

Fact sheet and frequently asked questions

Revised 29 November 2011

[29 November 2011 – addition of questions 5.2 and 5.3 (p.7) & update to transitional provisions (p.5); 21 September 2011 – addition of last two paragraphs of core requirements (p. 4) & questions 8 and 9 (pp. 8-9); 29 August 2011 – original document].

Registration standard on English language skills

Background

Since 1 July 2010, applicants applying for registration as a nurse and/or midwife for the first time in Australia have been required to meet the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's (the Board or NMBA) registration standard on English language skills.

The Board is committed to best practice regulation that protects the public by ensuring nurses and midwives can communicate effectively in English to provide safe care to clients.

On Monday 19 September 2011, a revised registration standard on English language skills came into effect. It replaced the registration standard on English language skills and related arrangements in effect from 1 July 2010 – 18 September 2011.

This fact sheet aims to explain the key requirements of the revised standard and detail how it is being implemented. Anyone applying for registration should refer to the revised registration standard on English language skills which took effect from 19 September 2011.

About the registration standard

Under the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law Act* (the National Law) as in force in each state and territory, the Board sets registration standards which all applicants must meet before they can be registered to practise in Australia.

The Board set a registration standard on English language skills to ensure all enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives in Australia can communicate effectively in English – by listening, reading, speaking and in writing – with their clients and with other health professionals about the care of their clients.

The registration standard on English language skills details the English language proficiency requirements that everyone applying for initial registration in Australia must demonstrate to be eligible for registration as a nurse or midwife.

Consistent with the National Law, the Board developed the registration standard which was approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 5 August 2011. The revised standard took effect on 19 September 2011.

Reasons for the review

In September 2010, in response to stakeholder feedback, the Board decided to review the original registration standard on English language skills to make its effect clearer and its implementation more straightforward.

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

The revised standard was also informed by the Board's review of the available evidence and stakeholder feedback.

In developing the revised standard, the Board applied the following principles:

- protection of the public
- national consistency and alignment, where possible, with the registration standard on English language skills of the other National Boards
- recognition of the difference in the education preparation for nursing and midwifery and the two categories of nurse (enrolled and registered)
- establishment of a rigorous registration standard that can be understood easily and
- the ability to implement the registration standard effectively.

Key changes

The revised Nursing and Midwifery Board registration standard on English language skills:

- still requires registered nurses, midwives and enrolled nurses to communicate effectively in English
- brings the Board's registration standard on English language skills in line with the standards of the other National Boards, while retaining key profession-specific features
- means that applicants who have completed a minimum of five (5) years (full-time equivalent) of combined secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary education taught and assessed in English, in:
 - Australia
 - Canada
 - New Zealand
 - the 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 nursing and midwifery and the two categories of nursing (enrolled and registered):
 - for registered nurses and registered midwives, two (2) of the required full-time equivalent five years of education must be a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English in one of the countries previously listed
 - for enrolled nurses, one (1) of the required full-time equivalent five years of education must be a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English in one of the countries previously listed

- gives the Board flexibility in the future to consider and/or grant an exemption to a defined group by developing nationally-consistent policy, if compelling evidence arises demonstrating English language proficiency equivalent to the standard for the defined cohort/s and
- 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 registration standard which comes into force from 19 September 2011. (Please note the important update about the information in this paragraph on page 5 under the heading **Update 21 November 2011**).

Core requirements

The registration standard requires all applicants who seek initial registration in Australia to demonstrate that they meet the registration standard on English language skills.

