

English language skills registration standard policy

Approved 26 May 2016

Authority

This policy is developed pursuant to the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) functions under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law as in force in each state and territory (the National Law).

Purpose

Section 38 of the National Law requires the NMBA to develop an English language skills registration standard (ELS Standard).

The NMBA ELS Standard (2015) sets out the NMBA's requirements for English language skills for applicants for registration. The ELS Standard provides flexible and varied approaches for applicants to demonstrate compliance with the ELS Standard. The ELS standard sets out five ways (pathways) that an applicant for initial registration can demonstrate their English language competency.

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. provide clarity about the extended education pathways (Pathways 2 and 3) including:
 - setting out the period over which this education may be completed
 - confirming that completion of five years (full time equivalent) of vocational education taught and assessed in English in Australia will be accepted for the purpose of meeting Pathways 2 and 3, and
 - providing a definition of 'full time equivalent' education and 'vocational education' for the purpose of applying the ELS Standard and this policy.
2. provide clarity about demonstrating English language proficiency at least equivalent to the other pathways in the ELS standard,
3. confirm that as the NMBA does not have limited registration pathways the exemptions with respect to limited registration do not currently apply.

1. Extended education pathways (Pathways 2 and 3)

a. Period over which the five years of education may be undertaken

The five years (full time equivalent) of education taught and assessed in English for the purpose of pathways 2 and 3 do not need to be consecutive, however the five years of study must occur within a seven year period.

2. Demonstrating English language proficiency at least equivalent to the other pathways in the standard

One of the pathways to demonstrate your English language competency in the ELS standard (Pathway 5) **states**:

In other defined circumstances/cases where there is compelling evidence demonstrating English language proficiency at least equivalent to the other pathways in this standard set out in a policy published by the Board.

This policy confirms that:

- there are no defined circumstances/cases where there is compelling evidence demonstrating English language proficiency to meet the NMBA's ELS registration standard
- if there were defined circumstances/cases where there is compelling evidence demonstrating English language proficiency to meet the NMBA's ELS registration standard these would not apply to individual applicants but to a group or cohort
- the NMBA would define and approve the circumstances/cases where a group or cohort's provision of compelling evidence demonstrates English language proficiency equivalent to the other pathways in the ELS registration standard, not its committees or boards.

3. Exemptions with respect to limited registration

The NMBA currently does not have pathways to limited registration and therefore the exemptions with respect to limited registration in the ELS registration standard do not apply at this time.

Definitions

b. Definition of full time equivalent

'Full-time equivalent' means:

- a course load that a student would need to take in order to complete a course in the minimum time (not including accelerated or fast-track courses). For example, a full-time load for a four year undergraduate degree would be the normal course load for a student who would expect to complete that degree in four years, or
- a combination of part-time courses, which together make up a full-time course load. For example, two part-time courses each consisting of a 50% course load.

Key considerations:

- To determine whether the amount of study undertaken is full time or a percentage of full time equivalent, the advice of the Education provider should be initially relied upon. If this advice is not available then, as set by the Australian Qualifications Framework Council (<http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/06/Volume-of-learning-explanation-v2-2014.pdf>) that states: *the accepted length of a full time year, used for educational participation, is 1200 hours*
- The study can be completed either part-time or a full-time student; however, the evidence of combined studies completed must be equal to what a full time student would complete in a five-year period, recognising that the five years do not need to be consecutive but the five years of study must occur within a seven year period
- Concurrent education may be taken into account but must not be counted for more than one full time equivalent load. For example an applicant that has studied two programs over a year concurrently, one at half full time equivalent and the other at three quarters full time equivalent, this would equal one full time equivalent for one year
- The tertiary education provided was undertaken primarily face to face and requires students to use English language speaking, writing, reading and listening skills
- Failed subjects and 'recognised prior learning' (RPL) are not counted towards a full time course load

- If less than 75% of the full time course load has been completed, this is not considered to be full time education and no education from this period of education can be counted towards the extended education pathways
 - The last period of study that is being relied on must have been completed within the preceding 5 years.

c. Definition of vocational education

Vocational education in the context of the ELS Standard and this policy means education taught and assessed in English in Australia where:

- a) the level of the vocational education was at the Australian Qualifications Framework Level 3 or Certificate III or higher (<http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf/in-detail/aqf-levels/>)
- b) the vocational education provided was undertaken primarily face to face and requires students to use English language speaking, writing, reading and listening skills, and
- c) no more than two years (full time equivalent) of the vocational education was unrelated to health care or health service provision and must also have been taken face to face.
- d) for vocational courses that are taken over 26 weeks or less, the course must be completed for the education to be counted

As with the other types of education accepted under pathways 2 and 3 (secondary and tertiary), the vocational education must meet the requirements of the definition of full time equivalent education set out in this policy.

Review

The Board will review this Policy at least every five years, or as necessary.