

Authority

This standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council on 5 August 2011 pursuant to the *Health Practitioner Regulation National Law* (the National Law) as in force in each State and Territory with approval taking effect from 19 September 2011.

Background

From 1 July 2010, the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (the National Board) has been responsible for the regulation of nurses, midwives and students under the National Law. A link to the National Law is available at www.ahpra.gov.au under *Legislation and Publications*.

Registration standards

Section 38 of the National Law requires the National Board to develop and recommend to the Ministerial Council, registration standards about the English language skills necessary for an applicant for registration in the nursing and midwifery profession to be suitable for registration in the profession.

The Board has developed and consulted on a range of registration standards that have been approved by Ministerial Council. The approved standards can be accessed at www.nursingandmidwiferyboard.gov.au under *Registration Standards*.

Summary

All applicants, including internationally qualified applicants, who seek initial registration in Australia, must demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills. All applicants must be able to demonstrate English language skills that meet the requirements detailed in this registration standard.

Scope of application

This standard applies to all applicants, including internationally qualified applicants, who seek initial registration in Australia as:

- an enrolled nurse who has completed a pre-registration program of study in the vocational sector (or the equivalent) or;
- a registered nurse who has completed a pre-registration program of study in the tertiary sector (or the equivalent) or;
- a registered midwife who has completed a pre-registration program of study in the tertiary sector (or the equivalent).

This standard does not apply to students of nursing and midwifery until they make an application for registration as a nurse or midwife.

Requirements

1. Applicants for registration

Registered nurses and registered midwives

- a). An applicant for registration as a registered nurse and/or a registered midwife who has provided evidence of completion of five (5) years*(full-time equivalent) of education taught and assessed in English, in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard, is considered to have demonstrated English language proficiency and has met the requirements of this standard;
- b). An applicant for registration as a registered nurse and/or a registered midwife who has **not** completed five (5) years*(full-time equivalent) of education taught and assessed in English, in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard, **will** be required to demonstrate English language proficiency in accordance with Board-approved English language tests.

**The completion of five (5) years (full-time equivalent) education taught and assessed in English means five (5) years full-time equivalent of either:*
 - i). tertiary and secondary; or
 - ii). tertiary and vocational; or
 - iii). combined tertiary, secondary and vocational education

taught and assessed in English in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard. These five (5) years must include evidence of a minimum of two (2) years full-time equivalent pre-registration program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the countries listed in this registration standard.

Enrolled Nurses

An applicant for registration as an enrolled nurse who has:

- c). provided evidence of completion of five (5) years*(full-time equivalent) of education taught and assessed in English, in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard, is considered to have demonstrated English language proficiency and has met the requirements of this standard.

- d). An applicant for registration as an enrolled nurse who has:

not completed five (5) years* (full-time equivalent) of education taught and assessed in English, in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard, **will** be required to demonstrate English language proficiency in accordance with Board-approved English language tests.

**The completion of five (5) years (full-time equivalent) education taught and assessed in English means five (5) years full time equivalent of either:*

- i). vocational and secondary; or
- ii). vocational and tertiary; or
- iii). combined vocational, secondary and tertiary education

taught and assessed in English in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard. These five (5) years must include evidence of a minimum of one (1) year full-time equivalent in a pre-registration program of study approved by the recognised nursing and/or midwifery regulatory body in any of the countries listed in this registration standard.

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

List of recognised countries

The National Board recognises the following countries where the applicant was taught and assessed in English at either vocational and tertiary or combined secondary, vocational and/or tertiary education levels:

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

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

4. The following tests for assessment of English language proficiency are approved by the Board:

- a). 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; or
- b). 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; or
- c). other English language tests approved by the Board from time to time.

5. English language proficiency test results must have been obtained within two years before applying for registration. An IELTS or OET result (or approved equivalent) that is older than two-years may be accepted as current, if accompanied by proof that an applicant:

- a). has actively maintained continuous practice and/or employment as a registered nurse, enrolled nurse or midwife using English as the primary language of practice in any of the recognised countries listed in this registration standard; and/or
- b). has been continuously enrolled 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 countries listed in this registration standard.

6. Results from any of the above mentioned English language proficiency tests must be obtained in one sitting.
7. The applicant is responsible for the cost of English language proficiency tests.
8. The applicant must make arrangements for test results to be provided to the Board for verification.

Exemptions

1. The Board may grant an exemption to this standard where 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 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.

2. The Board reserves the right to consider and/or grant an exemption to this standard as a matter of policy where there is compelling evidence demonstrating English language proficiency equivalent to the standard.

The Board reserves the right at any time to revoke an exemption to this standard.

Definitions

Board approved English language proficiency

tests means tests approved by the Board as being appropriate to allow applicants to demonstrate that their English language skills are at a level that they can provide safe and competent practice (see: <http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/>).

Compelling evidence means verifiable facts and/or data that give the National Board a reasonable degree of certainty that English language proficiency of the applicant is equivalent to the standard. Decisions relating to the sufficiency of the evidence will be made solely by the National Board and will be informed by concern for public safety.

Formal education means a program of study that is taught and assessed in English in the recognised countries listed above and leads to a qualification that is recognised in the vocational and tertiary sectors.

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 (see <http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/>).

An internationally qualified applicant means a person who obtained nursing or midwifery, or equivalent, qualifications outside Australia.

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.

Tertiary means all forms of formal education beyond secondary education, including programs of study leading to registration as a registered nurse and/or a registered midwife.

The National Board means the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia.

Vocational means all forms of formal education beyond secondary education, including programs of study leading to registration as an enrolled nurse.

Pre-registration means all forms of formal nursing and midwifery education beyond secondary education leading to initial registration.

Review

This standard will commence on 19 September 2011. The Board will review this standard at least every three years.