

## Explanatory Notes and 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 their secondary education as well as a nursing or midwifery program, taught and assessed in English.**

If an applicant is able to provide sufficient evidence that they have completed:

- their secondary education taught and assessed in English to the requisite level required for entry into a nursing or midwifery program AND
- a nursing or midwifery program taught and assessed in English

then the applicant is not required to undertake a test of English language proficiency for registration purposes.

However on application for registration, applicants are required to provide documentary evidence of their completed secondary education as well as the completed nursing or midwifery program. Evidence that both were taught and assessed in English is also required as well as evidence of the requisite level

required for entry into the nursing or midwifery program.

Evidence of secondary education may include documentation that states the name and location of the secondary education provider, the years in which an applicant undertook their secondary education at this location, 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.

Evidence of the requisite level for entry into a nursing or midwifery program may include information from the course handbook detailing the entry requirements of the education provider.

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 and location of the education provider and the final level of secondary education achieved.

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

All other applicants must demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes by meeting the requirements of this registration standard. That is:

Applicants must arrange for evidence to be provided directly to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) by the testing authority 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); OR

## Explanatory Notes and Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

- b) completion and an overall pass in the OET with grades A or B only in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing, and speaking)

Results must be obtained in one sitting of assessment and test results will generally need to be obtained 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.

Under the *Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997*, the Board is required to recognise the registration status of a nurse, midwife or enrolled nurse from New Zealand with no additional requirement to demonstrate 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.

### Contact details to be provided to the testing authority:

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

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

### FAQs English Language Skills

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

All applicants applying for registration with the NMBA for the first time.

#### 2. Does it apply to students?

No. The term 'student' refers to those who are currently enrolled in an NMBA approved program that leads to registration as a registered nurse, midwife or an enrolled nurse. This includes **international students** currently enrolled in such programs.

The standard does not apply to students whilst undertaking their studies. However, once you have successfully completed your course and you are eligible to apply for registration, you will need to meet the English language skills registration standard.

#### 3. What is an internationally qualified applicant?

An internationally qualified applicant is any applicant who completed their nursing or midwifery qualifications in **any** country other than Australia.

#### 4. What is the requisite level of secondary education required for entry into a nursing or midwifery program?

The education provider determines this in the entry requirements for a nursing or midwifery program. However, on completion of the course you will need to meet the English language skills registration standard.

#### 5. I only completed part of my secondary education in English. Does this meet the requisite level for entry into a nursing or midwifery program?

You must have completed your secondary education to the requisite level for entry into a nursing or midwifery program. The education provider determines this in the entry requirements of the course. However, on completion of the course you will need to meet the English language skills registration standard.

#### 6. Are there any exemptions to this standard?

Yes. The exemptions are listed in the standard and apply to applications for limited registration in special circumstances.

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

#### 7. 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?

Contact details to be provided to testing authority:

Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

GPO Box 9958  
IN YOUR CAPITAL CITY

**Refer to the following scenarios to see which situation applies to you.**

***I completed my secondary education taught and assessed in English to the requisite level. I have recently completed a NMBA approved nursing or midwifery program.***

**8. Do I need to demonstrate that I have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes?**

No. However, when you apply for registration you will need to provide evidence that you have completed your secondary education to the requisite level for entry into a nursing or midwifery program AND the level that was required.

**9. What evidence do I need to provide that I completed my secondary education taught and assessed in English to the requisite level?**

The evidence provided for completion of secondary education taught and assessed in English may vary amongst applicants depending upon the location in which the education was undertaken.

Evidence of secondary education may include documentation that states the name and location of the secondary education provider 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.

Evidence of the requisite level for entry into a nursing or midwifery program may include information from course handbook detailing the entry requirements of the education provider.

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 and location of the education provider, the number of years that the applicant attended their secondary schooling and the final level of secondary education achieved.

***I am an internationally qualified applicant.***

**10. Do I need to demonstrate that I have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes?**

Yes. You must meet requirements 1 -5 of the NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard*

## Frequently Asked Questions: English Language Skills

***I did not complete my secondary education in English. However, I have undertaken more than one tertiary or TAFE qualification (including my nursing or midwifery qualification) in Australia.***

**11. Do I need to demonstrate that I have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes?**

Yes. You must meet requirements 1 - 5 of the NMBA *English Language Skills Registration Standard*

**I am registered as an enrolled nurse in Australia. I did not complete my secondary education in English and / or enrolled nurse qualification in Australia. However, I am undertaking my registered nurse or registered midwife program in Australia.**

**12. Do I need to demonstrate that I have the necessary English language skills for registration purpose?**

No. The standard applies to applicants for registration for the first time.

**I have current registration with either or both the Nursing Council of New Zealand and the Midwifery Council of New Zealand**

**13. Do I need to demonstrate English language skills for that I have the necessary English language skills for registration purpose?**

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