

# OET

OCCUPATIONAL ENGLISH TEST

The English language test for  
the healthcare sector



Information for organisations



To help you prepare and select international healthcare professionals with excellent English language skills, you need a high-quality test that has been specifically designed to meet the needs of the healthcare sector.

## What is the Occupational English Test (OET)?

OET is an international English language test that assesses the language proficiency of healthcare professionals who seek to register and practise in an English-speaking environment.

It provides a valid and reliable assessment of all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking – with an emphasis on communication in healthcare professional settings.

OET tests health practitioners from the following 12 professions:

Dentistry	Occupational Therapy	Podiatry
Dietetics	Optometry	Radiography
Medicine	Pharmacy	Speech Pathology
Nursing	Physiotherapy	Veterinary Science



**Cambridge Assessment  
English**



The Occupational English Test (OET) is designed to meet the specific English language needs of the healthcare sector. It assesses the language proficiency of healthcare professionals who wish to register and practise in an English-speaking environment.

OET is owned by Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment Trust (CBLA), a venture between Cambridge Assessment English and Box Hill Institute. Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge, helps millions of people learn English and prove their skills to the world. Box Hill Institute is a leading Australian vocational and higher education provider.

A growing number of healthcare regulators, educators and government departments recognise OET as proof of English proficiency, ensuring healthcare professionals are registration and work-ready.



## Why recognise OET?

OET can help you ensure that healthcare professionals have the right level of English language proficiency to deliver high-quality care.

- **Governments, healthcare boards and councils** have a crucial role to play in safe-guarding public safety and OET gives confidence for safe and effective practice.
- **Educators** integrate OET preparation and testing and accept OET results for entry into healthcare courses, helping students to demonstrate they are ready to communicate effectively in the workplace.
- **Employers** know that limited language proficiency is an obstacle to effective communication and quality of care. OET replicates the critical tasks of workplace settings and measure candidates' abilities in listening, reading, writing and speaking.
- **Teachers** have access to the knowledge and tools needed to run high quality OET preparation courses.
- **Agents** know that OET is recommended by healthcare professionals as most suitable for visa and healthcare registration.

Other benefits of using OET:

- protect patient safety and improve quality of care by optimising communication with patients, carers and colleagues
- reduce the training burden for hospitals and other employers
- establish a fair way to select internationally trained health professionals
- attract candidates committed to excellence and professionalism.

# Who recognises OET?

## Government departments

OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for visas in:

**Australia** | The Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP) accepts OET for all visa categories where an English test may be required. Visit [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) for more details.

**New Zealand** | Immigration New Zealand accepts OET for all visa categories where an English test may be required. Visit [www.immigration.govt.nz](http://www.immigration.govt.nz) for more details.

## Healthcare Boards and Councils

OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for registration, accreditation and licensing purposes in:

**Australia** | OET is accepted for registration purposes by most professional Boards within the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA), and most healthcare profession Councils for accreditation purposes.

**New Zealand** | OET is accepted by most healthcare Boards and Councils in New Zealand.

**Dubai Healthcare City Authority-Regulatory (DHCR)** | OET is accepted for licensing of healthcare professionals who have not graduated from a program offered in English, nor worked or licensed in a native English speaking country.

**Singapore** | OET is accepted by four major healthcare Councils in Singapore.

**Namibia** | OET is accepted by the Health Professions Council of Namibia.

**UK** | OET is accepted by the Nursing and Midwifery Council and the General Medical Council.

**Ireland** | OET is accepted by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland and the Irish Medical Council.

**Ukraine** | OET is accepted by the Ukraine Medical Council.

## Qualification Authorities

**Dubai** | The Dubai Knowledge and Human Development Authority (KHDA) accepts OET as a quality standard qualification for proof of English proficiency.

**New Zealand** | The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) accepts OET as an approved English Proficiency Assessment.

## Universities, education providers and recruiters

OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for employment by healthcare employers, and a growing number of leading educators in:

**Australia** | OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for admission and graduation from healthcare courses at leading universities, TAFEs and colleges in Australia.

**New Zealand** | OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for admission and graduation from healthcare courses at leading universities and technical colleges.

**UK** | OET is accepted as proof of English proficiency for admission and graduation from healthcare courses at leading colleges in the UK.

For the most up to date list of organisations recognising OET as proof of English proficiency visit:

[www.occupationalenglishtest.org/recognition](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/recognition)

# Continual research-based development

OET is underpinned by over 30 years of extensive research by the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC) at the University of Melbourne. This work is now supported by the Research and Validation department at Cambridge Assessment English. The test is regularly updated to keep pace with changes in language testing in a healthcare context, in turn ensuring the ongoing validity and reliability of the test.

Leading language testing academics contribute to the continued development and improvement of the test, placing it at the forefront of research and practice in the assessment of English for specific purposes.

Input from subject matter experts provides for authentic test materials, underpinning OET's validity. This ensures that tasks are based on a typical workplace situation and reflect the demands of the profession.