The evidence can be provided to the Board by:

- providing documentation that shows the applicant has completed five years' full-time equivalent of a combination of secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary education, taught and assessed in English, in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States of America) listed in the registration standard
- for applicants seeking registration as an enrolled nurse, the completion of five years' full-time equivalent education must include evidence of a minimum of one year full-time equivalent in a pre-registration program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in one of seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard
- for applicants seeking registration as a registered nurse, the completion of five years' full-time equivalent education must include evidence of a minimum of two years' full-time equivalent in a pre-registration nursing program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard and
- for applicants seeking registration as a midwife, the completion of five years' full-time equivalent of education must include evidence of a minimum of two years' full-time equivalent in a pre-registration midwifery program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Applicants who cannot provide the evidence that they meet these requirements need to demonstrate English language proficiency by sitting and passing to the standard set by the Board, one of the two Board-approved language tests detailed in the registration standard. The requirements for these two language tests did not change in the revised registration standard.

The two tests for assessment of English language proficiency approved by the Board currently are:

- i. International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination (Academic) with a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components of listening, reading, writing and speaking and
- ii. Occupational English Test (OET) with an overall pass, and with grades A or B only, in each of the four components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

Criteria that must be met when submitting an English language test result include:

- test results should be obtained within two years of applying for registration
- test results must be obtained in one sitting
- the applicant is responsible for the cost of the test and
- the applicant must make arrangements for their test results to be provided to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) for verification.

An IELTS or OET result that is older than two years may be accepted if accompanied by documentary evidence that the applicant:

- has maintained active, continuous practice and/or employment as an enrolled nurse and/or as a registered nurse or midwife using English as the primary language of practice in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the standard and/or
- has been enrolled continuously in a program of study taught and assessed in English and approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the standard.

Applicants with registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse or midwife in New Zealand are deemed to have demonstrated English language proficiency and to have met the requirements of this standard in accordance with the *Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997*(Cth).

If an applicant is or was previously registered as an enrolled nurse, a registered nurse and/or a registered midwife in Australia, with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia or a previous state or territory nursing and/or midwifery board, s/he will be considered to have met the Board's English language skills registration standard. When applicants no longer hold registration as a nurse or midwife in Australia, they will need to provide evidence to the Board that they have maintained their English language competence. They can do this by demonstrating continued professional practice in an English-speaking environment and/or continued residence in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Please note: the Board reserves the right at any time to require any applicant for registration or renewal of registration to undertake a specified English language test. The Board can also decide at any time that an individual is not a suitable person to hold registration as a nurse or midwife if it believes that the individual's competency in speaking or communicating in English is not sufficient for the individual to practise as a nurse or midwife.

Transitional provisions

Transitional provisions for current and future applicants and students are in place to make the initial implementation of the revised standard smooth and fair. Standard transition provisions for current students and applicants are detailed in this document.

Education providers are encouraged to contact their local State or Territory Manager at AHPRA to clarify any issues arising from the transition provisions. The State or Territory Manager will ensure all relevant issues are raised directly with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia for consideration.

Students currently enrolled in a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study

(Please note the important update relating to the information in this section on page 5 under the heading **Update 21 November 2011**).

Students who complete a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study by Friday 30 December 2011 will have their English language skills assessed against the registration standard on English language skills and related arrangements in place from 1 July 2010 to 18 September 2011.

Students who are scheduled to complete a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study by Friday 30 December 2011, who are required to meet an outstanding course requirement that can be completed satisfactorily before Friday 30 March 2012, will have their English language skills assessed against the registration standard on English language skills and related arrangements in place from 1 July 2010 to 18 September 2011.

Outstanding course requirements may include: successful completion of clinical experience placements or assessments; academic or clinical challenges; and/or resubmission of a formal assignment.

AHPRA will assess evidence from applicants in this cohort of students against the registration standard on English language skills and related arrangements in place from 1 July 2010 to 18 September 2011, **unless** the applicant specifically requests, in writing to AHPRA, to have his or her evidence assessed against the revised registration standard on English language skills that has applied from 19 September 2011. This means that students in this cohort can 'opt in' to be assessed under the revised standard if they request this in writing to AHPRA.

All other students enrolled currently in a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study will need to meet the requirements of the revised registration standard on English language skills that has applied from 19 September 2011, when they complete the program requirements successfully and apply for registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or midwife.

