



Policy on English language requirements

Policy Statement

Sections 16(a) and (b) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 require the Medical Council of New Zealand (Council) to be satisfied that any doctor seeking registration in New Zealand is able to communicate in and comprehend English sufficiently to protect the health and safety of the public, and is able to communicate effectively for the purposes of practising within a scope of practice in which they are seeking registration.

Rationale

All applicants for registration must satisfy Council that they are able to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in the medical workplace, as one of the prerequisites for registration.

All candidates applying for the New Zealand Registration Examination (NZREX Clinical) must establish that they have a reasonable ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English as a prerequisite to sitting the examination.

Requirements

To be accepted to sit NZREX Clinical or to be registered with the Council, applicants must meet one of the following English language requirements.

1. Have a primary qualification from a New Zealand medical school; or
2. English is the graduate's first language and the graduate has an acceptable primary medical qualification from Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada or a South African medical school where English is the sole language of instruction, or
3. Satisfy the Council of having completed at least 24 months full time equivalent of a health-related postgraduate qualification (diploma, masters or PhD) at an accredited New Zealand university within the 5 years immediately prior to application.

And

Provide references from two professors from an accredited New Zealand university who are registered as doctors in New Zealand and who speak English as a first language. The referees must be able to attest to the applicant's ability to read, write, speak and understand spoken English: or

4. Satisfy Council of continuous work as a registered medical practitioner in an institution where English was the first and prime language for a period of at least 2 years within the 5 years immediately prior to application.

And

Provide the names and contact details of at least two referees who are senior medical practitioners who speak English as a first language, and who can attest to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in a clinical setting with both patients and professional colleagues. Referees will be contacted directly by the Council or a body Council authorised to do this (employer or recruitment agency); or

5. Doctors registered with the Medical Council of New Zealand on or after 18 September 2004, whose registration was cancelled for administrative reasons (and not as a result of an order of the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal or a direction by the Council under section 146 or 147 of the HPCAA).

And

Provide the names and contact details of at least two referees who are senior medical practitioners registered in New Zealand, and who can attest to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in a clinical setting with both patients and professional colleagues. Referees will be contacted directly by the Council or a body Council authorised to do this (employer or recruitment agency); or

6. Pass the **Academic Module** of the **International English Language Testing System (IELTS)** by achieving a minimum of the following within one result:

Required scores
Minimum requirements:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Speaking 7.5• Listening 7.5• Writing 7.0• Reading 7.0

Validity of IELTS results
IELTS results are valid within:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 years of an application for registration.• 2 years of NZREX Clinical examination date (new candidate).• Repeat candidates for NZREX Clinical will not be required to re-sit IELTS for up to 5 years of the examination date if they have been, since the last NZREX Clinical sat, residing continuously in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada (English speaking region, not Quebec) or South Africa. Acceptable evidence includes a letter of reference from an employer or landlord with a passport displaying visa or residency.

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7. Before 11 August 2018¹, pass the Medical Module of the Occupational English Test (OET) by achieving a minimum of 'A' or 'B' in each of the four components (reading, writing, listening and speaking) within one result.

From 9 September 2018, pass the Medical Module of the OET by achieving a minimum score of 350 in each of the four components (reading, writing, listening and speaking) within one result.

Validity of OET results
OET results are valid within: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2 years of an application for registration.• 2 years of NZREX Clinical examination date (new candidate).• Repeat candidates for NZREX Clinical will not be required to re-sit OET for up to 5 years of the examination date if they have been, since the last NZREX Clinical sat, residing continuously in New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, the United States, Canada (English speaking region, not Quebec) or South Africa. Acceptable evidence includes a letter of reference from an employer or landlord with a passport displaying visa or residency.

Note

Incomplete applications

If an application for registration or to sit the NZREX Clinical is submitted without the English requirements having been met, the application will be considered incomplete and referred back to allow the applicant to fulfil the requirements.

NZREX Clinical candidates

Candidates who pass the NZREX Clinical will not be required to meet the English language requirements again for the purposes of registration, provided the NZREX Clinical pass is still valid (valid for 5 years of the date of the examination passed).

If comprehension and communication deficiencies are noted during NZREX Clinical, candidates will be required to undertake further remediation and/or testing of their ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English before being eligible to apply to re-sit NZREX Clinical (if needing to re-sit) or to apply for registration.

Management of communication while working under supervision

If, after registration, comprehension and communication deficiencies are notified by an employer, Council will address those issues within policies and processes as appropriate within the HPCAA.

Council approval: October 2010 (replaced Policy on approved English tests and Policy on exemption from an approved English test).

Updated at Council meeting:

February 2014

Updated to reflect changes to OET reporting of results

March 2018

¹ The last OET test using the old scoring system, will be held on 11 August 2018. The first test using the new scoring system will be held on 9 September 2018.