

## English Language Policy

### Requirements for Registration

#### **Purpose**

If English is not an applicant's first language the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) requires him/her to demonstrate proficiency in English. This policy explains the OTBNZ's requirements for registration in terms of English language competence.

#### **Background**

Under section 15 of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCA Act) the OTBNZ may register an applicant within the scope of practice 'General Scope of Practice: Occupational Therapist' if the applicant:

- is fit for registration in accordance with section 16; and
- has the qualifications that are prescribed, under section 12, for that scope of practice; and
- is competent to practise within that scope of practice.

#### ***Fitness for registration***

There are eight criteria relating to fitness to practise, set out under section 16 of the HPCA Act – English language competence is one of those criteria.

#### **Acceptable tests**

The OTBNZ recognises two international English language standard tests to demonstrate competency for registration. Applicants are free to choose either test.

- 1) International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic  
[www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

Applicants must achieve a test result score of at least 7 in each band.

The IELTS scores of 7 in each band do not need to be achieved in a single sitting of the test. Applicants may choose to sit the test more than once and gain the necessary scores over a series of tests. The total of 7 in each band must be achieved within 12 months of first sitting the test. Test results must be no older than 24 months when they are submitted.

- 2) Occupational English test (OET)  
[www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

Applicants must achieve a minimum score of B in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking).

The OET scores of B or above in each component do not need to be achieved in a single sitting of the test. Applicants may choose to sit the test more than once and gain the necessary scores over a series of tests. The total of B in each

component must be achieved within 12 months of first sitting the test. Test results must be no older than 24 months when they are submitted.

### **Exemption to the requirement for IELTS results**

The HPCA Act requires that registration authorities refrain from imposing unnecessary costs. Therefore the OTBNZ allows some applicants to apply for an exemption to the requirement.

All applications for an exemption are considered on a case-by-case basis, and may require an interview with appointed OTBNZ representatives in Wellington, at the applicant's own expense.

The OTBNZ will not grant an exemption if it is in possession of any information which raises questions about the applicant's English language competence. For example, it will not grant an exemption if a Head of School provides information indicating that there have been issues relating to the applicant's English language competency during the course of study.

The OTBNZ may grant an exemption if it is satisfied that all of the following requirements have been met:

1. The applicant has undertaken and completed their undergraduate Occupational Therapy degree in New Zealand; and
2. The OTBNZ has received a letter from the Head of School at the applicant's New Zealand tertiary educational institution, stating that there were no issues raised relating to the applicant's English language competency during the course of study; and
3. The applicant has provided satisfactory endorsements from three clinical placement supervisors who have observed, and are familiar with, their English language competency in a clinical setting; and
4. All three clinical placement supervisors speak English as a first language, and have adequately addressed the applicant's competence in reading, writing, speaking and listening in a clinical setting.

The OTBNZ may not consider applications for an exemption from applicants who do not satisfy the above criteria (1) – (4).

**Date approved: July 2017**

**Approved by: Andrew Charnock**

**Due for review: July 2020**