Update 21 November 2011: The NMBA at a meeting on 27 October 2011 considered submissions from three education providers regarding the impact of the existing transition provisions. The Board approved a policy whereby any student that is identified in writing by a Board-approved education provider as having completed all the approved program of study requirements by 30 March 2012 will be assessed against the registration standard on English language skills (1 July 2010-18 September 2011) and related arrangements in place prior to 19 September 2011.

The identified students will have the option to choose to be assessed against the registration standard on English language skills in place from 19 September 2011. Students will need to write to AHPRA specifically to request this.

Internationally-qualified nursing and midwifery applicants.

New applicants

All applications from internationally-qualified nurses and midwives for registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or midwife received on or after 19 September 2011 are assessed against the revised registration standard on English language skills in place from 19 September 2011.

Existing internationally-qualified nursing and midwifery applicants

Applications lodged by internationally-qualified nurses and midwives for registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or midwife that were received by AHPRA **before** 19 September 2011 are being or have been assessed in accordance with the registration standard on English language skills and related arrangements in place from 1 July 2010 to 18 September 2011.

These candidates have had to provide documentary evidence to demonstrate satisfactory completion of:

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

or

- test results from an IELTS (minimum of 7 in each of the four components) or OET (minimum of B in each of the four components) examination in the four components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

If the applicant preferred to have his or her evidence assessed against the revised registration standard on English language skills in place from 19 September 2011, the applicant could have requested this specifically in writing to AHPRA. Applicants in this cohort could 'opt in' to be assessed under the revised standard when they attached the written request to their application and lodged it with AHPRA.

Applications lodged with AHPRA between 29 August 2011 and 18 September 2011

Applicants who lodged an application for registration as a nurse and/or midwife with AHPRA between 29 August 2011 and 18 September 2011 will continue to be assessed under the former English language skills arrangements, if the application was complete and included the relevant fee. Applicants who were not required to submit the results of an IELTS or OET test must have included all the supporting certified documentation specified on the application form to demonstrate:

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

Definitions

Full-time equivalent refers to the total amount of education studies a student has completed at a secondary and/or a vocational and/or a tertiary institution that is equivalent to the student undertaking full-time study during a five-year period.

It is not important whether the student was enrolled as a part-time or a full-time student; the evidence of combined studies completed must be equal to what a student would complete as a full-time student in a five-year period, recognising that the five years do not need to be consecutive. The five-year period may constitute a number of separate study periods that together total five years.

A number of definitions are listed in the registration standard on [English language skills](#).

Frequently asked questions and answers: English language skills

1. *To whom does the Board's registration standard on English language skills apply?*

The registration standard on English language skills applies to all applicants, including internationally-qualified applicants, applying for initial registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or midwife in Australia.

2. *What is an internationally-qualified applicant?*

An internationally-qualified applicant is a person who has obtained an initial nursing and/or midwifery qualification in a country outside Australia.

3. *Does the Board's registration standard on English language skills apply to students?*

No. This registration standard does not apply to students of nursing or students of midwifery. When a student completes a Board-approved program of study successfully and applies for registration as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or midwife, the student will then need to meet the Board's registration standard on English language skills.

4. *Which countries are recognised by the Board for the purposes of this registration standard?*

The Board's registration standard on English language skills recognises the following countries when an applicant has been taught and assessed in English at secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary levels:

- Australia
- Canada
- New Zealand
- Republic of Ireland
- South Africa
- the United Kingdom and
- the United States of America.

5.1 *What is the meaning of full-time equivalent education at secondary, vocational or tertiary levels?*

Full-time equivalent refers to the total amount of education studies a student has completed at a secondary and/or a vocational and/or a tertiary institution that is equivalent to the student undertaking full-time study during a five-year period.

It is not important whether the student was enrolled as a part-time or a full-time student; the evidence of combined studies completed must be equal to what a student would complete as a full-time student in a five-year period, recognising that the five years do not need to be consecutive. The five-year period may constitute a number of separate study periods that together total five years.

