

English language skills transition arrangements policy

March 2025

Introduction

The revised *Registration standard: English language skills* (the ELS standard) came into effect on **18 March 2025**.

In December 2024, Ahpra and the National Boards (except for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practice Board of Australia) published advance copies of revised ELS standards for 14 professions. These include:

- the common ELS standard which applies to applicants for initial registration in Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology, and
- the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's ELS standard, which applies to applicants for initial registration as enrolled nurses, registered nurses and midwives.

The revised ELS standards are available on the Ahpra [ELS webpage](#).

Purpose

National Boards' retired ELS registration standards remained in effect until the revised ELS standards (common and NMBA) took effect on **18 March 2025**. The **advance copy period** provided early notice for applicants who may have wanted to apply under the then ELS standard. It further provided time for Ahpra and National Boards to undertake essential system changes to enable applications under the revised standard and to improve the overall applicant experience.

The purpose of this policy is to establish special transition arrangements for certain applicants to support health workforce need. Most applications for registration will need to be assessed against the ELS standard that was in effect at the time of application.

This policy applies to:

- applicants that have submitted an application for initial registration during the advance copy period and whose applications are being assessed by Ahpra at the time the revised standard took effect on 18 March 2025, and
- applicants that are applying for initial registration from the take effect date of the revised standard and seeking additional flexibility in meeting the revised standard through a minor extension to accepted timeframes.

This policy is to be read in conjunction with the revised ELS standard for your profession.

Transition arrangements for applications being assessed at the time the revised standard took effect on 18 March 2025

Applicants that have submitted an application during the advance copy period and whose application is being assessed by Ahpra at the time the revised standard came into effect on 18 March 2025 will be assessed against the ELS standard which best aligns with the applicant's individual circumstances. This may be the retired or the revised ELS standard.

Transition arrangements for applicants applying from 18 March 2025

The following transition arrangements apply for applicants applying for registration from 18 March 2025, once the revised ELS standard is in effect.

Where your circumstances would have enabled you to meet the revised standard, had it come into effect earlier during the **advance copy period**, Ahpra and National Boards will endeavour to provide appropriate flexibility through a minor extension to accepted timeframes for the two-year accepted timeframe for test validity periods (test pathway) and the time since completion of study (advanced education pathway), before applying for initial registration.

Applicants requiring this additional flexibility must submit an application within 30 days of the revised standard taking effect, by 18 April 2025.

Test pathway

This flexibility is available for applicants who:

- have completed an English language test within 2 years of the date of advance copy publication (12 December 2024), and
- the test validity period (2 years) will expire prior to 18 March 2025, and
- meet all other requirements of the revised ELS standard.

Advance education pathway

This flexibility is available for applicants (except nursing and midwifery applicants*) who:

- have taken a break during their qualification or advanced education of less than 2 years, and
- who completed study within 2 years of the date of advance copy publication (12 December 2024), and
- the period of time since they completed study will be more than 2 years when the revised standard came into effect, and
- meet all other requirements of the revised ELS standard.

Transition arrangements regarding the removal of South Africa from the list of recognised countries

In the revised ELS standard, South Africa is no longer a recognised country. In the most recent review, National Boards consulted on whether South Africa should be removed from the recognised country list, noting that it has not been recognised by the Department of Home Affairs for English language purposes for some time. After careful consideration of the available evidence and stakeholder feedback, National Boards decided that South Africa should be removed from the list of recognised countries.

This change will come into effect from 18 March 2026, 12 months after the revised ELS standard came into effect.

Applicants relying on their education or work experience in South Africa as a recognised country must submit their application for registration before 18 March 2026. Applicants who are unable to submit an application by 18 March 2026 may need to complete an English test to meet the revised ELS standard.

References/related documents

- [English Language Skills registration standard](#) (retired) (1 July 2015 to 17 March 2025)
- [English Language Skills registration standard](#) (in effect from 18 March 2025)
- [NMBA English Language Skills registration standard](#) (retired) (1 March 2019 to 17 March 2025)
- [NMBA English Language Skills registration standard](#) (in effect from 18 March 2025)

**The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's English language skills registration standard does not have an 'advanced education pathway'.*

Definitions

Advance copy period means the period advance copy of the revised ELS standard was published, from 12 December 2024 to 17 March 2025.

Retired ELS standard means the English language skills registration standard in effect for your profession from 1 July 2015 to 17 March 2025.

Revised ELS standard means the English language skills registration standard in effect for your profession from 18 March 2025.

**The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia's English language skills registration standard does not have an 'advanced education pathway'.*