

OET FAQ's

The following OET FAQ's can be copied and pasted into information sheets or promotional items as needed. They are not intended to be used for external distribution.

1. What is OET and what does OET assess?

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

OET 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.

2. Who is OET for?

OET tests health practitioners from the following 12 professions:

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

3. What's in the test?

- 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.

The Writing Subtest

Writing a profession-specific letter of referral or discharge; or a letter to inform or advise a patient/carer/group.

The Speaking Subtest

Profession-specific scenario role-plays with an interlocutor who plays the part of a patient/relative/carer.

The Reading Subtest

Completion of a health-related summary paragraph and multiple choice questions on a longer health-related text.

The Listening Subtest

Note-taking on a recorded professional consultation and a range of questions on a health-related talk recording.

4. How is OET different to general English tests?

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

For example:

- For writing, most healthcare professionals must prepare referral letters based on case notes as part of their regular practice, so this is one task that is tested in OET.
- For speaking, OET uses role-plays which test the healthcare professional's ability to proficiently conduct a healthcare consultation with a patient/carer. OET tests the ability to deal with sensitive topics, reassure someone who is anxious, translate specialist register into lay language and control the power relationship between the healthcare professional and the patient/carer in a consultation.

5. How is the speaking test conducted?

- The speaking test is conducted face to face by interlocutors. The interlocutors are required to play the role of a patient or carer while recording the role play on to a digital recorder. The candidate plays the role of the healthcare professional they have selected to take the test for (e.g. nurse). It is a simulation of communication in a healthcare setting between healthcare professional (candidate) and the patient or carer (interlocutor).

6. Do speaking test interlocutors need special training?

- Test Venues conduct training sessions for their interlocutors based on webinar training provided by OET, which focusses how to play the role of the patient/carer in an OET role play. A document containing the minimum professional requirements for interlocutors will be supplied to new test venues.

7. Do speaking test interlocutors need to do any marking or know medical terms?

- The interlocutor does not do any marking. The recordings are sent to the OET Centre in Melbourne, Australia where they are assessed by examiners. In addition, interlocutors are not required to train in medical English.

8. When and where can candidates take the test?

- OET is available monthly, 12 times per year.
- OET is available at over 80 testing venues in 35 countries. For up to date details on test venues go to the OET website – <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/test-dates-locations/>

9. How do candidates apply for OET?

- Candidates can apply and pay for the test online three weeks or more before their selected test date at www.occupationalenglishtest.org

10. How do candidates receive results?

- Results are published online 16 days after the test and candidates can login to a secure system to view their results, which are also sent by post.

11. How are the tests graded and how do scores compare to IELTS?

- Candidates receive a separate grade for each subtest, ranging from A – E. There is no overall grade.
- The table below shows which OET scores correlate to IELTS scores.

OET grade	Description of ability	IELTS
A	Very high level of performance	8.0-9.0
B	High level of performance; i.e. able to use English with fluency and accuracy adequate for healthcare registration, appropriate visa categories, healthcare courses and workplaces	7.0-7.5
C	Good level of performance; adequate for appropriate visa categories, healthcare courses and workplaces	5.5-6.5
D	Moderate level of performance: requires improvement	4.0-5.0
E	Low level of performance: requires considerable improvement	–

12. How much does the test cost?

- The test costs AUD \$587 globally and there are no plans to increase this amount in the near future.

13. Why is the test more expensive and take longer to get results than other tests?

- OET is healthcare specific and therefore not based on everyday language. To ensure a high-quality exam, each test is developed and marked in consultation with subject matter experts in healthcare, leading to longer preparation and assessment time and the involvement of a greater number of staff.

14. How is validity and reliability of OET ensured?

- Candidates undergo a rigorous ID check upon initial registration, on the test day and for each sub-test.
- A strict code of practice for the storage and transportation of test materials is followed.
- Candidate scripts are securely dispatched and returned directly to The OET Centre in Melbourne. All sub-tests are assessed at The OET Centre in Melbourne by trained expert assessors.
- Assessment processes routinely include double marking and statistical analysis to ensure that candidate results are accurate and fair.
- Leading language testing academics contribute to the continued development and improvement of the test.
- Input from subject matter experts ensures authentic test materials.
- Numerous studies have been published exploring various aspects of the test's validity and can be found at: <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/research/>

15. How long is an OET result valid?

- The length of time that OET results are valid is determined by the regulatory authority, government agency, educational institution or other organisation that accepts OET results. To ensure they meet individual requirements, candidates need to contact the OET recognizing organisation. In most situations, it is two years for registration purposes and three years for immigration purposes. A list of organisations accepting OET is available at: <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/who-recognises-oet/>