5.2 *Can I use failed or withdrawn subjects to contribute to the completion of five (5) years "full-time equivalent" requirement?*

No. The Board requires evidence that applicants are able to communicate effectively in English. This would not be supported by failed or withdrawn subjects.

5.3 *What if I have successfully completed subjects within a course and have evidence of that successful completion, but have withdrawn from the course prior to completion? Can these subjects contribute to the 'completion of five (5) years' full-time equivalent' requirement?*

Yes. The successful completion of subjects should provide evidence to the Board of the ability to communicate effectively in English. However, the NMBA has discretion in this matter.

Applicants completing a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study leading to registration as a registered nurse or midwife

6 I have completed a three-year program of study approved by the Board (or by a previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) such as a Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Midwifery (or equivalent). What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as a registered nurse or a registered midwife?

You will need to provide documentary evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of the three-year nursing or midwifery program of study approved by the Board (or by the previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) **and**
- an additional two years' full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at either a secondary or vocational or tertiary level **or** a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

If you are unable to provide this evidence, you will be required to undertake a Board-approved English language test (IELTS or OET).

7 I have completed a two-year program of study approved by the Board (or by a previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) such as a Bachelor of Nursing or Bachelor of Midwifery (or equivalent). What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as a registered nurse or a registered midwife?

You will need to provide documentary evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of the two-year nursing or midwifery program of study approved by the Board (or by the previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) **and**
- an additional three years' full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at either a secondary or vocational or tertiary level **or** a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

If you are unable to provide this evidence, you will be required to undertake a Board-approved English language test (IELTS or OET).

8 I am currently registered as an enrolled nurse in Australia, and have completed a Board-approved nursing and/or midwifery program of study leading to registration as a registered nurse and/or midwife. Do I need to provide documentary evidence that I have met the English language skills registration standard?

If you are currently or have been previously registered as an enrolled nurse in Australia with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia or with a previous state or territory nursing and/or midwifery board, you will be considered to have met the Board's registration standard on English language skills.

If you no longer hold registration as an enrolled nurse in Australia, you will be considered as meeting the registration standard on English language skills if you can provide evidence that you have maintained

continuous professional practice in an English-speaking environment and/or maintained continuous residence in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the Board's registration standard.

Please note: the Board reserves the right, at any time, to require any applicant for registration or renewal of registration to undertake a specified English language test. The Board can also decide, at any time, that an individual is not a suitable person to hold registration as a nurse or midwife if it believes that the individual's competency in speaking or communicating in English is not sufficient for the individual to practise as a nurse or midwife.

9 I have completed a postgraduate midwifery program of study approved by the Board leading to registration as a registered midwife. Will this course meet the requirements of the registration standard on English language skills?

A Board-approved, postgraduate midwifery program that **leads to** registration as a midwife comes under the Board's definition of a pre-registration program of study: that is, *all forms of formal nursing and midwifery education beyond secondary education leading to initial registration.*

Applicants with existing or previous registration in Australia as a registered nurse or enrolled nurse

If you are currently or have been previously registered as a registered nurse or an enrolled nurse in Australia with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia or with a previous state or territory nursing and/or midwifery board, you will be considered to have met the Board's registration standard on English language skills.

If you no longer hold registration in Australia, you will be considered as meeting the registration standard on English language skills if you can provide evidence that you have maintained continuous professional practice in an English-speaking environment, and/or maintained continuous residence in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the Board's registration standard.

Please note: the Board reserves the right, at any time, to require any applicant for registration or renewal of registration to undertake a specified English language test. The Board can also decide, at any time, that an individual is not a suitable person to hold registration as a nurse or midwife if it believes that the individual's competency in speaking or communicating in English is not sufficient for the individual to practise as a nurse or midwife.

Applicants with a Board-approved postgraduate midwifery program of two years' or more duration

If you are not and have not been previously registered as a registered nurse or enrolled nurse in Australia, and you have completed a Board-approved postgraduate midwifery program of at least two years' full-time equivalent duration, you can use your completion of this program as evidence that you meet the Board's pre-registration program of study requirement.

