



**The world's only international
English language test specifically
for healthcare professionals**



www.occupationalenglishtest.org

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01.

WHAT IS OET?

OET is the world's only international English language test specifically for healthcare professionals. It assesses the language proficiency of healthcare professionals who seek to register, practice or study in an English-speaking environment.

The test provides a valid and reliable assessment of all four language skills – listening, reading, writing and speaking – with an emphasis on the types of communication required in healthcare settings.

OET tests international healthcare professionals from the following **12 professions**:



Dentistry



Dietetics



Medicine



Nursing



Occupational
Therapy



Optometry



Pharmacy



Physiotherapy



Podiatry



Radiography



Speech
Pathology



Veterinary
Science

TO HELP YOU SELECT INTERNATIONAL HEALTHCARE
PROFESSIONALS WITH THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE SKILLS TO
PROVIDE SAFE AND EFFECTIVE CARE, YOU NEED A HIGH-
QUALITY TEST THAT HAS BEEN SPECIFICALLY DESIGNED FOR
HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS.



02.

HOW IS OET DIFFERENT TO OTHER ENGLISH LANGUAGE TESTS?

Patient safety and quality of care

OET was designed specifically to meet the language needs of the healthcare sector. Test materials are developed in consultation with subject matter experts and replicate the English language skills required in healthcare settings to deliver patient safety and quality of care. While studying for OET, candidates learn exactly the type of language they will need every day at work.

“One of the great advantages of an English-for-Specific Purposes test such as OET, over more general academic tests, is that preparation for the test is also preparation for the communication demands of the workplace.”

Professor Tim McNamara

World-renowned language testing expert
and developer of OET



GENERAL OR ACADEMIC ENGLISH TEST



WRITING

Write an essay
on a general topic



SPEAKING

Structured interview
on a general topic

OET



WRITING

Write a healthcare letter,
usually a referral letter,
based on case notes



SPEAKING

Health care professional
to patient role-plays



Valid and reliable

OET is a valid and reliable assessment of the English language skills of healthcare professionals. The test is owned by Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment, a venture between Cambridge Assessment English (the makers of IELTS) and Box Hill Institute.

To ensure that the test remains relevant to the healthcare industry, OET is underpinned by continuous research by Cambridge Assessment English and the University of Melbourne, and updated at regular intervals as required. The most recent major update to the test was in September 2018, while 2019 saw the assessment criteria for the Writing sub-test updated.

All tests are double-marked by highly trained assessors and results undergo rigorous statistical analysis to confirm validity and reliability.

Highly secure

Given the high-stakes nature of the test, security both while we administer the test and of our results verification process is critical. Malpractice checks occur throughout the testing process and world-class candidate identity-checking technology is in use at all OET test venues.

The OET online results verification service allows OET recognising organisations to check the authenticity of OET results in a quick and reliable way. The service provides access to a secure, encrypted database through which candidates' results can be checked. Moreover, before a verifier can access a candidate's results, the candidate must first give permission in the system to the verifier, thereby protecting candidate privacy.

Recognised by leading healthcare institutions

OET is accepted by healthcare regulators and education institutions around the world, including in the USA, Canada, the UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, Dubai and Singapore. Below is a snapshot of key organisations that rely on OET as proof of English language proficiency:

- The General Medical Council (UK)
- The Nursing and Midwifery Council (UK)
- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)
- Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons in Canada
- The Medical Council (Ireland)
- The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland
- Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates | Foundation for Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (ECFMG®/FAIMER®)
- Various State Boards of Nursing in the USA

OET results may also be used in the UK, Australia and New Zealand for visa and immigration purposes.

To see the complete list of organisations that recognise OET, see the OET website:

www.occupationalenglishtest.org

Available globally in three delivery modes

OET is available globally throughout the year in three delivery modes:



OET on paper



OET on computer
at test venues



OET@Home: a remote-proctored, computer-based version of the test.

