



## Communiqué

2 July 2015

The Pharmacy Board of Australia (the Board) met on 19 June 2015 in Melbourne.

### Revised English language skills registration standards taking effect from 1 July

On 1 July 2015 a new [registration standard](#) for English language skills came into effect for the pharmacy profession. The revised standard is a common standard for 12 professions; Chinese medicine, chiropractic, dental, medical, medical radiation, occupational therapy, optometry, osteopathy, pharmacy, physiotherapy, podiatry and psychology.

These new standards were developed following a review of the existing standards, which included public consultation.

Ensuring that pharmacists practising in Australia have English language skills that support them to communicate effectively with patients, relatives and other healthcare professionals is of fundamental importance. The intent of the new standard is to balance this need for public protection while providing a small amount of reasonable increased flexibility for applicants. Accordingly, the revised standards establish additional ways in which health practitioners may be able to demonstrate that they meet the National Boards' English language skills requirements.

### Who it applies to

This change applies to:

- all individuals applying for initial registration as a pharmacist (provisional, limited and general registration) in Australia after 1 July 2015 if they are currently unregistered in Australia, and.
- all individuals applying for registration as a pharmacist (including moving from non-practising to another registration type) who have not used English as their primary language for more than five years.

### What the change means for pharmacists

- The changes will not affect currently registered pharmacists unless they let their registration lapse and apply for registration again at a later date or apply for a different type of registration in circumstances where they have not used English language for more than five years. If this happens, they will need to meet the new standard.
- The level of English language skills required has changed slightly for pharmacy from the old standard. Applicants for provisional and limited registration will be required to meet the requirements of the standard. Previously the standard only applied to applicants for general registration.
- From 1 July 2015, applicants relying on the test results of IELTS (academic module) are required to achieve a minimum overall score of 7 and a minimum score of 7 in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking). Applicants will also have a small amount of increased flexibility in the ways that they can demonstrate that they meet the standard.
- Practitioners who need to take an English language test to demonstrate that they meet the standard are now able to choose between four different tests. The four tests are also used by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection for visa purposes.
- Individuals will be able to count the results of up to two sittings in a six month period, within strict parameters and provided certain minimum scores are maintained.

## Transition arrangements

The Board has agreed to transition arrangements for applicants for provisional and limited registration in particular circumstances for a limited period of time. These details are published on the Board's [website](#).

Many applicants will be prepared to meet the revised standard when they apply for provisional or limited registration, and if so the Board encourages them to do so at that time.

However, to ensure these applicants are not disadvantaged by the timing of the introduction of the revised standard on 1 July 2015, the following transition arrangements apply:

- applicants for provisional and limited registration applying from 1 July 2015 until 30 September 2015 can choose to meet the revised standard, but will also have the option of meeting the standard at the time of application for general registration, and
- from 1 October 2015 all new applicants for provisional registration or limited registration must meet the Board's revised standard.

Any queries about this should be directed to the Board via the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

## For more information

- Lodge an [online enquiry form](#)
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 9275 9009 (overseas callers)

## Revised criminal history registration standard will take effect from 1 July

A revised criminal history registration standard came into effect for all registrants from 1 July 2015.

National Boards published the contents of the revised shared criminal history registration standard for all registered health practitioners, which is common to all National Boards and takes effect from 1 July 2015.

Whenever possible, National Boards seek to work together to develop common or similar standards across professions.

The revised criminal history registration standard has been approved by the Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council and makes very minor amendments to the old standard. The changes are expected to have minimal impact on practitioners as no changes have been made to the factors National Boards will take into account when considering an applicant's or registrant's criminal history.

When an individual first applies for registration, the National Board requires the applicant to declare their criminal history in all countries, including Australia. All registered health practitioners must inform their National Board if they are:

- charged with an offence punishable by 12 months imprisonment or more, or
- convicted or found guilty of an offence punishable by imprisonment in Australia and/or overseas.

When practitioners renew their registration they must disclose any changes to their criminal history.

More information about how criminal history checks are conducted is available on the [criminal history checks](#) page on the AHPRA website, including which checks are required from countries other than Australia for [some applicants and registrants](#).

## Public consultation on guidelines

The Board is currently analysing feedback received from stakeholders, pharmacists, government and the public on the following revised guidelines:

- *Guidelines for dispensing of medicines*
- *Guidelines on practice-specific issues*
- *Guidelines on dose administration aids and staged supply of dispensed medicines<sup>1</sup>*
- *Guidelines for proprietor pharmacists<sup>2</sup>*.

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<sup>1</sup> Currently titled *Guidelines on specialised supply arrangements*

The Board thanks all those who made a submission on the consultation paper. In the coming weeks, the Board will publish the finalised guidelines and submissions on its website.

### Meeting with the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association

The Board met with the President and Vice President of the National Australian Pharmacy Students' Association (NAPSA). The meeting provided an opportunity for NAPSA to present the results of the annual National Pharmacy Student Survey (NPSS), and enabled the Board to gain insight into the issues of concern and perceptions about the pharmacy profession and the future of the profession, as identified by survey participants.

The Board agreed to provide information via the NAPSA newsletter to inform students about the role of the Board and to improve their understanding of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme.

### Board supports distribution of information

The Pharmacy Board of Australia is helping the Commonwealth Department of Health to distribute important information to pharmacists.

The department has advised that changes to highly specialised drugs (HSD) community access arrangements will take effect on 1 July 2015.

To ensure all pharmacists are aware of the changes, the Board has agreed to a one-off release of the contact details of registrants on the National Register of Pharmacists so they can be posted a hard copy resource.

Registrant details are held primarily for the purpose of administering the National Scheme.

The addresses of pharmacists were given to the department under section 219 of the National Law<sup>3</sup> to support the department with fulfilling its own statutory functions relating to professional services provided by health practitioners.

'The *Privacy Act 1988* (Cth) strictly limits the use of this information for secondary purposes and so the Board has carefully considered the department's request to help get the information about the HSD changes to all pharmacists. AHPRA required the Department to use the addresses solely for the mail out, destroy them afterwards and keep them confidential.

The changes will better align existing HSD program arrangements with clinical practice and models of care through improvements to the way HSDs for the treatment of schizophrenia, HIV and Hepatitis B are prescribed, dispensed and accessed under the Section 100 HSD Program. These changes will be known as 'HSD Community Access'.

Pharmacists should look out for an information booklet in the post or email the [Australian Government Department of Health](#)

Stephen Marty  
Chair, Pharmacy Board of Australia  
2 July 2015

*[The Pharmacy Board of Australia](#) is the regulator of pharmacists in Australia and acts to protect the public by ensuring that suitably qualified and competent pharmacists are registered. The Board is responsible for developing registration standards, codes and guidelines for pharmacists and managing notifications (complaints)\* about pharmacists and pharmacy students. The Board does this through its powers under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory, and the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme, supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA). The Board's work in regulating Australia's pharmacists in the public interest is underpinned by [regulatory principles](#), which encourage a responsive, risk-based approach to regulation.*

*\*Except in NSW and QLD which have co-regulatory arrangements.*

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<sup>2</sup> Currently titled *Guidelines on responsibilities of pharmacists when practising as proprietors*

<sup>3</sup> The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (the National Law)