To meet the Board's registration standard, you will also need to provide evidence that you have completed an additional three years' full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) in English at secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary level, or a combination of two or three of these education levels, in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

Applicants with a Board-approved postgraduate midwifery program of less than two years' duration

If you are not and have not been previously registered as a registered nurse or enrolled nurse in Australia, and the approved postgraduate midwifery program you have completed is less than two years' fulltime equivalent in duration, you will be required to sit one of the two Board-approved English language tests.

Applicants completing a nursing and/or midwifery program of study approved in one of the recognised countries (excluding Australia and New Zealand) leading to registration as a registered nurse or midwife

10 I have completed a three-year program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom, or the United States of America. What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as a registered nurse or a registered midwife?

You will need to provide evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of a three-year nursing or midwifery program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in: Canada; Republic of Ireland; South Africa; the United Kingdom; or the United States of America **and**
- an additional two years' full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at secondary or vocational or tertiary level **or** a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

If you are unable to provide this evidence, you will be required to undertake a Board-approved English language test (IELTS or OET).

11 I have completed a two-year program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America. What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as a registered nurse or a registered midwife?

You will need to provide evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of a two-year nursing or midwifery program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America **and**
- an additional three years' full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at secondary or vocational or tertiary level **or** a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

Additional evidence of secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary education

12 My secondary education was taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed in the registration standard, but I did not complete secondary school. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide evidence of your secondary education that shows what you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook your secondary education and the level you achieved; for example, Year 10, Year 11 or Year 12 (or equivalent).

13 I have undertaken further studies in a course at vocational level which was taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard; however, I did not complete the course. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide evidence of your vocational education that shows the subjects you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook this education and the level you achieved; for example, incomplete or academic transcript. This vocational-level education may be unrelated to nursing or midwifery.

14 I have undertaken further tertiary studies in a course taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard, but I did not complete the course. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide information of your tertiary education that shows the subjects you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook the education and the level you achieved; for example, incomplete or academic transcript. The tertiary-level education may be unrelated to nursing or midwifery.

15 What does the Board mean when it refers to a pre-registration program of study?

The Board defines *pre-registration* to mean all forms of formal nursing and midwifery education beyond secondary education that leads to initial registration. For the purposes of the Board's registration standard, a *pre-registration program of study* must be approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Evidence of a minimum of two years' full-time equivalent studies, within a pre-registration program of study, that is taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries, does not include studies for which the student received recognition of prior learning. Rather, the evidence must include nursing or midwifery subjects the student was taught and assessed in English as part of the two years' full-time study.

Enrolled nurses

16 I have completed a program of study approved by the Board (or by a previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) (such as a 12- to 18-month Diploma of Nursing (pre-enrolment) or a 12-month Certificate IV in Nursing (enrolled nursing/division 2)). What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as an enrolled nurse?

You need to provide evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of the program of study approved by the Board (or by the previous state or territory nursing and midwifery board) (such as a 12- to 18-month Diploma of Nursing (pre-enrolment) or 12-month Certificate IV in Nursing (enrolled nursing/ division 2)) **and**
- an additional three and one half (3½) years to four (4) years of full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at secondary or vocational or tertiary level or a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

If you are unable to provide this evidence, you will be required to undertake a Board-approved English language test (IELTS or OET).

17 I have completed a one- to two-year program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America. What evidence do I need to include with my application for registration as an enrolled nurse?

You will need to provide evidence of five years' full-time equivalent education taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

The evidence required must demonstrate:

- successful completion of a one- to two-year program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in Canada, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America and
- an additional three to four years of full-time equivalent education (in nursing and/or midwifery and/or other studies) undertaken in English at secondary or vocational or tertiary level **or** a combination of two or three of these education levels in any of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard.

18 My secondary education was taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed in the registration standard but I did not complete secondary school. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide information of your secondary education that shows what you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook it and the level you achieved; for example, Year 10, Year 11 or Year 12 (or equivalent).

