for successful completion of the IELTS and OET. Test results must be obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.

**3. I am an enrolled nurse. I did not complete my secondary education and/or enrolled nurse qualification in Australia. However, I am undertaking my registered nurse or registered midwife program in Australia. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration as a registered nurse by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

Individuals who are already on a register as a nurse or midwife and are applying for another registration (e.g. enrolled nurse applying for registration as a registered nurse) are not required to demonstrate English language proficiency.

**4. I have current nursing or midwifery registration with the Nursing Council of New Zealand. Am I required to demonstrate English language skills for registration purposes by achieving the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or OET?**

Under the *Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997*, the NMBA is required to recognise the status of the registered nurse, midwife or enrolled nurse from New Zealand and grant registration with no additional requirements such as the demonstration of English language proficiency.

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

### Other Applicants

#### **5. How can I apply for an exemption from requirements of the NMBA English language skills registration standard?**

The following are the only exemptions available under the NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard*:

The Board may grant an exemption where an applicant applies for limited registration in special circumstances, such as:

- d) to perform a demonstration in clinical techniques
- e) to undertake research that involves limited or no patient contact
- f) 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.

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