

## English Language Skills – FAQ

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### Does the English language skills registration standard apply to me?

The [English language skills registration standard](#) applies to all applicants for initial registration in paramedicine. The standard does not apply to students but does apply to graduates seeking initial registration.

Initial registration means the first time that you apply for registration as a health practitioner in Australia. This means if you have been registered in another health profession (for example, nursing and midwifery) the standard may not apply to you.

If you are currently registered, or have previously been registered, in another health profession you are unlikely to be considered to be applying for initial registration unless:

- you are registered in a profession that does not have a comparable English language standard to paramedicine (which includes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practice and Chinese Medicine prior to July 2015), or
- your registration has lapsed or is currently non-practising registration and you have not used English as your primary language for more than five years, or
- the other registration you hold or previously held was limited registration in another profession and you were granted an exemption from the English language registration standard under specified circumstances.

### Why do I have to meet the English language skills registration standard?

In order to be registered as a paramedic in Australia, you must be able to demonstrate that your English language skills will meet the requirements of the Paramedicine Board of Australia's (the Board) English language skills registration standard to enable you to safely practice your profession. The English language skills registration standard is one of the five core standards required under the National Law and its requirements are shared by almost all registered health professionals.

### How can I demonstrate my English language competence?

There are four pathways that you can use to demonstrate your English language competence. These are outlined in the *English Language skills registration standard*. The pathways are:

1. Primary language pathway
2. Combined secondary and qualifications or training pathway
3. Extended education pathway, or
4. English language test pathway

Each pathway is outlined in the *English Language skills registration standard*.

[A flow diagram to help you find the most appropriate pathway for you can be found on the Board's website.](#)

## I grew up and studied in Australia – which pathway is appropriate for me?

If you grew up and completed all of your education in Australia, the most appropriate pathway for you is the combined secondary and qualifications and training pathway. This pathway requires that at least two years of your secondary education as well as the qualification and training you are relying on for registration were taught and assessed in English in a recognised country (such as Australia). Although you may meet the standard through other pathways, it will be easiest for you to satisfy the evidence requirements through this pathway.

If you qualify for registration through one of the grandparenting pathways, you can use the combined secondary and qualifications and training pathway if all the qualifications, training and/or practice that you are relying on to meet the grandparenting pathway was completed in English in a recognised country. You may be requested to provide further information (such as references) to confirm the qualifications, training and/or practice were completed in English.

Most applicants under grandparenting pathway (c) will meet the combined secondary and qualifications and training pathway. For these applicants there is further information about how to complete the English language skills section of the online form in the final section of this document.

## I grew up in Australia but I completed my qualification and training in paramedicine overseas, not in a recognised country. Which pathway is appropriate for me?

If your qualification and training was taught and assessed in English, and English is your primary language, the primary language pathway is the most appropriate for you.

This pathway requires that English is your primary language (that is, the language you use most frequently and are most familiar and comfortable with), that you completed all of your primary and secondary education in English in a recognised country (such as Australia) and that the qualification you are relying on for registration was taught and assessed in English. However, this qualification does not need to have been obtained in a recognised country.

If your qualification as a health practitioner was not taught and assessed in English, you will need to demonstrate that you meet the standard through the English language test pathway.

## I did not go to secondary school in a recognised country but I have been studying for an extended period in a recognised country. Which pathway is most relevant for me?

If you have completed at least six years (full-time equivalent) continuous education in English, including your paramedicine qualification and training, in a recognised country, you meet the standard through the extended education pathway.

If your qualification as a health practitioner was not taught and assessed in English, you will need to demonstrate that you meet the standard through the English language test pathway.

If you qualify for registration through one of the grandparenting pathways, you may be able to use the extended education and training pathway if you are relying on qualifications and training to qualify, as long as the education meets the requirements for this pathway. You may be requested to provide further information (such as references) to confirm the qualifications, training and/or practice was completed in English. If you qualify for registration through the grandparenting pathway (c) that relies on practice, you will not be able to use the extended education pathway.

## What does 'full-time equivalent' mean?

'Full-time equivalent' means:

- a course load that a student would need to take in order to complete a course in the minimum time (not including accelerated or fast-track courses). For example, a full-time load for a four year undergraduate degree would be the normal course load for a student who would expect to complete that degree in four years, or

- a combination of part-time courses, which together make up a full-time course load. For example, two part-time courses taken at the same time, each consisting of a 50% course load.

Course loads for particular programs of study are set by educational institutions.

### **Can I count studies that are more than full-time on the *extended education pathway*?**

If your course load is greater than full-time, you cannot count the additional study towards the total number of years you are claiming. For example, if you are undertaking full-time study for a particular course, but are also studying another course part-time, you cannot claim the equivalent of 1.5 times the duration of study in English. That is, one year of full-time equivalent study is the maximum that you can claim in a single year, regardless of whether your subject load would normally be considered to be in excess of full-time.