19 I have undertaken further vocational studies taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed in the registration standard, but I did not complete the course/s. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide information about your vocational education that shows the course subjects you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook it and the level you achieved; for example, incomplete or academic transcript. This vocational education may be unrelated to nursing or midwifery.

20 I have undertaken further tertiary studies taught and assessed in English in one of the countries listed in the registration standard but I did not complete the course/s. Can I use this as evidence towards my five years of education?

Yes. You need to provide information about your tertiary education that shows the subjects you completed, the timeframe in which you undertook it and the level you achieved; for example, incomplete or academic transcript. This tertiary education may be unrelated to nursing or midwifery.

21 What does the Board mean when it refers to a pre-registration program of study?

The Board defines *pre-registration* to mean all forms of formal nursing and midwifery education beyond secondary education that leads to initial registration. For the purposes of the Board's registration standard, a *pre-registration program of study* must be approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Evidence of a minimum of one year's full-time equivalent study within a pre-registration program of study, that is taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries, does not include studies for which the student received recognition of prior learning. Rather, the evidence must include nursing subjects the student was taught and assessed as part of the one to two years' full-time study.

Evidence

22 What evidence do I need to provide to demonstrate that I completed my secondary education taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard?

The evidence required to demonstrate secondary education taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard may vary, depending on where the education occurred. You need to provide comprehensive and clear information that will allow AHPRA and the Board to make a full assessment of the evidence you provide, without the need to ask for clarification or more documentation from you.

Evidence to demonstrate secondary education should include [certified copies](#) of original documentation that identifies clearly:

- the name and address of your secondary education institution/s
- the years and levels (for example, Year 10, 11 and/or 12) you attended secondary education
- the highest level you completed in secondary education and
- the studies completed as a full-time student and/or as a part-time student.

23 What evidence is required to show that I have completed vocational and/or tertiary education in an area of study (other than my nursing or midwifery qualification) that was taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard?

The evidence provided to demonstrate vocational and/or tertiary education taught and assessed in English in one of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard, may vary, depending on where the education occurred. You need to provide comprehensive and clear information that will allow AHPRA and the Board to make a full assessment of the evidence you provide, without the need to ask for clarification or more documentation from you.

Evidence to demonstrate vocational and/or tertiary education should include [certified copies](#) of original documentation that identifies clearly:

- the name and address of your vocational and/or tertiary study education institution/s
- the year/s you attended vocational and/or tertiary education
- the highest level you completed in the vocational and/or tertiary education
- an Academic Transcript detailing all subjects completed at the vocational and/or tertiary level
- Certificate of Attainment in the vocational and/or tertiary course if applicable
- the studies completed as a full-time and/or part-time student and
- duration of the course/s.

Board-approved English language proficiency tests

24 When do I need to undertake a Board-approved English language proficiency test?

You will be required to take a Board-approved English language proficiency test (IELTS or OET) if you are unable to provide documented evidence of five years' full-time equivalent of secondary and/or vocational and/or tertiary education, taught and assessed in English in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Registered nurses and registered midwives

For applicants seeking registration as a registered nurse and/or a registered midwife, the five years' full-time equivalent education means either: tertiary and secondary; or tertiary and vocational; or combined tertiary, secondary and vocational education; and must include evidence of a minimum of two years' full-time equivalent in a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

Enrolled nurses

For applicants seeking registration as an enrolled nurse, the five years' full-time equivalent education means either: vocational and secondary; or vocational and tertiary; or combined vocational, secondary and tertiary education; and must include evidence of a minimum of one year's full-time equivalent in a pre-registration program of study taught and assessed in English approved by the recognised nursing regulatory body in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

This does not apply to applicants who hold registration as a nurse or midwife in New Zealand, who are deemed to have demonstrated English language proficiency and have met the requirements of the registration standard on English language skills in accordance with the *Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997* (Cth).

