

# English language policy for registration

The Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand (OTBNZ) is required by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 to ensure that applicants are able to communicate and comprehend effectively in English in order to work as an occupational therapist in Aotearoa New Zealand (Section 16 (a & b))

## Scope

This policy applies to all applicants applying to register with the OTBNZ where English is not their first language. This includes applicants who have received their training in Aotearoa New Zealand, and those who received their training elsewhere. For the purposes of this policy the OTBNZ defines 'first language' as the language that the applicant learnt to speak first, also known as their mother tongue.

Applicants whose first language is one of New Zealand's official languages (Te Reo Maori or NZ sign language) are exempt from this policy.

## Acceptable methods

Where English is not the first language of the applicant the applicant must demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively by either the:

1. Submission of acceptable test results from an approved English language test  
OR
2. Completion of a primary undergraduate occupational therapy qualification in Aotearoa New Zealand, and appropriate attestations.

## 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	<a href="http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org">www.occupationalenglishtest.org</a>	Occupational therapy	Minimum score of B in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking).
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic	<a href="http://www.ielts.org">www.ielts.org</a>	Academic	At least 7.0 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 an OTBNZ accredited programme 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 lead occupational therapist within an OTBNZ accredited programme that the applicant can comprehend and communicate effectively in English.
- AND
- One (1) reference from a final year fieldwork educator/supervisor attesting to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English.

**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 situation 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 fieldwork placement educators/supervisors.
- OR
- Requiring the applicant to attend an interview with an OTBNZ nominated assessor, either remotely (eg, zoom) or in person (travel would be at the applicant's expense).

Effective from: 10 December 2019	Review by: Dec 2021
Approved by: OTBNZ Board	Version 1.0