

## Information for nursing and midwifery applicants

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Updated March 2025

### How to provide the evidence requirements for the NMBA English language skills registration standard

This document explains how to provide evidence for the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (NMBA) [English language skills registration standard](#) (ELS registration standard).

#### Background

All registered health practitioners in Australia, including nurses and midwives, must show they have the English language skills needed to practise their profession safely. This includes being able to communicate effectively with patients and their relatives, collaborate with other healthcare professionals and keep clear and accurate health records. The English language standards set by the National Boards help to ensure that everyone who registers as a health practitioner in Australia possesses these skills, regardless of their language or educational backgrounds.

The ELS registration standard provides pathways for applicants to demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills to meet the ELS registration standard and safely practise in Australia.

#### Purpose

This guide has information about the types of evidence that you may be required to provide, depending on which pathway is most suitable for your individual circumstances.

It is important that you provide accurate information. You will need to sign a declaration that the information you provide is true and correct, including the information you provide about your English language skills. A false statement may lead to the NMBA refusing registration or taking further action if required.

If your documents are not in English, you will need to upload certified translations of the documents.

### Evidence requirements for each pathway

#### Primary language pathway

English is your **primary language** and:

- a. you have attended and satisfactorily completed at least **six years of primary and secondary education** taught and assessed solely in English in a **recognised country**, including at least two years between years 7 and 12, **and**
- b. your tertiary qualification in the relevant professional discipline, which you are relying on to support your eligibility for registration under the **National Law** was taught and assessed solely in English in a **recognised country** and:
  - i. in the case of a registered nurse and/or registered midwife, you must provide evidence of having successfully completed at least a two (2) years full-time equivalent pre-registration program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body a recognised country.
  - ii. in the case of an enrolled nurse, you must provide evidence of having successfully completed at least a one year full-time equivalent pre-registration program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in a recognised country.

If you are using this pathway, English must be your **primary language**. This means that English must be the language you primarily use for reading, writing, listening and speaking and the language you know best and are most comfortable with.

For part (a), complete the online application form, including details of any relevant **primary and secondary education** that you have successfully completed.

For part (b), if your **qualification** is not from a **Board-approved program of study**, upload certified copies of official transcripts of your qualifications including confirmation that the qualification was taught and assessed solely in English.

If your transcript does not show that the program of study was taught and assessed solely in English, you will also need to upload a letter from your education provider confirming that the program of study was taught and assessed solely in English.

If your qualification is from a **Board-approved program of study**, you do not need to provide additional evidence under part (b), unless requested by Ahpra.

### Extended education pathway – registered nurses and midwives

If you are applying for registration as a registered nurse and/or a midwife, you must provide evidence that you have successfully completed at least **five (5) years (full-time equivalent) continuous education** taught and assessed solely in English, in a **recognised country**, which includes tertiary qualifications in the relevant professional discipline which you are relying on to support your eligibility for registration under the **National Law**.

The Board will only accept the completion of **five (5) years (full-time equivalent) continuous education** that is a combination of:

- a) **tertiary** and **secondary education** taught and assessed in English; or
- b) **tertiary** and **vocational education** taught and assessed in English; or
- c) combined **tertiary, secondary** and **vocational education** taught and assessed in English; or
- d) **tertiary education** taught and assessed in English

The last period of education must have been completed no more than five years prior to applying for registration.

If you are using this pathway, you will need to provide the following:

For part (a) above, complete the online application form, listing details of your relevant education.

You must provide evidence that each course was taught and assessed solely in English by providing a certified copy of your transcript for **all** education you are listing and relying on to meet the **extended education pathway** requirements. You must include all course commencement and completion dates and evidence of whether you studied full-time or part-time.

To support your eligibility for registration under the National Law, you must provide a certified copy of your transcript for your tertiary qualifications in the relevant professional field. The transcript should show that you have completed a pre-registration program of study, taught and assessed solely in English and approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the **recognised countries**.

If your transcript does **not** show that the program of study was taught and assessed solely in English, including the clinical aspects of the program involving direct communication with patients, relatives and other healthcare professionals, you will need to upload a letter from your education provider.

## Extended education pathway – enrolled nurses

If you are applying for registration as an enrolled nurse, you must provide evidence that you have successfully completed at least **five (5) years (full-time equivalent) continuous education** taught and assessed solely in English, in a **recognised country**, which includes vocational qualifications in the relevant professional discipline which you are relying on to support your eligibility for registration under the **National Law**.