25 Which English language proficiency tests are Board-approved?

The Board has two approved English language proficiency tests:

- the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) examination (Academic) (see www.ielts.org) and
- the Occupational English Test (OET) (see www.occupationalenglishtest.org).

26 What is the minimum score required in IELTS?

The Board requires an IELTS examination (Academic) score of a minimum of 7 in each of the four components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

27 What is the minimum score required in OET?

The Board requires an OET score of a minimum of B in each of the four components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

28 Does the minimum score need to be achieved in one sitting?

Yes. Results from an IELTS or OET test must be obtained in one sitting. This means the period of time set by the testing authority to complete 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. OET offers the opportunity to sit the listening, reading and writing components of the test together or separately. For the purpose of registration with the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia, all four components of the test must be taken in the one sitting.

29 The registration standard requires applicants to provide the English language proficiency test results to the Board for verification. How do I do this?

Applicants are responsible for arranging for test results to be provided to AHPRA for verification. You can either send the results to the State or Territory AHPRA office when you submit your application for registration, or you can arrange for the English language testing authority to send the results directly to the AHPRA office in your State or Territory once your application has been submitted. AHPRA will verify your test results through the secure Internet login verification service offered by OET and IELTS.

30 *Can the English language proficiency test results be older than two years?*

In certain circumstances, the Board may accept results of the Board-approved English language proficiency test that are older than two years. For test results older than two years to be accepted as current, you must have:

- been enrolled continuously in a program of study taught and assessed in English and approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in one of the seven recognised countries (Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or the United States of America) listed in the registration standard or
- maintained active, continuous practice and/or employment as an enrolled nurse, registered nurse and/or registered midwife using English as the primary language of practice in any of the seven recognised countries listed in the registration standard.

You will be required to provide certified documentary evidence to AHPRA as required in the application form.

Exemptions

31 *Are there any exemptions to this registration standard?*

There are two exemptions to the revised registration standard on English language skills.

Exemption 1: when an individual applicant applies for limited registration in special circumstances:

- to perform a demonstration in clinical procedures
- to undertake research that involves limited or no patient contact and/or
- 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.

Exemption 2: when the Board determines, as a matter of policy, that an exemption to the registration standard on English language skills applies to an identified cohort of applicants. Currently, the Board does not have such an exemption policy.

32 *How do I know I am eligible to apply for Exemption 1?*

When submitting your application to AHPRA for one of the three categories of limited registration listed in question 29 of this document, provide all relevant information so a clear determination can be made by AHPRA and the Board.

33 *Can I apply as an individual under Exemption 2?*

No. If, in future, the Board makes a policy decision about an exemption for a specific cohort of applicants, further detail about the documentary evidence required will be published.

34 *Who will determine if my exemption is successful?*

Staff in the AHPRA office of the State or Territory in which you live or plan to live will assess eligibility for exemption as part of considering applications for limited registration. Complex cases will be referred to the State or Territory Board of the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

35 I have current registration with the Nursing Council of New Zealand and/or the Midwifery Council of New Zealand. Do I need to demonstrate English language skills in accordance with the Board's registration standard on English language skills?

No. Under the *Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Act 1997* (Cth), the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia recognises the registration status of a registered nurse, midwife or enrolled nurse from New Zealand and grants registration with no additional requirement to demonstrate English language proficiency. New Zealand and Australia have comparable English language requirements for health practitioners.

36 Can the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia require me to undertake a specified English language proficiency test at any time?

Yes. The Board reserves the right at any time to require any applicant, or a registrant on renewal of registration, to undertake a specified English language proficiency test.

For more information on the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's registration standard on English language skills

- Visit the Board's website at www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au
- Lodge an online enquiry form at www.ahpra.gov.au under Contact us and select Registration Enquiries from the drop-down menu; or
- Telephone AHPRA on 1300 419 495 from within Australia between 09:00am – 05:00pm local time or from overseas on +61 3 8708 9001 between 09:00am – 05:00pm Australian Eastern Standard Time.