Find out where OET is available, see the OET website:

www.occupationalenglishtest.org



"We have reviewed OET thoroughly and are confident that, as well as giving more flexibility for doctors keen to work in the UK, it will continue to ensure that only those with a high level of English will reach the required standard."

Charlie Massey

Chief Executive, General Medical Council (UK)

03.

WHAT'S IN THE TEST?

OET is an in-depth and thorough assessment of all areas of language ability. The test is divided into four sub-tests:



Listening



Reading






Writing




Speaking



SUB-TEST	CONTENT	SHOWS CANDIDATES CAN
 Listening (approx. 45 minutes)	Two tasks common to all 12 professions: Note-taking on a recorded professional consultation and multiple-choice questions on a health-related audio.	Follow and understand a range of health-related spoken materials such as patient consultations and lectures.
 Reading (60 minutes)	Two tasks common to all 12 professions: Completion of a health-related summary paragraph and multiple-choice questions on a longer health-related text	Read and understand different types of text on health-related subjects.
 Writing (45 minutes)	One profession-specific task: Writing a letter of referral or discharge; or a letter to inform or advise a patient/ carer/ group.	Write a letter that is relevant for the reader in a clear and accurate way.
 Speaking (approx. 20 minutes)	Two profession-specific tasks: Scenario role-plays with an interlocutor who plays the part of a patient/relative/carer.	Effectively communicate in a real-life context using role-plays.

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 each of the 12 individual healthcare professions that the test covers and designed to reflect common tasks performed in that profession's workplace.



THE LISTENING SUB-TEST

The Listening sub-test consists of three parts, and a total of 42 question items. The topics are of generic healthcare interest and accessible to candidates across all professions. The total length of the Listening audio is about 40 minutes, including recorded speech and pauses to allow candidates time to write their answers. They hear each recording once and are expected to write their answers while listening.

PART A

EXTRACTS

🕒 About 5 minutes each

Part A assesses candidates' ability to identify specific information during a consultation. They listen to two recorded health professional-patient consultations and will complete the health professional's notes using the information they hear. **Note:** the health professionals may be any one of the 12 professions who can take OET.

PART B

SHORT WORKPLACE EXTRACTS

🕒 About 1 minute each

Part B assesses candidates' ability to identify the detail, gist, opinion or purpose of short extracts from the healthcare workplace. They listen to six recorded extracts (e.g. team briefings, handovers, or health professional-patient dialogues) and answer one multiple-choice question for each extract.

PART C

PRESENTATION EXTRACT

🕒 About 5 minutes each

Part C assesses candidates' ability to follow a recorded presentation or interview on a range of accessible healthcare topics. They listen to two different extracts and answer six multiple-choice questions for each extract.

Sample Listening sub-test extract and question

Extract

Mrs Green was admitted last night for pneumonia. She came in yesterday with a cough, fever, dizziness, and chest discomfort. She's a healthy sixty-year-old with a history of right knee replacement five years ago. She's on a regular diet and has no allergies. She's at high risk for falls due to her dizziness. We changed her IV antibiotics to oral, which she's tolerating well. Her assessment is within normal limits, except for some mild shortness of breath and wheezing. Her vital signs are stable, oxygen saturation is 98% on one litre, and she's been comfortable during my shift. Around 5.30, I gave her two paracetamol for minor pain, with good results. She has an 18 gauge in her left arm. She's got normal saline at 15 mils per hour.

