

## Notice to all Laboratory Managers and Registered Medical Laboratory Science Practitioners - English Language Policy

Effective from 12 August 2019 the Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand (the Council) is introducing a revised English language policy.

### Background

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

Over recent years the Council has sought to set a robust English language policy. As a result, the Council has revised its policy on several occasions. This latest revision addresses issues subsequent to the August 2018 revision. The key changes are listed below.

### International English Language Testing (IELTS)

The major changes to the IELTS requirements are:

- the removal of the requirement to achieve an average score of 7.5: and
- for MLT's and MLPAT's a reduction in the score for writing from 7 to 6.5.

From 12 August 2019 the following English Language test requirements apply:

Applicants applying for registration in the anaesthetic technician, medical laboratory technician, or medical laboratory pre-analytical technician 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 must be the academic band of IELTS;
- ii. A minimum score of a 7 in listening, reading and speaking and a minimum of 6.5 in writing;
- iii. The results are achieved in one sitting; and
- iv. IELTS results achieved within the 2-years immediately before their registration application.

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 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 achieved within 2-years immediately before their registration application.

### Attestation of English language competency

The Council's previous policy allowed for candidates who had been resident in New Zealand for a continuous period of at least two-years within the five-years immediately before their application, to demonstrate their English language proficiency by providing two Certificates of English Language Proficiency signed by referees whose primary language is English. These certificates have proved to

be insufficient in satisfying the Council of a practitioner's English language proficiency. Consequently, as from 12 August 2019, the Council will no longer accept Certificates of English Language Proficiency.

### Working as a registered health practitioner in a recognised country

From 12 August 2019, the following provision will be in place.

A practitioner can demonstrate their proficiency in English if they have continuously worked as a registered health practitioner<sup>1</sup> in an accredited medical laboratory or health facility in one of the recognised countries<sup>2</sup> 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 before their registration application; and
- 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.

**MARGARET STEEL, Registrar, Medical Sciences Council of New Zealand.**

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> Recognised countries are - Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America