



ENGLISH LANGUAGE POLICY FOR REGISTRATION

1. Policy purpose and background

- 1.1. The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (ODOB) is required by the *Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003* (HPCA Act) to ensure that applicants can communicate and comprehend effectively in English in order to work as an optometrist or dispensing optician in Aotearoa New Zealand (NZ) (Section 16 (a), (b)).

2. The scope of this policy

- 2.1. In this policy, an applicant's "first language" is the language that they learnt to speak first, also known as their mother tongue or home language.
- 2.2. This policy applies to all applicants applying to register with the ODOB where English is not their first language. This includes applicants who have received their training in NZ, and those who received their training elsewhere.
- 2.3. Applicants who meet the following criteria are exempt from this policy:
- 2.3.1. Te Reo Māori is their first language, **and** the relevant professional qualification was taught and examined in English (only full-time contact courses¹, or qualifications are considered).
- 2.3.2. English is their first language, **and** the relevant professional qualification was taught and examined in English (only full-time contact courses, or qualifications are considered),
- OR**
- 2.3.3. English is **not** their first language, **but** the relevant professional qualification² was taught and examined in English (only full-time contact courses or qualifications are considered), **and** they have been working in an English-only business environment for more than two years.
- 2.4. The ODOB reserves the right to make further enquiries from applicants who are exempt.

3. Acronyms and abbreviations

- 3.1. The following acronyms and abbreviations are used in this policy:

Aotearoa New Zealand	NZ
Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003	HPCA Act
Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board	ODOB

¹ Full-time contact delivery means the study was undertaken 100% in person on-site. Contact delivery does not include transnational delivery or study branches/campuses.

² A relevant professional qualification means any prescribed qualification that can lead to the registration in the optometrists or dispensing opticians scopes of practice with the ODOB.

4. Assessing proficiency in English

- 4.1. Where English is not the first language of the applicant, they must demonstrate their ability to communicate effectively by either the:
- 4.1.1. submission of acceptable test results from an approved English language test, or
 - 4.1.2. completion of a relevant qualification being taught and examined in English. Only full-time, contact courses or qualifications are considered, and appropriate verifications must be provided.
- 4.2. Approved tests
- 4.2.1. The ODOB recognises three international English language standard tests to demonstrate competency for registration. Applicants are free to choose the best option for them.

Provider	Website	Relevant test	Standard to be achieved in one result
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) academic	www.ielts.org	Academic	A minimum of 7.0 in each band (listening, reading, writing, and speaking) ³ .
Pearson Test of English (PTE)	https://www.pearsontest.com	Academic	A minimum of 65 score in each section.
Occupational English Test (OET)	www.occupationalenglishtest.org	Optometry	A minimum B pass in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing, and speaking).

- 4.2.2. The ODOB will verify all results of English language testing using the provider's online verification system.
- 4.2.3. The test results must be no more than 2 years old from the date the registration application is received by ODOB.

5. Further information

- 5.1. The ODOB will not approve registration where there is doubt about an individual's ability to communicate clearly in English. Applicants in this situation will be managed on a case-by-case basis.
- 5.2. The ODOB reserves the right to make further enquiries by:
- 5.2.1. Seeking additional information from sources such as clinical placement supervisors.
 - 5.2.2. Asking for additional referees who can attest to the applicant's ability to comprehend and communicate effectively in English in a clinical setting with both patients and professional colleagues. Referees will be contacted directly by the ODOB.
 - 5.2.3. Requiring the applicant to attend an interview with an ODOB staff member or nominated assessor, either remotely (e.g., via Zoom) or in person (travel would be at the applicant's expense).

6. Related legislation, policies, and procedures

- 6.1. The ODOB's *Registration policy*.

³ All modules have to be met the minimum requirements in one test/ sitting.

Revision history			
Version	Changes	Approval date	Next review
v1	Drafted as a result of the ODOB's 2022/2023 transformation programme that included a full review of key policies.	January 2024	2027