



Consultation paper on registration standards and related matters

**Issued by the Pharmacy Board of Australia
under the authority of Stephen Marty, Chair**

27 October 2009

If you wish to provide comments on this paper, please lodge a written submission in electronic form, marked 'Attention: Chair, Pharmacy Board of Australia' to natboards@dhs.vic.gov.au by close of business on 24 November 2009.

Please note that your submission will be placed on the Board's website unless you indicate otherwise.

**RELEASED UNDER THE
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 1982 (Cth)**

At the time of issuing this consultation paper the Board is operating under the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008* (the Act). However, the approach to the paper and consultation has been informed by the proposed provisions of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill 2009 (the Bill, the proposed national law), which was introduced in the Queensland Parliament on 6 October 2009. Nothing in this paper is intended to pre-empt consideration of the Bill in that parliament. A copy of the Act and a link to the proposed national law are available at www.ahpra.gov.au.

Contents

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1 Introduction

1.1 Legislative requirements

This consultation paper has been developed under the requirements of the *Health Practitioner Regulation (Administrative Arrangements) National Law Act 2008* (the Act), taking into account a requirement of the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Bill 2009 (proposed national law). The Act empowers national boards to oversee the development of health profession standards. The proposed national law includes a requirement for national boards to undertake wide-ranging consultation on proposed registration standards, codes and guidelines.

Other matters needing ministerial approval also require consultation to ensure that boards take into account stakeholder views, and so ministers know that consultation has occurred when they consider board proposals.

1.2 Contents of the consultation paper

This consultation paper covers proposals from the Pharmacy Board of Australia on the following issues:

- Section 2 Proposals for mandatory registration standards (required by all boards).
- Section 3 Proposals for board-specific standards

2 Mandatory registration standards (all boards)

The proposed national law provides for national boards to develop registration standards for approval by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (the Ministerial Council). Under the legislation, boards must develop a registration standard on each issue shown in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Mandatory registration standards

Issues for mandatory standards	Common or individual board standard
English language	Common standard for all boards

Common standards across all boards are proposed for y matters and English language requirements.

The proposed national law will require a national board to undertake wide-ranging consultation on its proposed registration standards before they are submitted to the Ministerial Council for approval.

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Age Group	Yes (%)
18-24	~95
25-34	~90
35-44	~85
45-54	~95
55-64	~92
65+	~45
18-24	~90
25-34	~85
35-44	~35
45-54	~80
55-64	~75
65+	~95
18-24	~85
25-34	~90
35-44	~65

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2.2 English language skills

The following draft common registration standard on English language requirements is proposed to be used by all registration boards but contains some specific adjustments for pharmacy.

The Pharmacy Board seeks advice on the draft standard, including:

- whether Australian graduates should have a minimum score of 7 in the IELTS academic module or equivalent at entry to an accredited pharmacy course with an expectation that by completion of the intern year applicants for registration would have achieved competence in English at IELTS at level 7.5 academic module or equivalent
- whether the achievement level should be set at 7.5 in the IELTS academic test
- whether the Board should also accept a pass in the Professional Linguistic Assessment Board (PLAB), or a pass in the New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX) in New Zealand.

APC requires an overall Band score of at least 7.5 (with a minimum score of 7.0 in each of the four components) at the Academic level of IELTS for pharamcists

No information about validity of these to be able to comment

Pharmacy Board of Australia English language skills standard	
Summary	
An internationally qualified applicant or an applicant who is an international student must have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes by achieving a minimum score of 7 in the IELTS academic module, OET or specified alternatives (see 'Definitions', below).	
Test results will generally need to be obtained within two years, but preferably within 12 months prior to applying for registration. The Board may grant an exemption in specified circumstances.	
Scope of application	
This standard applies to all internationally qualified applicants and applicants who are international students seeking registration in Australia.	General or provisional?
Requirements	
An applicant who is an internationally qualified applicant or an international student must submit evidence, or arrange for evidence to be provided, to the relevant Board of competency in English language skills as demonstrated by having completed the IELTS examination (academic module) to the following standard:	
1. The applicant must have achieved a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking).	
2. Alternative English proficiency tests that will be accepted are: (a) completion and an overall pass in the OET with grades A or B only in each of the four components; or (b) other tests as approved by the Board (to be specified in the standard).	
3. Results must have been obtained within two years prior to applying for registration.	Not consistent with statement in summary
4. An IELTS (or approved equivalent) Test Report Form more than two years old will be accepted as current if accompanied by proof that a candidate 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. Test results must comply with the current requirements of this policy.	
5. Results from any of the abovementioned English language examinations must be obtained in one sitting.	
6. The applicant is responsible for the cost of English tests.	
7. 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 where :
 - (a) the applicant provides evidence of successful secondary education in English, and that 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:
 - Canada
 - Republic of Ireland
 - New Zealand
 - United Kingdom
 - United States of America
 - South Africa
 - Australia.
 - (b) an applicant applies for limited registration in special circumstances, such as:
 - to perform a demonstration in clinical techniques
 - to undertake research that involves limited or no patient contact
 - to undertake postgraduate study or 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 the use of a translator and/or supervision by a registered health practitioner.
2. The Board reserves the right at any time to require an applicant who has been granted an exemption 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. The test is administered at least once a month by IELTS Australia and The British Council at over 230 centres worldwide.

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

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

An **international student** is a person who completed their secondary education outside Australia in any country other than those specified in exemption 1.

Review

This standard will commence on 1 July 2010. The Board will review this standard within three years of operation.

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- The English language standard reflects the current requirement and is based on the experience of the Board of the requirements for communication. Clear communication is especially important for pharmacists because they must constantly educate consumers on the medications they dispense. Public safety demands a high level of English language. The standard provides for some exemptions from the standard to ensure that the cost of assessment only applies where necessary to ensure that applicants have adequate English language skills, to protect the public.

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