Numerous studies have been published exploring various aspects of the test's validity. Below is a sample of OET research:

Title and Source	Author/Editor	Date of publication
<p><b>Authenticity in language testing</b>            Language Testing, (Vol 33, Issue 2) <a href="http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ltja/33/2">http://journals.sagepub.com/toc/ltja/33/2</a>  <i>The 8 papers in this guest edited special issue cover four years of research into the OET, including the findings of a project funded jointly by the Australian Research Council and the Occupational English Test.</i></p>	Elder, C (ed.)	2016
<p><b>Towards improved language assessment of written health professional communication: the case of the Occupational English Test</b>            Papers in Language Testing and Assessment 4.2, 60–66.</p>	Knoch, U., McNamara, T., Woodward-Kron, R., Elder, C., Manias, E., Flynn, E., Zhang, Y.	2015
<p><b>Investigating the test impact of the OET: A qualitative study of stakeholder perceptions of test relevance and efficacy</b>            Final report to the Occupational English Test Centre. 51pp. Melbourne Language Testing Research Centre, the University of Melbourne.</p>	Macqueen, S., Pill, J., Elder, C. & Knoch, U	2013
<p><b>Stakeholders' Perceptions of Occupational English Test (OET): An exploratory study</b>            University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations Research Notes, Issue 54, pp 29-32.</p>	Vidakovic, I. & Khalifa, H.	2013
<p><b>Health professionals' views of communication: Implications for assessing performance on a health-specific English language test</b>            TESOL Quarterly, 46(2), 409-419.</p>	Elder, C., Pill, J., Woodward-Kron, R., McNamara, T., Manias, E., McColl, G. & Webb, G.	2012
<p><b>Problematising content validity: The Occupational English Test (OET) as a measure of medical communication</b>            Melbourne Papers in Language Testing, 6(1), 19-43.</p>	McNamara, T.	1997
<p><b>Language proficiency testing for migrant professionals: new directions for the Occupational English Test</b>            Report submitted to the Council on Overseas Professional Qualifications. Institute for English Language Education University of Lancaster, Lancaster.</p>	Alderson, J., Candlin, C., Clapham, C., Martin, D. & Weir, C.	1986

To see the complete list of research visit [www.occupationalenglishtest.org/research](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/research)

# What's in the test?

OET is an in-depth and thorough assessment of all areas of language ability.

The test is divided into four sub-tests:

- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Speaking.

The Listening and Reading sub-tests are designed to assess a candidate's ability to understand spoken and written English, based on health-related topics and tasks common to all professions. The Writing and Speaking sub-tests are specific to the 12 individual healthcare professions – designed to reflect common tasks performed in the workplace.

Sub-test (duration)	Content	Shows candidates can:
Listening (approx.40 minutes)	2 tasks Common to all 12 professions	follow and understand a range of health-related spoken materials such as patient consultations and lectures.
Reading (60 minutes)	2 tasks Common to all 12 professions	read and understand different types of text on health-related subjects.
Writing (approx. 40 minutes)  Reading time: 5 minutes Writing time: 40 minutes	1 task Specific to each profession	write a letter in a clear and accurate way which is relevant for the reader.
Speaking (20 minutes)	2 tasks Specific to each profession	effectively communicate in a real-life context using role-plays.

## How is OET different to general and academic English tests?

OET tests real communication scenarios candidates will experience in the healthcare workplace, whereas other tests assess English language skills using everyday scenarios.



Example 1:  
**Writing**

### General or academic English Test

Write an essay on a general topic

### OET

Write a healthcare letter, usually a referral letter based on case notes



Example 2:  
**Speaking**

### General or academic English Test

Structured interview on a general topic

### OET

Health professional to patient role-plays

## When and where is the test available?

OET is available in more than 110 locations in 40 countries.

To see the current test dates and a list of countries and venues where the test is available visit [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

## OET scoring and results

Candidates will receive a numerical score ranging from 0 to 500 in ten-point increments (e.g. 350, 360, 370...). The numerical scores will be mapped to a separate letter grade for each sub-test, ranging from A (highest) to E (lowest). There is no overall grade for OET.

Results are published on the OET website approximately 16 business days after the test. Candidates log in to a secure online profile to view results.

Here are the descriptions for each grade that appears on the OET Statement of Results received by candidates:

### OET Results table - effective from 9 September 2018 test date

OET results to August 2018	OET score from September 2018	OET band descriptors	IELTS equivalent band score
A	450 – 500	Can communicate very fluently and effectively with patients and health professionals using appropriate register, tone and lexis. Shows complete understanding of any kind of written or spoken language.	8.0 - 9.0
B	350 – 440	Can communicate effectively with patients and health professionals using appropriate register, tone and lexis, with only occasional inaccuracies and hesitations. Shows good understanding in a range of clinical contexts.	7.0 –7.5
C+	300 – 340	Can maintain the interaction in a relevant healthcare environment despite occasional errors and lapses, and follow standard spoken language normally encountered in his/her field of specialisation.	6.5
C	200 – 290		5.5 –6.0
D	100 – 190	Can maintain some interaction and understand straightforward factual information in his/her field of specialisation, but may ask for clarification. Frequent errors, inaccuracies and mis- or overuse of technical language can cause strain in communication.	Less than 5.5
E	0 – 90	Can manage simple interaction on familiar topics and understand the main point in short, simple messages, provided he/she can ask for clarification. High density of errors and mis- or overuse of technical language can cause significant strain and breakdowns in communication.	

## Online Results Verification Service

We provide a free and secure online Results Verification Service to enable organisations and authorities to verify candidate results. The service provides access to a secure database through which candidates' results – across the previous three years – can be checked for authenticity. The site is securely encrypted and designed for use in high-stakes environments.

Find out more about OET results at [www.occupationalenglishtest.org/results-verification](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/results-verification)

## Find out more

To find out more about OET and how it can help you prepare and select international healthcare professionals with the right level of English language proficiency, contact:

### The OET Centre

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VIC 8007

Australia

Tel: +61 3 8656 4000

Email: [stakeholders@oet.com.au](mailto:stakeholders@oet.com.au)

[www.occupationalenglishtest.org/organisations](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/organisations)



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