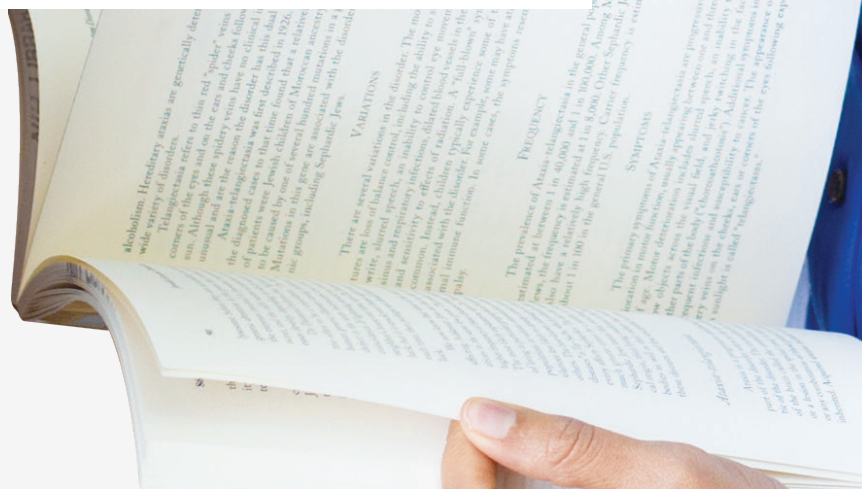
Question

You hear a nurse briefing her colleague about a patient. What does she warn her colleague about?

- a. The patient is allergic to some types of antibiotics
- b. Care must be taken to prevent the patient from falling. (Highlight this one as the correct answer)
- c. Oxygen may be needed if the patient becomes breathless

THE READING SUB-TEST

The Reading sub-test consists of three parts and a total of 42 question items. All three parts take a total of 60 minutes to complete. The topics are of generic healthcare interest and are therefore accessible to candidates across all professions.





PART A

EXPEDITIOUS READING TASK

🕒 15 minutes

Part A assesses candidates' ability to locate specific information from four short texts in a quick and efficient manner. The four short texts relate to a single healthcare topic, and they must answer 20 questions in the allocated time period. The 20 questions consist of matching, sentence completion and short answer questions.

PART B & C

CAREFUL READING TASKS

🕒 45 minutes

Part B assesses candidates' ability to identify the detail, gist or main point of six short texts sourced from the healthcare workplace (100-150 words each). The texts might consist of extracts from policy documents, hospital guidelines, manuals or internal communications, such as emails or memos. For each text, there is one three-option multiple-choice question.

Part C assesses candidates' ability to identify detailed meaning and opinion in two texts on topics of interest to healthcare professionals (800 words each). For each text, they must answer eight four-option multiple choice questions.

Sample Reading sub-test extract and questions

Technique for plaster backslab for arm fractures -
use same principle for leg fractures

- Measure a length of non-compression cotton stockinette from half way up the middle finger to just below the elbow. Width should be 2–3 cm more than the width of the distal forearm.
- Wrap cotton padding over top for the full length of the stockinette — 2 layers, 50% overlap.
- Measure a length of plaster of Paris 1 cm shorter than the padding/stockinette at each end. Fold the roll in about ten layers to the same length.
- Immerse the layered plaster in a bowl of room temperature water, holding on to each end. Gently squeeze out the excess water.

- Ensure any jewellery is removed from the injured limb.
- Lightly mould the slab to the contours of the arm and hand in a neutral position.
- Do not apply pressure over bony prominences. Extra padding can be placed over bony prominences if applicable.
- Wrap crepe bandage firmly around plaster backslab

Question

- Which parts of a limb may need extra padding?
- What should be used to cover a freshly applied plaster backslab?
- In plaster backslab, there is a layer of _____ closest to the skin.



