

Graduating in 2010?

28 October 2010

Update: More time to meet English language skills standard

Background

All medical practitioners registering with the Medical Board of Australia (Board) must comply with the Board's [English language skills registration standard](#). This standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council and is published in full on the Board's website.

The registration standard requires all internationally qualified applicants for registration, or applicants who qualified for registration in Australia but did not complete their secondary education in English in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or the United States of America, to demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes.

All applicants must be able to demonstrate English language skills at IELTS academic level 7 or the equivalent, and achieve in one sitting, the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module or other tests that are specified in the registration standard.

International students graduating in 2010

The Board is aware that a number of medical students who are expected to complete their medical degree from an Australian medical school in 2010 did not undertake their secondary education in Australia or in one of the other countries that would make them exempt from having to pass the English language test. These students must therefore meet the Board's English language registration standard. However, the Board recognises that these students may find this difficult to do before they begin their intern year at the beginning of 2011.

The Board recognises that:

1. the standard was introduced half way through the 2010 year and
2. if these students had graduated before 1 July 2010, they would have met the previous state medical boards' English language policy and
3. these applicants will work under supervision in an accredited intern position.

As a one-off transitional arrangement, the Board has decided to grant these students provisional registration (if they meet all the other registration requirements) and impose conditions on their registration that they will:

- meet the Board's English language skills registration standard within six months of being granted registration and will inform the Board when they have successfully completed the English language test
- advise their employer of the conditions imposed on their registration and

- authorise their employer to notify AHPRA if the employer has any concerns about their competence in English language.

The Board will remove these conditions when the provisional registrant has met the Board's English language registration standard.

FAQs

As an overseas medical student about to graduate from an Australian medical course, do I need to meet the Board's English language standard?

Yes. Please refer to the Standard. But there are two exemptions. The Board has decided:

1. To accept as current an IELTS (or approved equivalent) test result that is more than two years old, provided it is accompanied by proof that the candidate has since been continuously enrolled in an approved program of study.
2. In relation to Exemptions, the Board accepts that students who completed the last two years of their secondary education in English meet the requirement of having 'undertaken and completed secondary education' taught and assessed in English in one of the following countries where English is the native or first language: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America.

As a one-off transitional arrangement, the Board has also decided to grant provisional registration to students who do not qualify for these exemptions (if they meet all the other registration requirements) and impose conditions on their registration that they will:

- meet the Board's English language skills registration standard within six months of being granted registration and will inform the Board when they have successfully completed the English language test
- advise their employer of the conditions imposed on their registration and
- authorise their employer to notify AHPRA if the employer has any concerns about their competence in English language.

My successful IELTS result is more than two years old, do I meet the standard?

Yes, if you also have proof that you have since been continuously enrolled in an approved program of study in Australia.

Not all my secondary education was in English, do I meet the standard?

The Board accepts that students who completed the last two years of their secondary education in English meet the requirement of having 'undertaken and completed secondary education' taught and assessed in English in one of the following countries where English is the native or first language: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom and United States of America.

I didn't get an academic level 7 in all four areas of my IELTS, do I need to resit?

Applicants who qualified for registration in Australia but did not complete their secondary education in English, must demonstrate that they have the necessary English language skills for registration purposes. All applicants must be able to demonstrate English language skills at IELTS academic level 7 or the equivalent, and achieve the required minimum score in each component of the IELTS academic module, OET or specified alternatives, in the one sitting. If you do not qualify for an exemption then yes, you will need to pass the IELTS (or equivalent) to this standard before you can begin your intern year.

However, the Board will grant you provisional registration so you can begin your intern year in 2011, with a condition on your registration that you will:

- meet the Board's English language skills registration standard within six months of being granted registration and will inform the Board when you have successfully completed the English language test
- advise your employer of the conditions imposed on your registration and
- authorise your employer to notify AHPRA if your employer has any concerns about your competence in English language.

Why has the Board set this standard?

The role of the Board is to protect the public. Under the National Law, the Board set registration standards which all registrants must meet before they are registered to practise in Australia. Each of the National Boards have set an English language skills standard to ensure all registered health practitioners in Australia can provide safe care to the Australian community and can communicate effectively – orally and in writing.

Will the Board make other exemptions/exceptions?

Under the National Law, Ministerial Council must approve the Board's registration standards. The Board cannot change the registration standard without ministerial approval.

What do I have to do to arrange an IELTS test?

The Board encourages all students in this situation to seek guidance and support from their university in relation to meeting this registration standard. You have six months from being granted provisional registration to meet this standard and will have conditions on your registration related to meeting this standard during this time.

Can I sit an IELTS test after my final exams but before I start the intern year?

Yes. You have six months from being granted provisional registration to meet this standard. You will have conditions on your registration during this period related to meeting the English language skills registration standard. The Board suggests you seek advice and support from your university about how to meet this standard.