16. Why is OET needed?

- Research has shown that limited language proficiency is a barrier to effective communication in healthcare. *Source: Elder, C. et al (2013) Towards improved healthcare communication.*
- The top source of complaints in healthcare are treatment and communication. *Source: Reader, T. G. (2014). Patient Complaints in Healthcare Systems: a systematic review and coding taxonomy.*

- Ageing populations and chronic diseases are putting pressure on healthcare systems in English speaking countries, resulting in a shortage of healthcare workers and demand for foreign-trained healthcare professionals. *Source: WHO 2013, A universal truth: no health without a workforce: <http://www.who.int/workforcealliance/knowledge/resources/hrhreport2013/en/>*
- An increasing number of foreign trained healthcare professionals are being recruited to fill shortages. *Source: OECD 2016 Health workforce policies in OECD countries: <http://www.oecd.org/publications/health-workforce-policies-in-oecd-countries-9789264239517-en.htm>*

17. Why do candidates choose OET?

- **Recognition:** OET is accepted by healthcare regulators in Australia, New Zealand, Namibia, Singapore and Dubai for registration purposes, as well as both Australian and New Zealand immigration for all visa categories.
- **Confidence:** OET is recommended by past test takers because preparation and test materials reflect real healthcare scenarios leading to increased confidence on test day.
- **Relevance:** OET helps candidates develop the language skills and confidence to communicate in the healthcare workplace.
- **Support:** OET provides a wide range of preparation resources, many of which are online and free of charge.

18. Has any stakeholder research been carried out?

To establish OET's validity and reliability, stakeholder perception research was carried out in 2013 by Vidakovic and Khalifa, which showed that OET is a reliable test of English language communication skills, stating: "***OET test takers are perceived as effective communicators able to communicate on matters that are both technical and emotional and who can use lay language so that patients can easily understand what they are saying.***"

- Significant findings include:
 - 93% of healthcare professionals said that their colleagues who have taken OET communicated effectively in the workplace.
 - 83% said they performed well at the writing tasks in their workplace.
 - Over 70% of healthcare professionals said that preparing for OET made them confident about communicating in English in their profession.
 - Close to 70% felt confident about communicating with patients and carers.

<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/resources/uploads/2015/08/Vidakovic-and-Khalifa-2013-Stakeholders-Perceptions-Research-Notes-54.pdf>

19. What preparation support does OET provide to candidates?

- OET's Preparation Portal contains a range of preparation materials, many of which are free of charge. To see the OET Preparation Portal, go to <https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/preparation-portal/oet-masterclass/>
- OET's Preparation Portal resources include:

<p>FREE! Online sample Practice Tests</p>	<p>FREE! ONLINE MASTERCLASS Live webinar with OET preparation expert Top tips for success - What the test involves - Opportunity to ask questions</p>	<p>FREE! Online tips to improve performance</p>
<p>ONLINE PREPARATION COURSE</p>	<p>CUSTOMISED FEEDBACK Receive feedback on your speaking and writing skills and guidance on how to improve.</p>	<p>PRACTICE BOOKS FOR ALL SKILLS</p>

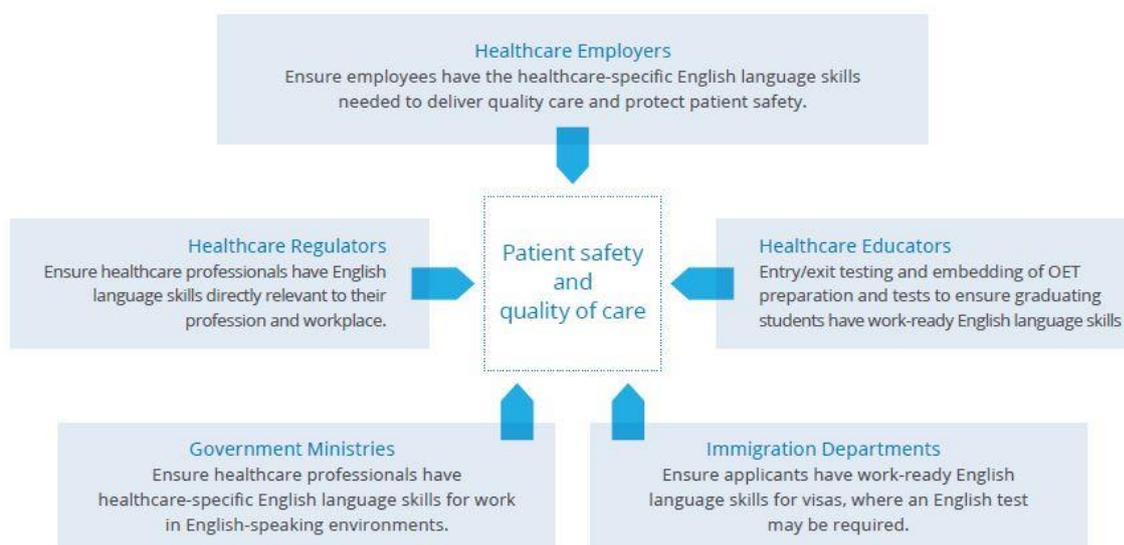
20. Who uses OET as proof of English proficiency?

