

Consultation for English Language Policy

The role of the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) is to protect the public by ensuring that occupational therapists in Aotearoa New Zealand are fit and competent to practice. The OTBNZ is required by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003¹ to ensure that all occupational therapists applying for registration are able to communicate effectively in English.

The OTBNZ's English Language policy sets the English Language policy and acceptable methods of demonstrating the requirements. The policy applies to all applicants where English is not their first language, regardless of country of qualification.

Reasons for policy review

The OTBNZ regularly reviews its policies to ensure they are accurate, appropriate and consistent with good regulatory practice.

The OTBNZ is aware of the changing demographics in Aotearoa New Zealand. Applicants for registration come from increasingly diverse backgrounds where English is not their first language.

Feedback from applicants and other stakeholders suggests that the current requirements for New Zealand Occupational Therapy graduates are overly restrictive and may act as a barrier to registration. Applicants in this situation are currently required to request an exemption to the English Language Policy. The exemption requires completion of an occupational therapy degree in Aotearoa New Zealand, an attestation from the head of school, together with three references from clinical/fieldwork supervisors about their ability to communicate effectively in English. The supervisor must have English as their first language.

1 Health Practitioners Assurance Act 2003

16 Fitness for registration

No applicant for registration may be registered as a health practitioner of a health profession if—

(a) he or she does not satisfy the responsible authority that he or she is able to communicate effectively for the purposes of practising within the scope of practice in respect of which the applicant seeks to be, or agrees to be, registered; or

(b) he or she does not satisfy the responsible authority that his or her ability to communicate in and comprehend English is sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public; or

Significant changes

The proposed policy is attached to this consultation document.

Applicant group	Change to policy
Applicants who have completed the prescribed qualification in Aotearoa New Zealand	A decrease from three (3) to one (1) reference to be supplied by the applicant's final year clinical/fieldwork supervisor attesting to the applicant's ability to communicate effectively in English

The OTBNZ will continue to reserve the right to obtain further information about an applicant where their ability to communicate effectively in English may be in doubt.

Consultation Questions

Do you support the proposed changes to the English Language policy?

Are there any comments you would like to make about the policy?

Making a Submission

Submissions to the consultation can be made via email to enquiries@otboard.org.nz, or by post to, Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand, PO Box 9644, Marion Square, Wellington, 6141. Submissions must be received by **5pm on Friday 11 October 2019**.

Submissions received will be published on the Board's website and will record the person's name and profession (for health practitioners). No other contact details will be published. We reserve the right not to publish disparaging or inflammatory material. All information received will be stored on a secure password protected site on the Board's server and disposed of securely when no longer required.

About the Process

Once approved by the Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand, the policy will be published on the OTBNZ website: www.otboard.org.nz.

If you have any questions about the consultation process, please contact us by email at enquiries@otboard.org.nz or phone (04) 918 4740 or 0800 99 77 55.

English language policy for registration

The Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) is required by the HPCA Act to ensure that applicants are able to communicate and comprehend English in order to work as an occupational therapist in Aotearoa New Zealand. (Section 16(a&b))

Scope

This policy applies to applicants wishing to register with the OTBNZ where English is not their first language.

Applicants must demonstrate their ability to communicate and comprehend effectively in English in order to be registered.

Acceptable methods

1. Submission of acceptable test results
2. Completion of a primary undergraduate occupational therapy qualification in Aotearoa New Zealand

Approved tests

The OTBNZ recognises two international English language standard tests to demonstrate competency for registration. Applicants are free to choose either test. The OTBNZ will verify all results of English language testing using the provider's online verification system.

Provider	Website	Relevant test	Standard to be achieved
Occupational English Test	www.occupationalenglishtest.org	Occupational therapy	Minimum score of B in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking).
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic	www.ielts.org	Academic	At least 7 in each band

Applicants may combine (club) the results of more than one test attempt to achieve the results required, however, the standard must be achieved within 12 months of sitting the first test. Test results must be no older than 24 months when they are submitted.

New Zealand graduates

Where an applicant has completed their primary occupational therapy qualification in Aotearoa New Zealand the applicant can demonstrate their ability to communicate by:

- Notification from the appropriate school that the applicant has completed an undergraduate degree in occupational therapy in Aotearoa New Zealand (Bachelor of Health Science (occupational therapy) or Bachelor of Occupational Therapy)
AND
- Attestation by the head of the occupational therapy school that the applicant has had no identified issues with communication in English during their course or clinical placements.
AND
- A reference from a final year clinical/fieldwork supervisor stating that the applicant's ability to communicate effectively in English. The supervisor must have English as their first language.

Further information

The OTBNZ will not approve registration where there is doubt about an individual's ability to communicate clearly in English. Applicants in this case will be managed on a case by case basis. The OTBNZ reserves the right to make further enquiries by:

- seeking additional information from sources such as clinical/fieldwork placement supervisors
OR
- requiring the applicant to attend an interview with OTBNZ staff or nominated assessors (Travel would be at the applicant's expense)