THE WRITING SUB-TEST

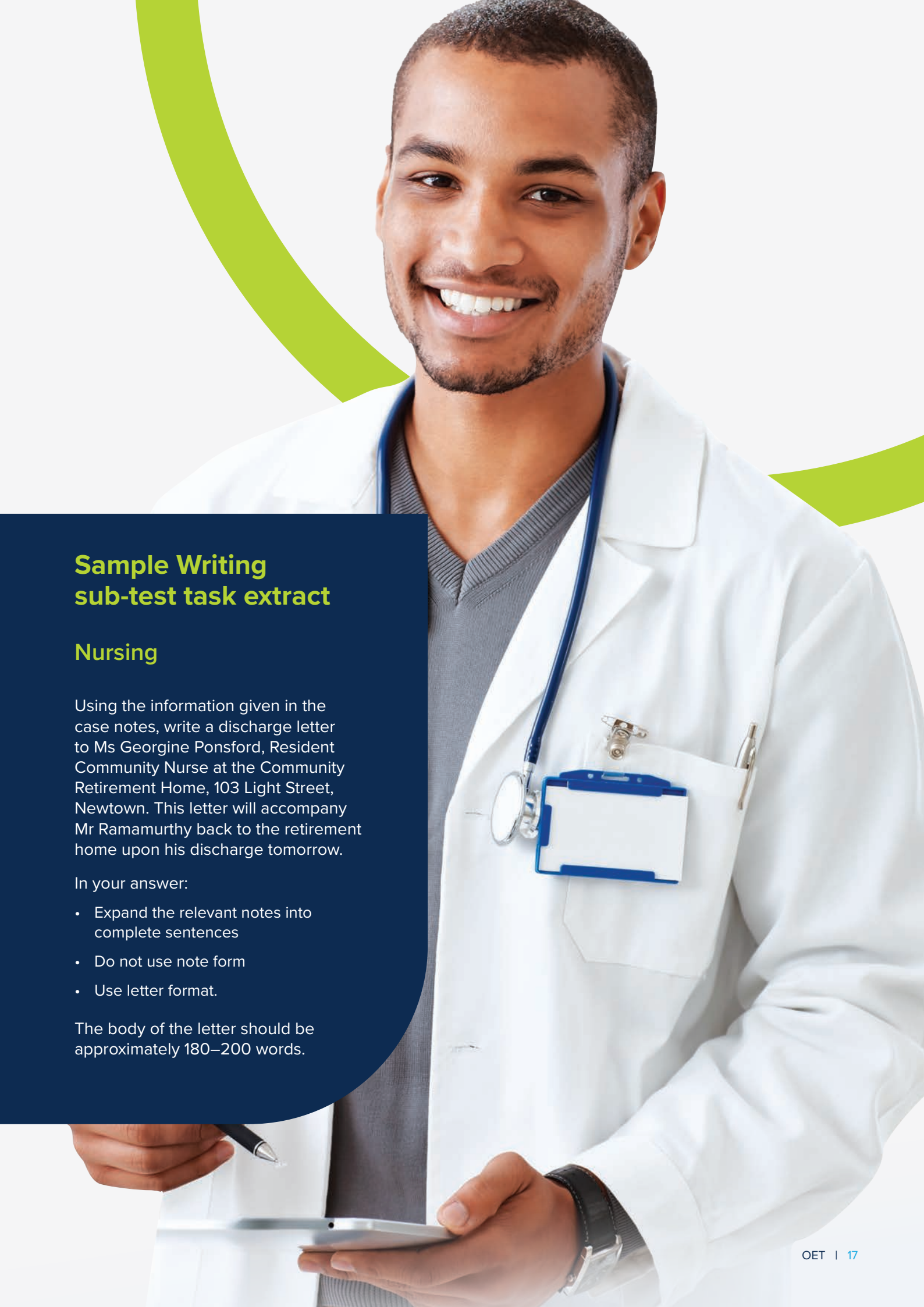
The Writing sub-test takes 45 minutes and is profession-specific. There is one task set for each profession based on a typical workplace situation and the demands of the profession – a nurse does the task for nursing, a dentist does the task for dentistry, and so on.

STRUCTURE

The task is to write a letter, usually a referral letter. Sometimes a different type of letter is required: e.g. a letter of transfer or discharge, or a letter to advise or inform a patient, carer, or group.

Along with the task instructions, you will receive stimulus material (case notes and/or other related documentation) which includes information to use in your response.





Sample Writing sub-test task extract

Nursing

Using the information given in the case notes, write a discharge letter to Ms Georgine Ponsford, Resident Community Nurse at the Community Retirement Home, 103 Light Street, Newtown. This letter will accompany Mr Ramamurthy back to the retirement home upon his discharge tomorrow.