The Board will only accept the completion of **five (5) years (full-time equivalent)** continuous education that is a combination of:

- a) **vocational** and **secondary education** taught and assessed in English; or
- b) **tertiary** and **vocational education** taught and assessed in English; or
- c) combined **tertiary, secondary** and **vocational education** taught and assessed in English; or
- d) **tertiary education** taught and assessed in English.

The last period of education must have been completed no more than five years prior to applying for registration.

Note: the NMBA will also accept **continuous vocation education** only taught and assessed in English to satisfy the requirements of the **extended education pathway**.

If you are using this pathway, you will need to provide the following.

For part (a) above, complete the online application form listing details of your relevant education. You must provide evidence that each course listed was taught and assessed solely in English by providing a certified copy of your transcript for **all** education you are listing and relying on to meet the **extended education pathway** requirements. You must include all course commencement and completion dates and evidence of whether you studied full-time or part-time.

To support your eligibility for registration under the National Law, you must provide a certified copy of your transcript for your qualifications in the relevant professional field. The transcript should show that you have completed a pre-registration program of study, taught and assessed solely in English and approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the **recognised countries**.

If any of the transcripts do not show that the program of study was taught and assessed solely in English, including the clinical aspects of the program involving direct communication with patients, relatives and other healthcare professionals, you will need to upload a letter from your education provider.

## Test pathway

To satisfy this pathway, you must achieve the required minimum scores in one of the following English language tests **and** meet the requirements for **test results** outlined in the ELS registration standard.

1. **Cambridge** (C1 Advanced or C2 Proficiency)
2. **International English Language Testing System** (Academic) (IELTS)
3. **Occupational English Test** (OET)
4. **Pearson Test of English Academic** (PTE Academic)
5. **Test of English as a Foreign Language internet-based test** (TOEFL iBT)
6. **Other English language tests** may be approved by the National Boards from time to time and published on the Board's website with the required minimum scores. National Boards reserve the right at any time to revoke their approval of an English language test.

**NOTE:** We will only accept test results from:

- (i) one test sitting, or
- (ii) a maximum of two test sittings in a 12-month period

**and only** if the requirements for test results, such as when the test must be taken, type/modality of test and the required minimum scores, are met as specified in this standard.

To apply under the test pathway, you need to provide the following evidence:

1. For tests taken within the last two years:
  - Complete the online application form, including specifying which accepted English test you have undertaken.
  - Upload a copy of your test results, which must include your candidate number issued to you by the test provider, so Ahpra staff can verify your results.
  - For PTE Academic tests only, you will need to authorise Ahpra to access your test results through the test provider's system.
2. For tests taken more than two years ago, but you have been **continuously working** (which extends your test validity timeframe)
  - i. as a registered health practitioner (starting within 12 months of the test date) where English was the main language of practice in one of the **recognised countries**, or
  - ii. in another relevant health, disability or aged-care related role where English was the main language of practice in one of the **recognised countries** and your role requires you to read, write, listen to and speak English in the working environment, and
  - iii. lodge your application for registration within 12 months of finishing your last period of employment
  - Complete the online application form for registration, including specifying which accepted English test you have undertaken. You must also specify the dates that you started working and (if relevant) the date that you stopped working.
  - Upload a copy of your test results, which must include your candidate number issued by the test provider, so Ahpra staff can verify your results.
  - Upload a copy of your curriculum vitae (in [Ahpra's standard format](#)).
  - Upload a letter from your employer/s confirming your continuous employment.

- iv. For tests taken more than two years ago, but you have been continuously enrolled in a Board approved program of study, (which extends your test validity timeframe):
- Complete the online application form for registration, including specifying which accepted English test you have undertaken.
  - Upload a copy of your test results, which must include your candidate number issued by the test provider. Ahpra staff will use this number to verify your results.
  - Upload a copy of your transcript, which shows that you have been continuously enrolled in a **Board-approved program of study**, and that:
    - You commenced this study within 12 months of sitting the test; and
    - You finished your study within 12 months of submitting your application.

### **IELTS One Skill Retake**

National Boards have agreed to accept the IELTS One Skill Retake to provide further flexibility to applicants applying for registration. This is not available for the other accepted English language tests.

The IELTS One Skill Retake allows eligible test takers to re-sit one component of the test *within a 60-day period*, if all other components and certain requirements are met. Successful completion of an IELTS One Skill Retake is not considered an additional test sitting by the NMBA; however, if you are relying on results from two test sittings *and* an IELTS One Skill Retake, all three of these tests must have been completed within a 12-month period.

