

Media release

29 August 2011

New English Language Skills Registration Standard from 19 September 2011

A revised [English language skills registration standard](#) for nurses and midwives will be in place from Monday 19 September 2011, after the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council (AHWMC) approved the revised standard recommended by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the Board or NMBA).

The new standard was developed through extensive consultation with the professions and the community, which helped ensure it is fair, reasonable and guided by public safety.

The revised standard - also informed by the Board's review of the available evidence and stakeholder feedback - takes effect from 19 September 2011 and includes detailed transition provisions to smooth its implementation.

The role of the Board is to protect the public. Under the National Law, the National Boards set registration standards which all applicants must meet before they can be registered to practise in Australia.

Each of the 10 National Boards has set an English language skills registration standard to ensure all registered health practitioners in Australia can provide safe care to the Australian community and can communicate effectively – by listening, reading, in oral conversation and in writing – with their patients and with other health professionals about the care of their patients. For detailed information about the NMBA English language skills registration standard go to www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au

The revised NMBA [English language skills registration standard](#):

- still requires registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses to communicate effectively in English
- brings the NMBA English language skills registration standard in line with the standard of the other National Boards, while retaining key profession specific features
- means that applicants who have completed a minimum of five years (full-time equivalent) of combined secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary education taught and assessed in English, in: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America are considered to have met the standard and therefore do not need to sit an English language test. All other applicants are required to submit evidence of English proficiency
- recognises the different education requirements for each category of nursing. For registered nurses and registered midwives, two of these full-time equivalent five years required above must be a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed above. For enrolled nurses, one of these full-time equivalent five years must be a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed above

- gives the Board flexibility to consider and/or grant an exemption to a defined group through the development of nationally-consistent policy, if in the future there is compelling evidence demonstrating English language proficiency equivalent to the standard for a defined cohort
- is supported by detailed transition provisions for currently-enrolled students who are soon to complete their courses. For example, current students due to complete their course by the end of 2011 or who complete their outstanding course requirements by 30 March 2012 must **either** meet the Board's current (to 18 September 2011) requirements in relation to English language skills, **or** they can opt to meet the Board's new standard.

The revised NMBA English language skills registration standard does not change the requirement for applicants who must submit evidence of proficiency in English through their English test results. This group must still achieve a minimum of level 7 in one sitting in each of the four components – listening, reading, writing and speaking - of the academic International English Language Testing System (IELTS), or a B score or above in one sitting in each of the four components of the Occupational English Test (OET).

To support the implementation of the new standard, the Board has determined a number of transition provisions for students and applicants who have submitted their application to AHPRA which are detailed in the Revised English language skills registration standard [Fact Sheet and FAQs](#) published on the NMBA website. The Board is also working with nursing and midwifery professional organisations and education providers, employers in the public and private sectors and Commonwealth, State and Territory government departments to support the smooth introduction of the revised standard from 19 September 2011.

In determining the new standard the Board applied the following principles:

- protecting the public
- national consistency and alignment, where possible, with the English language skills registration standards of the other National Health Profession Boards
- recognising the differences in the educational preparation for nursing and midwifery and the two categories of nurse (enrolled and registered nurses)
- the need for a rigorous registration standard
- the requirement for a standard that is clear and can be implemented effectively.

NOTE: This media release is a summary only. Applicants must meet the requirements detailed in the Board's revised English language skills registration standard.

For more information

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