

English language requirements and tests policy

Date last reviewed	May 2024
Scheduled review	May 2026
Approved by	Council

Purpose

1. The purpose of the English language requirements and tests policy is to ensure that oral health practitioners practising in New Zealand can sufficiently comprehend and communicate in English in order to protect the health and safety of the Aotearoa New Zealand public.
2. Inability to communicate effectively may 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.

Scope

3. This policy applies to all applicants for registration.

Policy

4. Applicants must satisfy the Dental Council that they are able to communicate in, and comprehend English in order to protect the health and safety of the Aotearoa New Zealand public.
5. English language requirements are normally considered to be met if the applicant can satisfy the Council that they meet at least one of the following requirements:

a.	The applicant is applying for registration as a graduate of a New Zealand Dental Council accredited programme (excluding orthodontic auxiliary applicants, refer to point e).
b.	The applicant is applying for registration as a graduate of a Dental Board of Australia approved programme.
c.	English is the applicant's first language AND The applicant completed their dental training in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Republic of Ireland or Canada where English was the sole language of instruction and assessment. Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.
d.	The applicant has worked as a registered oral health practitioner in a practice where English is the primary language of communication with patients and colleagues in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Republic of Ireland or Canada for at least 2 years within the 5 years immediately prior to application AND

	<p>Two practitioners registered in a similar oral health profession who speak English as their first language, attest to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in an oral health setting with patients and professional colleagues.</p> <p>The practitioners must have worked with the applicant for at least 6 months within the last 5 years in the United Kingdom, United States of America, Australia, Republic of Ireland or Canada.</p> <p>This option may only be used in the absence of any concerns about the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English.</p>
e.	<p>Orthodontic auxiliary registration applicants:</p> <p>The applicant successfully completed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Certificate of Orthodontic Assisting, New Zealand Association of Orthodontists: Orthodontic Auxiliary Training Programme <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 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 <p>AND</p> <p>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.</p> <p>Evidence of this may be required from the applicant.</p>
f.	<p>If none of the above applies:</p> <p>The applicant must sit and pass a Dental Council approved English language test to the required level.</p>

6. A pass in a Dental Council approved English language test must be achieved in one sitting and is valid for two years.
7. The Dental Council has discretionary power to require proof of English language competence at any time. Where an applicant applies for registration in a new scope of practice, the Dental Council may require a person to undergo an approved English language test at the level required for the new scope of practice.
8. Deficiencies in English language communication skills reported after registration may require remedial training and a pass in a Dental Council approved English language test.

Dental Council approved English language tests and required pass rates

9. International English Language Testing (IELTS):

	Level of proficiency
Dentists and Dental Specialists	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> sit the academic band; and score at least 7 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Oral Health Therapists	
Dental Hygienists	
Dental Therapists	
Clinical Dental Technicians	
Dental Technicians	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> sit the academic band; and gain an average score of 7 or more across the four individual components of listening, reading, writing and speaking.
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	Applicants are required to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> sit the academic band; and score at least 6 in each band of the four individual components of listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

10. Occupational English Test (OET):

	Level of proficiency
Dentists and Dental Specialists	A pass with A or B grades in each of the four components.
Oral Health Therapists	
Dental Hygienists	
Dental Therapists	
Clinical Dental Technicians and Dental Technicians	
Orthodontic Auxiliaries	A pass with a minimum score of 250 in each of the four components ¹

Responsibilities

Applicants	Meeting the costs of the English language test(s).
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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