



**MEDICAL SCIENCES COUNCIL
OF NEW ZEALAND**

TE KAUNIHERA PŪTAIAO HAUORA O AOTEAROA

POLICY AND GUIDELINES: ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY

JUNE 2019

Policy Title	
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Scope	This policy applies to all practitioners seeking registration with the Medical Sciences Council

Associated Policy Documents	
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Policy Overview

Sections 16(a) and (b) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 require the Medical Sciences Council (the Council) to be satisfied that an applicant is able to communicate effectively for practising in the scope for which they are seeking registration in New Zealand, and adequately comprehends English to protect the health and safety of the public.

This policy document sets out the Council's standard for applicants to meet the requirements for demonstrating English language proficiency.

English Language Proficiency

Registration applicants must satisfy the Council they can communicate effectively to practise in the medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology professions. Their ability to communicate and comprehend English must be sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public.

English language proficiency is inclusive of speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

Demonstration of English Language Proficiency

The Council has identified four pathways for registration applicants to demonstrate their proficiency in English:

1. They have graduated from a Council-accredited New Zealand qualification programme; or
2. English is their first language and their primary qualification¹ (for the scope of practice in which they are seeking registration) is from an educational institution where English is the sole language of instruction and assessment, and located in one of the following recognised countries:
 - Australia,
 - Canada,
 - Ireland,
 - New Zealand,
 - South Africa,
 - United Kingdom or
 - United States of America.
3. They have continuously worked as a registered health practitioner² in an accredited medical laboratory or health facility in one of the recognised countries where English was the first and prime language providing they have:
 - a. worked in a comparable role to the scope of practice for which they are seeking registration, for a period of at least 2-years within the 5-years immediately prior to their registration application; and

¹ The Council must be satisfied that the primary qualification is equivalent to or as satisfactory as the prescribed qualification for the scope of practice the applicant is seeking registration in.

² If the applicant works in a country where registration is not required to practise in the scope of practice they are seeking registration in they must have worked in an accredited medical laboratory or health facility.

- b. provided the names and contact details of at least two referees who are senior health practitioners who speak English as a first language and who can attest to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in a clinical setting with patients and professional colleagues. Referees are contacted directly by the Council or their delegate.
4. They meet the required standards of a Council approved English language test.

English Language Test

Applicants applying for registration in the anaesthetic technician, medical laboratory technician, or medical laboratory pre-analytical scopes of practice, who are required to sit an English language test will need to complete the International English Language Testing (IELTS) to the following standards:

- i. The test was in the academic band of IELTS;
- ii. A minimum score of 7 in each of the three sub-tests of listening, reading and speaking and a minimum of 6.5 in writing;
- iii. The results are achieved in one sitting; and
- iv. IELTS results were achieved within the 2-years immediately prior to their registration application.

In limited circumstances the test result can be more than 2-years prior to their application date. The applicant must have been in continuous employment as a registered health practitioner in the same health profession in one of the recognised countries where English was the primary language of practice. They must have lodged their registration application within 12 months of finishing their last period of employment.

Medical laboratory scientist applicants who are required to sit an English language test will need to complete the International English Language Testing (IELTS) to the following standards:

- i. The test was in the academic band of IELTS;
- ii. A minimum score of a 7 in each of the four sub-tests of listening, reading, writing and speaking;
- iii. The results are achieved in one sitting; and
- iv. IELTS results were achieved within 2-years immediately prior to their registration application.

In limited circumstances the test result can be more than 2-years prior to their application date. The applicant must have been in continuous employment as a registered health practitioner in the same health profession in one of the recognised countries where English was the primary language of practice. They must have lodged their registration application within 12 months of finishing their last period of employment.

English Language Proficiency: Ongoing Competency Requirements

Should concerns be raised about the communication competencies (including their proficiency in English) of a practitioner registered with the Council, a competency review may be undertaken under sections 34 and 36 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003.