### **Can I count part-time studies on the *extended education pathway*?**

You can count part-time studies as long as your overall course load is full-time equivalent. For example, you may be studying one part-time course with a 40% course load and another part-time course with a 60% course load. Together, this would be considered a full-time equivalent course load.

### **Can I apply under the *extended education pathway* if my 6 years extended education was interrupted by 12 months or more of leave?**

Any period of leave within the 6 years extended education that is not an education institution's scheduled holiday, eg for overseas travel or maternity leave, means that the 6 years is not continuous as required by the English language skills registration standard. The best option in this situation is to use the English language test pathway, which is intended for applicants who cannot meet the other pathways in the standard and is not affected by gaps in education or employment.

### **Can I count vocational study on the *extended education pathway*?**

Yes, as long as your overall course load is full-time equivalent and it meets the requirements in the definition for vocational education.

**Vocational education** means education taught and assessed in English in Australia where:

- a) the level of the vocational education was at the Australian Qualifications Framework Level 3 or Certificate III or higher (<http://www.aqf.edu.au/aqf/in-detail/aqf-levels/>)
- b) the vocational education provided was undertaken primarily face to face and requires students to use English language speaking, writing, reading and listening skills, and
- c) no more than two years (full time equivalent) of the vocational education was unrelated to health care or health service provision.

### **I have completed a tertiary preparation English course before commencing my qualification/training in paramedicine. Can this be included as vocational education under the *extended education pathway*?**

Yes, you may be able to include this course if it meets the requirements in the definition for vocational education. The length of time you may count towards the required number of years of study in English will depend on whether you studied full-time or part-time. If you studied part-time, you can only count this course if you were studying another course part-time (that also meets the requirements in the definition), such that your total hours of study in English would be considered 'full-time equivalent'.

### **I have completed an online university or TAFE course. Can this be included as vocational education under the *extended education pathway*?**

Potentially. You can count online study provided that the course meets the requirements in the definition for vocational education. Some online courses will not meet the requirement for you to use

English language speaking, writing, reading and listening skills. Courses that are delivered entirely online and do not require students to use all these English language skills to communicate are not acceptable. You may be required to provide further evidence about the program and delivery method.

**I have completed a Diploma in Paramedical Science through the NSW Ambulance Service. Can this be included as vocational education under the extended education pathway?**

Yes this three year training program is an accepted qualification under the National Law, so it can be included under the extended education pathway as long as the education meets the requirements for this pathway.

**I have completed a Diploma in Paramedical Science through a Registered Training Organisation in Australia. Can this be included as vocational education under the extended education pathway?**

If you are relying on the Diploma in Paramedical Science for eligibility for registration as a paramedic, then yes this can be included under the extended education pathway as long as the education meets the requirements for this pathway.

**I have completed a traineeship through a Registered Training Organisation in Australia. Can this be included as vocational education under the extended education pathway?**

It depends. If the traineeship you have completed is in paramedicine and has articulated to or is the qualification or training you are relying for eligibility for registration as a paramedic, then yes this can be included under the extended education pathway as long as the education meets the requirements for this pathway. If the traineeship you have completed is not in paramedicine or has not articulated to or is not the qualification or training you are relying for eligibility for registration as a paramedic, then it is unlikely it can be included. This is because traineeships and apprenticeships generally involve full time work and on the job training by an employer, which is supplemented by some formal education with a Registered Training Organisation, whereas the extended education pathway considers a full time course of study that is formally assessed.

## English language tests

### Why are there so many English language tests and how do I decide which one I should sit?

The tests used by the National Boards to determine English language competence are also used by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) to determine visa eligibility. The scores required to demonstrate English language competence for each test are specified in the standard. Each test is slightly different, however the scores required to meet the standard have been benchmarked so they are set at equivalent levels across all the tests. It is not easier to achieve the required scores on one test, compared with any of the others.

The IELTS, PTE Academic and TOEFL iBT test can be taken by applicants from any profession. Currently, the OET test is not applicable for paramedicine. International medical graduates may also rely on their results of the NZREX clinical exam (NZ) or Professional and Linguistic Assessments Board (PLAB) test (UK).

In choosing which test to sit, you will need to do your own research and decide on which test is the most suitable or convenient for you. Links to the tests are published on the English language skills page on the AHPRA website.

### Do I need to achieve the required test scores in one sitting?

Ideally, you will be able to demonstrate that you meet the standard in one test sitting. However, National Boards will accept results from a maximum of **two test sittings in a six month period** so long as certain minimum scores are achieved in each sitting. These vary from test to test and are outlined in the standard. Note that this does not mean that you can only sit the test twice in the six month period; you may sit the test more than twice if you wish (although this is not recommended by the testing authorities). However, only the results from two sittings will be considered by National Boards.