OET is used as proof of English proficiency by health regulators in Australia, New Zealand, Namibia, Singapore and Dubai for registration in 12 healthcare professions. OET is also accepted by the Australian Department of Immigration and Immigration New Zealand for most visa categories, as well as major health educators and recruiters. For an up to date list of organisations, go to:

<https://www.occupationalenglishtest.org/test-information/who-recognises-oet/>

21. Why do employers, educators and healthcare regulators use OET as proof of English proficiency?

- **Healthcare regulators, boards and councils** can ensure that internationally trained healthcare professionals have appropriate standards of English, specific to the healthcare sector. This is key to guaranteeing patient safety and well-being.
- **Hospitals and other healthcare employers** can ensure that their employees (doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals) have the necessary English language communication skills for delivering quality healthcare.
- **Healthcare educators** can ensure that graduating students have employment-ready or registration-ready language skills by including OET preparation and testing in their courses.



22. What are the benefits of using OET as proof of English proficiency?

- Protects patient safety and improves quality of care by optimising communication with patients, carers and colleagues.
- Reduces the training burden for hospitals and other employers.
- Establishes a fair way to select internationally trained health professionals.
- Attracts candidates committed to excellence and professionalism.

23. How is OET used by healthcare regulators and employers?

- Healthcare regulators use OET results as proof of the required level of English language proficiency for registration in English-speaking healthcare environments.
- Most healthcare regulators accept an A or B grade in each subtest for registration purposes, but exact requirements need to be checked with individual regulators.

24. How is OET used by healthcare educators?

- OET results can be used as proof of English proficiency for students applying to take a healthcare course taught in English.
- OET preparation materials and tests can be embedded into healthcare courses to raise the English language skills of students up to the necessary level for registration and employment on graduation.

25. Is OET used as proof of proficiency for postgraduate healthcare studies?

- OET is used as proof of proficiency for entry into healthcare postgraduate courses. It is useful, not only for study, but also for English language requirements for registration on graduation.

26. Why do healthcare educators embed OET into courses?

- Embedding OET creates a contextualised learning environment where students develop English skills directly relevant to the course content. For example, during a unit on asthma management, English skills can be taught using a scenario involving asthma.

Healthcare diploma, degree, pathway or bridging programme

Contextualised learning — teaching relevant English alongside core curriculum units (e.g. helping a distressed asthma patient)

Before clinical placement

Mock OET test with feedback to students.

Graduation

Real OET test to become registration and work-ready.

- Benefits of embedding OET include:
 - **Benefits for students**
 - Relevance of English language learning
 - Increased retention
 - Increased proficiency.
 - **Benefits for educators:**
 - Engagement leading to faster progress
 - Work-ready graduates improving employer reputation for the institution
 - Increased performance.
 - **Benefits for employers:**
 - Accurate reflection of ability to communicate in an English-speaking workplace
 - Work-ready staff
 - Safety and quality of care.

27. What is involved in becoming a test venue?

- Test Venues administer OET tests 12 times per year and need to provide a secure testing room with separate rooms for the speaking test, as well as sound equipment, whiteboard and sufficient staff to monitor candidates.
- Test Venues are paid per candidate and supported by OET with venue staff training and marketing support for local promotion.
- Test papers and materials are provided by OET as well as the online results service and official statement of results.

28. How do test venues get paid?

- Test venues are paid per candidate, per administration on a sliding scale according to the number of candidates taking the test in each administration.
- Test venues submit an invoice to OET within 10 working days of each test administration. OET will remit the service fee within 30 days of receipt of an accurate invoice. Payments are made in Australian Dollars except if agreed otherwise with OET in advance.

29. How to find more information

The OET Centre Melbourne
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Tel: +61 3 8656 4000
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Website: www.occupationalenglishtest.org