

Policy

English Language Proficiency

Effective January 2026

Policy title	English Language Proficiency
Reference number	20260112 MSC English Language Proficiency
Scope	This policy applies to all practitioners seeking registration with Te Kaunihera Pūtaiao Hauora O Aotearoa Medical Sciences Council

Associated documents	
MLS Registration	20250408-MLS-Registration-Policy.pdf
AT Registration	2025-Mar-AT-Registration-Policy.pdf
MLS Qualification Assessment	20250326-AT-Qualification-Assessments-Policy.pdf
AT Qualification Assessment	20250408-MLS-Qualification-Assessments-Policy-v2.pdf

Revision Schedule			
Version number	Version date	Approved by	Next review
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Background

1. Sections 16(a) and (b) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the Act) require Te Kaunihera Pūtaiao Hauora O Aotearoa | Medical Sciences Council (the Council) to be satisfied that an applicant can communicate effectively for practising in the scope for which they are seeking registration in Aotearoa New Zealand and adequately comprehends English to protect the health and safety of the public.
2. This policy document sets out the Council's standard for applicants to meet the requirements for demonstrating English language proficiency.

Overview

3. Registration applicants must satisfy the Council that they can communicate effectively to practise in the medical laboratory science and anaesthetic technician professions. Their ability to communicate and comprehend English must be sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public.
4. English language is inclusive of speaking, reading, listening, and writing.

Demonstration of English language proficiency

Four pathways to demonstrating English proficiency

5. Registered practitioners wishing to work in Aotearoa New Zealand must demonstrate:
 1. They have graduated from a Council-accredited qualification programme; or
 2. English is their first language, and their primary qualification¹ is from an educational institution where English is the sole language of instruction and assessment, and located in one of the following countries recognised by the Council: Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States of America.
;or

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

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 primary language. In addition, they must have worked in a role comparable 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 application.

In this case they will be required to provide 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 English within a clinical setting with patients and professional colleagues. Referees will be contacted directly by a Council delegate; or

4. They meet the required standards of a Council-approved English language test as detailed below.

English language test

6. Applicants required to sit an English Language test will need to complete either the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test, or the Occupational English Test (OET).
7. Test results are verified as part of the registration application process.
8. The applicant's test of choice must meet the following standards:

International English Language Test System (IELTS)

9. The test was in the academic band of IELTS; and
 1. Medical Laboratory Technician, Medical Laboratory Pre-Analytical Technician, Anaesthetic Technician:
 - 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
 2. Medical Laboratory Scientist:
 - A minimum score of 7 in each of the four sub-tests of: listening, reading, speaking, and writing; and
 3. The results are achieved in one sitting; and

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

4. IELTS results were achieved within two (2)-years immediately prior to their registration application.

Occupational English Test (OET)

10. The test was in the Medicine or Pharmacy band of OET; and
 1. A minimum score of B in all four sections of listening, reading, speaking, and writing; and
 2. The results are achieved in one sitting; and
 3. OET results were achieved within two (2)-years immediately prior to their registration application.

Tests older than two years

11. In limited circumstances the IELTS or OET test result may be more than two (2)-years prior to their application date. For the test results to be older than two years the following must occur:
 - The applicant must have been in continuous employment as a registered medical laboratory science or anaesthetic technology practitioner 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.

Ongoing fitness and competency requirements

12. Should concerns be raised about the communication competencies or fitness to practise (including 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.