



Irish College of  
Ophthalmologists  
*Eye Doctors of Ireland*  
Protecting your Vision

## FAQ's – English Language requirements for NCHDs applying for Training Programmes

**Q.1 I am seeking to apply to a Basic Specialist Training programme in Ireland but I did not complete my under-graduate medical training in the Republic of Ireland. Do I need to undertake an IELTS or OET exam?**

Yes. All NCHDs taking up employment with the HSE who did not complete the entirety of their under-graduate medical training in the Republic of Ireland, are required to provide evidence of one of the following:

1. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) certificate with an overall band score of 7.0 and a minimum score of 6.5 in each of the four domains – reading, writing, listening and speaking - on the academic test. The test must be undertaken no more than two years prior to the date of it being submitted to the employer. While a doctor may sit the above test as often as they wish, the above scores must have been achieved at only one sitting of the IELTS test. Results from more than one test sitting cannot be amalgamated. Any cost incurred in relation to the IELTS exam will be borne by the applicant. Information on IELTS is available at [www.ielts.org](http://www.ielts.org);

OR

OET (Occupational English Test) certificate with an overall grade of B and a minimum grade of B in each of the four domains- reading, writing, listening and speaking. The test must be undertaken no more than two years prior to the date of it being submitted to the Irish College of Ophthalmologists. Results from more than one test sitting cannot be amalgamated. Any cost incurred in relation to the OET exam will be borne by the applicant. Information on OET is available at [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

OR

2. Completion of their medical degree in the any of the following countries – United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or United States.

**Q2. What is an acceptable IELTS Score?**

A current Academic IELTS Certificate (dated within the last two years) with a minimum overall band score of 7.0 and a minimum score of 6.5 in each domain is the minimum score accepted.

**Q3. What is an acceptable OET Score?**

A current OET Certificate (dated within the last two years) with a minimum overall grade of B and a minimum grade of B in each domain is the minimum score accepted.

**Q4. I completed my medical degree in English but not in a country where English is an official language. Is this acceptable?**

NCHD's taking up employment / training programme must have completed the entirety of their undergraduate medical training medical degree through English in the any of the following countries – Ireland, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or United States. Otherwise, a sufficient IELTS/OET score is required.

**Q.5. I did not complete my medical degree in a country listed (in answer to Q1 above) but I am already employed in the HSE for a number of years – do I need to furnish IELTS/OET exam results?**

Yes, you must submit a current IELTS/OET certificate unless you can provide evidence (to the training body you are applying to) that you furnished evidence of IELTS/OET at the time of commencing employment with the HSE (in line with Circular 021/2012 and subsequently 022/2018).

**Q6. I took up employment with the HSE prior to 1st January 2015 – am I exempt from the requirement to have obtained a sufficient IELTS/OET score?**

No, taking up employment prior to 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 does not mean that an exemption applies. NCHD's that are employed prior to this date (that have not completed the entirety of their undergraduate medical training through English in the any of the following countries – Ireland, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand, or United States) are required to provide evidence of English competence by furnishing evidence of IELTS results or OET results. NCHDs that furnished satisfactory evidence of IELTS/OET certification at the time of employment (to the hiring hospital) are not required to re sit IELTS/OET, however they must submit evidence of this to the training body. Prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2015 the IELTS requirement was higher in Ireland.

**Q7. I provided evidence of sufficient IELTS to obtain my medical council registration (prior to December 2012) – do I need to re-sit the exam?**

No. If you submit evidence to the training body, that you previously submitted IELTS certification to the Medical Council at the time of registration, you are not required to re-sit the exam. Since 2012, the Medical Council no longer assess English language competency as part of the registration processes for EU doctors.

**Q8. I was not required to provide evidence of sufficient IELTS to the Irish Medical Council at the time of my medical council registration – am I exempt from the HSE IELTS requirements?**

No. The Medical Council requirements are separate to the HSE employment requirements on English language.

**Q9. Where can I get more information about English language requirements?**

Further information in relation to the English language requirements is available on the [HSE website](#).

Eligibility for training schemes is a matter for each training body, please contact the relevant training body directly.