



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING CHANGES TO THE - OET READING SUB-TEST

### **Why the need for change?**

A recent study undertaken at the *Language Testing Research Centre* at the University of Melbourne established, via the use of surveys and interviews conducted among a range of health professionals, that there was a wider range of publications and reading genres likely to be read in the workplace than the type of texts that had previously informed the OET Reading sub-test.

The specific reading skill of *skimming and scanning* a text was identified as a key component of surveyed health professionals' work related reading; an ability that was not directly tested under the old reading format. An important justification for changes to the OET Reading sub-test therefore was to enhance the quality of the test through a more accurate reflection of real-world reading tasks and the underlying skills required to complete them.

A second reason for changes to the Reading sub-test concerns the desire to further increase the reliability of test scores; more particularly by increasing the number of assessable items (a generally accepted reliability-enhancement measure); in real terms to increase the number of items to above the current 20-24 multiple choice items.

### **What's new?**

After the development and trialling of several prototypes, a revised format for the OET Reading sub-test has been established. The new format consists of two parts:

Part A is a Summary reading task. This requires test-takers to skim and scan 3-4 short texts (a total of about 650 words) related to a single topic and then complete a summary paragraph by filling in the missing words (sometimes referred to as a 'cloze' activity type). Test-takers will be required to fill-in 25-35 gaps in total in a strictly monitored timeframe of 15 minutes. Part A is designed to test candidates' ability to source information from multiple texts, to synthesise information in a meaningful way and to assess skimming and scanning ability under a time constraint.

Part B is a variation of the existing Reading task type. Test-takers are required to read two passages (600-800 words each) on general medical topics and answer 8-10 multiple choice questions for each text in a recommended timeframe of 45 minutes (a total of 16-20 questions; less questions than the old format). Part B is designed to test candidates' ability to read in

greater detail for general and specific information. The two texts in Part B are shorter than those used in the current Reading sub-test.

**When will the changes become effective?**

The new Reading sub-test format will be introduced for the **March 2010** administration.

Details and samples of the new task type will be made available on the OET website shortly, with revised editions of further practice test materials, incorporating the Reading changes, scheduled for later in 2009.