## Glossary

**Board- approved program of study** means an accredited program of study approved by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia under section 49(1) of the National Law and published on the list of approved programs of study on the NMBA's website.

**Continuously working** means working for at least 26 weeks **full-time equivalent** per year. For example, 52 weeks part-time work (five days per fortnight) which in total adds up to the equivalent of 26 weeks full-time.

Continuously working can include some periods of leave. However, as this requirement is to demonstrate exposure to English in the working environment the minimum hours worked per year must total 26 weeks *full-time equivalent*.

**Continuously enrolled** means enrolled in a course of study over consecutive calendar years without a break from study apart from the education institution's scheduled holidays.

**Five years (full-time equivalent) continuous education** means education over a period of five consecutive calendar years without a break from study apart from the education institution (e.g. school, university or vocation education provider) scheduled holidays.

### Full-time equivalent

For the purpose of:

- education, is the successful completion of a course load which meets the education provider's definition of full-time enrolment and does not include recognised prior learning. For example, a student enrolled in a full-time four-year undergraduate degree would be expected to complete the degree in four years. This is set by the relevant educational institution. This could include a combination of part-time courses, which together make up a full-time course load. For example, two part-time courses taken at the same time, each consisting of a 50 per cent course load that together meet the full-time load requirement. This requirement is to demonstrate exposure to English in the education environment. For that reason, concurrent education, accelerated courses, fast track courses and/ or additional education taken during semester breaks cannot be counted for more than one full-time equivalent course load. For example, an applicant that has studied two programs in a year concurrently, one at half full-time equivalent and the other at three quarters full-time equivalent, could only count a maximum of one full-time equivalent year. Where a course load is delivered in a shorter time such as an accelerated or fast-tracked course (for example a four-year course delivered over 3 years) only the duration of the delivery of the course is to be counted (i.e. the three-year course delivery period in this example)
- work, means the equivalent to working full time hours typically ranging from 35 to 38 hours per week.

**National Law** means the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory.

**Primary education** means Australian school years one (1) through to six (6) inclusive (or equivalent).

**Primary language** means the language primarily used for reading, writing, listening, and speaking and the language known best and most comfortable.

**Recognised country** means one of the following countries or territories:

- Antigua and Barbuda
- Anguilla
- Australia
- The Bahamas
- Barbados
- Belize
- Bermuda
- British Indian Ocean Territory
- Canada
- Cayman Islands

- Dominica
- Falkland Islands
- Gibraltar
- Grenada
- Guernsey
- Guyana
- Isle of Man
- Jamaica
- Jersey
- Malta
- New Zealand
- Republic of Ireland
- Saint Helena, Ascension and Tristan da Cunha
- St Kitts and Nevis
- St Lucia
- St Vincent and the Grenadines
- Trinidad and Tobago
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- US Virgin Islands.

Other **recognised countries** approved by the National Boards from time to time will be published on the Board's website.

**Secondary education** means Australian school years seven (7) through to twelve (12) inclusive (or equivalent), even where year seven is classified as primary education in a particular state or territory.

**Tertiary education** means education undertaken at a university, either as an undergraduate or a graduate student.

**Test results** means the official results provided by the English language test provider.

**Vocational education** means education taught and assessed in English in a recognised country where:

- the level of the vocational education was at the Australian Qualifications Framework Level 3 or Certificate III or higher, and
- the vocational education provided was undertaken primarily face to face and requires students to use English language speaking, writing, reading and listening skills.

**Two test sittings in a 12-month period** means that the dates of the sittings must not be more than 12 months apart. For example, if your first test sitting was on 1 March, the second sitting must be no later than 1 March of the following year. If you are providing test results from two sittings, you may provide results of any two tests taken within a 12-month period as set out in this standard. Results cannot be combined from different test providers.

## Document control

## Document history

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**Policy history:** Is this a new policy? **N**

Does this policy amend or update an existing policy? **Y**

If so which version **v1.1**

Does this policy replace another policy with a different title? **N**

Approval date	Version	Reason for change
March 2025	v2.0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Updated to reflect requirements of revised ELS registration standard (2025)<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Additional accepted English language tests</li><li>○ Expanded list of recognised countries</li></ul></li><li>• Minor editorial changes to improve readability</li></ul>
March 2019	v1.1	Revised ELS registration standard (2019) now in effect
October 2018	v1.0	Advance copy