

## **Policy on English Competence and English Tests**

Approved by the Council: July 2005  
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### ***Introduction***

The Dental Council is charged with the responsibility under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act 2003 to protect the health and safety of members of the public by providing for mechanisms to ensure that oral health practitioners are competent and fit to practise in their professions. This includes the ability to communicate effectively.

The Dental Council considers that effective English and communication skills are a pre-requisite to practising as an oral health practitioner in New Zealand. Without them the informed consent and active participation of the patient is jeopardised. An objective test of English communication skills is the best way of ensuring that oral health practitioners can comprehend and communicate effectively.

The Dental Council has approved the following policy on English competence and approved English tests which apply to all applicants for registration, including New Zealand graduates.

### ***Legislation***

Section 16 of the HPCA Act 2003 states that no applicant for registration may be registered if:

- a) He or she does not satisfy the Council that he or she is able to communicate effectively; or
- b) He or she does not satisfy the Council that his or her ability to communicate in and comprehend English is sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public.

### ***Policy Statement***

1. Applicants for registration are normally considered to have met the section 16 requirement if:-
  - a) The applicant has graduated from a joint Dental Council (NZ) /Australian Dental Council accredited programme<sup>1</sup>; or
  - b) English is the applicant's first language; and the applicant has completed their undergraduate dental training in New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, USA, Eire or Canada where English is the sole language of instruction and assessment; or
  - c) The applicant has passed a Council approved English test to the required level.
2. The Dental Council approved English tests and required pass rates in these tests are:
  - i) International English Language Testing (IELTS)

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<sup>1</sup> Provided this is an accredited requirement of the degree programme. (i.e. the protocol document should require the accreditation team to be assured that graduates possess communication skills equivalent to a B pass in all four parts of OET)

	<b>Level of proficiency</b>
Dentists and Dental Specialists	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) gain an average score of 7.5 or more; and c) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Dental Hygienists	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) gain an average score of 7.5 or more; and c) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Dental Therapists	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) gain an average score of 7.5 or more; and c) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Dental Technicians	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) gain an average score of 7 or more.
Clinical Dental Technicians	Applicants are required to: a) sit the academic band; and b) gain an average score of 7.5 or more; and c) score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.

ii) Occupational English Test (OET)

	<b>Level of proficiency</b>
Dentists and Dental Specialists	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Dental Hygienists	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Dental Therapists	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Dental Technicians	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Clinical Dental Technicians	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.

3. A pass in a Dental Council approved English test is valid for two years for new applications or three years for those repeat registration examination candidates who can demonstrate, if required, that they have continuously lived and worked in a country where English is the first language.
4. Results from the above mentioned language examinations must be obtained in one sitting.
5. The applicant is responsible for the cost of the English tests.
6. The applicant must arrange for English test results to be provided directly to the Dental Council by the examining body.
7. The Council has discretionary power to require an applicant to provide proof of English language competence at any time.
8. Candidates undertaking the New Zealand dental registration examinations whose English communication skills are deemed as deficient by the examiner may fail the clinical examination.
9. If deficiencies in English communication skills are reported subsequent to registration practitioners may be required to undertake remedial English training and then pass the communication skills assessment of the dental registration examination and/or an approved English test.

### ***Contacts***

**International English Language Testing (IELTS)**      [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org)

**Occupational English Test (OET)**      [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)