### Can I just re-sit one component of a test?

No, you will need to re-sit the entire test and achieve the required result in the relevant component, and any other minimum scores as outlined in the standard.

If you do not achieve the required results, you will have to re-sit the entire test again. You may only count the results of two tests within a six month period.

### I have a valid English language test result that demonstrates I meet the standard, however it is more than two years old. Do I need to sit another test?

Generally, yes.

However there are certain circumstances in which you may not have to sit another test. If, within twelve months of sitting the test, you started or continued employment as a registered health practitioner in one of the recognised countries where English was the primary language of practice; or you commenced or continued your enrolment in a Board approved program of study and you applied for registration within 12 months of completing that employment or study, you may not have to sit another test. Each application will be assessed to ensure that the employment or study undertaken satisfies the requirements specified in the standard.

### Do I need to sit a language test every two years to remain registered?

No. If you have demonstrated that you meet the standard through the *English language test pathway*, you do not need to sit another test as long as you remain registered.

## Evidence requirements

### What evidence do I need to provide about my secondary education in English?

When you complete your initial application for registration form you will be asked to list details of your secondary education. It is important that you provide accurate information. You are making a declaration on the application form that the information you provide is true and correct, including the information you provide about your English language skills. A false statement may be grounds for the Board to refuse registration or take further action if necessary.

Depending on where the education occurred, the Board may also require you to provide evidence to demonstrate that your secondary education was taught and assessed in English (for example if it was at a non-English language immersion school in a recognised country).

### What evidence do I need to provide about my qualifications and training in English?

If your qualification is [listed on the Board's website](#), you are required to provide information detailing the education you are relying on in the English language skills section of the online application form (for example, applicants under the primary language pathway are required to enter details of primary and secondary education). You will not be required to upload any documentation about the education listed with your application.

If your qualification or training that you are relying on to demonstrate that you have the required English language skills were not completed in Australia or New Zealand, you must provide confirmation that the course was taught and assessed solely in English.

If your transcript (that you have provided to support assessment of your qualification of training) does not show that the program of study was taught and assessed solely in English, including the clinical aspects of the program involving direct communication with patients, relatives and other healthcare professionals, you will also need to arrange for a letter to be sent directly to AHPRA by your education provider.

### What if I cannot submit the requested evidence of education in an English-speaking country, even though my first language is English?

You should provide as much information as possible in the application form. AHPRA will consider whether the information you have provided is sufficient evidence of meeting the standard. If not, you may need to sit an English language test.

### I am relying on the English language test pathway. What evidence do I need to provide?

If you are using this pathway, you should provide the following:

- a. For test results from the last two years, the name of the test provider and a copy of your results which includes the number required for AHPRA staff to verify your results.
- b. For test results more than two years old:
  - (i) when you are relying on a period of employment to extend the validity of your test result, a certified copy of test results plus your CV and:
    - a letter from employer/s confirming continuous employment as a registered health practitioner in a recognised country where English is the primary language of practice over the last two years using the template form (which will be published when available), or
    - a letter from a professional referee confirming continuous employment as a registered health practitioner in a recognised country over the last two years using the template form (which will be published when available).

- (ii) when you are relying on continuous enrolment in Board approved program of study to extend the validity period of test results, a certified copy of test results plus a transcript that shows that you have been enrolled continuously in a Board approved program of study and that you:
- commenced this study within 12 months of sitting the test, and
  - completed your study no longer than 12 months before lodging your application.

## Completing the English language skills section of the online form

### I qualify for registration through grandparenting pathway (c) and relying on hours of practice rather than education to meet the English language requirements – how do I complete the online form?

If you qualify for registration through the grandparenting pathway (c) that relies on hours of practice, you may meet the combined secondary and education or training pathway, the primary language pathway, or the English language test pathway.

If you meet the combined secondary and education or training pathway or the primary language pathway, the online form will ask you to complete details of your tertiary education that you are relying on for education. As you are relying on hours of practice rather than education, the following table sets out how you should enter your practice details in the education field for **tertiary education**.

If you don't have vocational education or tertiary education to enter for your English language skills, you can remove one of the sections in the form to continue. Select the tick box next to 'Education institution name' in the appropriate section and then select the (-) in the form.

Under the field for...	You should enter...
Education institution	Name of current (or most recent) employer
Program name	Grandparenting pathway (c)
Recognised Country	The recognised country where you completed the majority of your practice hours that you are relying on to qualify for registration
Study started	Date commenced employment as paramedic
Study completed	Date of application (if employed) or date last worked as paramedic