

English language requirements and tests policy

Date last reviewed	7 February 20223
Scheduled review	
Approved by	Council

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure oral health practitioners can comprehend and communicate in English effectively to protect the health and safety of the public, by setting out English language requirements for practising in New Zealand.

Scope

This policy applies to all applicants for registration, including New Zealand graduates.

Policy

1. Applicants must satisfy the Dental Council that they are able to communicate effectively in English with patients and their whānau/family or caregivers, staff and colleagues, and that their communication and comprehension of English is sufficient to protect the health and safety of the public.
2. Poor English language or other communication skills can jeopardise patient health and safety. For example, without these skills the informed consent and active participation of the patient in their care may be compromised.
3. English language requirements are normally considered to be met if:
 - (a) The applicant has successfully completed:
 - i) A Dental Council (New Zealand) accredited programme (excluding orthodontic auxiliary applicants); or
 - ii) A Dental Board of Australia approved programme.or
 - (b) The applicant is applying for registration as an orthodontic auxiliary and has successfully completed either one of the following prescribed qualifications:
 - i) The Certificate of Orthodontic Assisting, New Zealand Association of Orthodontists: Orthodontic Auxiliary Training Programme; or

Graduate Certificate of Orthodontic Assisting, Academy of Orthodontic Assisting, and possession of a dental therapy, dental hygiene or dentistry qualification and approved experience in the provision of orthodontic auxiliary services under the direction and supervision of a dentist or dental specialist who can attest to competency;

and

- ii) English is the applicant's first language, and the applicant has completed their secondary schooling in New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom, United States of America, Republic of Ireland, or Canada where English was the sole language of instruction and assessment. Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.

or

- (c) English is the applicant's first language, and the applicant has completed their undergraduate dental/oral health training in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Republic of Ireland or Canada where English was the sole language of instruction and assessment. Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.

or

- (d) The applicant has passed a Dental Council approved English language test to the required level.

4. Where an applicant applies for registration in an additional scope of practice, the Dental Council holds discretionary power to require that person to undergo an approved English language test at the level required for the new scope of practice.
5. The Dental Council has discretionary power to require proof of English language competence at any time.
6. Deficiencies in English language communication skills reported after registration may require remedial training and skills assessment.

If deficiencies in skills are reported subsequent to registration, practitioners may be required to undertake remedial English language training and then pass a Dental Council approved English language test.

7. A pass in a Dental Council approved English language test is valid for two years.

Dental Council approved English language tests and required pass rates

Results from the following language examinations must be obtained in one sitting.

1. International English Language Testing (IELTS):

	Level of proficiency
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.
Oral Health 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 6 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 across the four individual components of listening, reading, writing, and speaking.
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.

2. Occupational English Test (OET):

	Level of proficiency
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.
Oral Health Therapists	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	A pass with a minimum score of 250 in each of the four components ¹
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.

Responsibilities

Applicants	Meeting the costs of the English language test(s). Arranging for test results to be provided directly to the Dental Council by the examining body.
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¹ This includes a grade of A, B and a minimum score of 250 in the C band, in each of the four components