In your answer:

- Expand the relevant notes into complete sentences
- Do not use note form
- Use letter format.

The body of the letter should be approximately 180–200 words.



THE SPEAKING SUB-TEST

The Speaking sub-test is delivered individually and takes around 20 minutes. This part of OET uses materials specifically designed for the candidate's profession. In each role-play, the candidate takes their professional role (for example, as a nurse or as a pharmacist) while the interlocutor plays a patient, a client, or a patient's relative or carer. For veterinary science, the interlocutor is the owner or carer of the animal.

STRUCTURE

There is a short warm-up conversation about the candidate's professional background. Then the role-plays are introduced one by one and the candidate has three minutes to prepare for each. The role-plays take about five minutes each.



ROLE-PLAYS

The candidate receives information for each role-play on a card that they keep while they do the role-play. The card explains the situation and what they are required to do.

The role-plays are based on typical workplace situations and reflect the demands made on a health professional in those situations. The interlocutor follows a script so that the Speaking test structure is similar for each candidate. The interlocutor also has detailed information to use in each role-play. Different role-plays are used for different candidates at the same test administration.

Sample Speaking sub-test role-play task

Medical

You're doing a pre-anaesthesia evaluation on a 44-year-old patient who will undergo gall bladder surgery. The patient's never had surgery before and is worried about the whole procedure. (S)he is currently medicated for claudication in the legs.

- Greet the patient. Find out what's worrying him/her.
- Be reassuring. Explain the benefits of anaesthesia (safe, no pain, prevents movement, helps surgeon, etc). Find out about current medication, allergies, amount and type of exercise, etc.
- Advise the patient to stop aspirin five days before surgery. Say why (risk of bleeding during the procedure, need for blood transfusions, etc). Reassure the patient about interrupting the medication (low risk).
- Explain the anaesthesia procedure (IV medication, monitoring of vital signs, etc.).
- Stress the importance of fasting for at least eight hours beforehand (otherwise normal diet).
- Explain the gall bladder removal procedure - laparoscopy, only minor scars.

04.

SCORING AND RESULTS

Results are published in OET's secure online test administration system and candidates log in to view their results. They may also download a Statement of Results.

Candidates receive a numerical score for each sub-test, ranging from 0 to 500 in ten-point increments (e.g. 350, 360, 3). The numerical score is mapped to a separate letter grade, ranging from A (highest) to E (lowest). There is no overall grade for OET.



Here are the descriptions for each grade:

NUMERICAL SCORE	LETTER GRADE	BAND DESCRIPTORS	IELTS EQUIVALENT BAND SCORE	CEFR LEVEL
450 - 500	A	Can communicate very fluently and effectively with patients and health professionals using appropriate register, tone and lexis. Shows complete understanding of any kind of written or spoken language.	8.0 - 9.0	C2
350 - 440	B	Can communicate effectively with patients and health professionals using appropriate register, tone and lexis, with only occasional inaccuracies and hesitations. Shows good understanding in a range of clinical contexts.	7.0 - 7.5	C1
300 - 340	C+	Can maintain the interaction in a relevant healthcare environment despite occasional errors and lapses, and follow standard spoken language normally encountered in his/her field of specialisation.	6.5	B2
200 - 290	C		5.5 - 6.0	
100 - 190	D	Can maintain some interaction and understand straightforward factual information in his/her field of specialisation, but may ask for clarification. Frequent errors, inaccuracies and mis- or overuse of technical language can cause strain in communication.	Less than 5.5	
0 - 90	E	Can maintain simple interaction on familiar topics and understand the main point in short, simple messages, provided he/she can ask for clarification. High density errors and mis- or overuse of technical language can cause significant strain and breakdowns in communication.		

05.

HOW ORGANISATIONS USE OET

OET helps regulators, employers and educators select healthcare professionals with the right level of English proficiency to deliver safe and high-quality care.

The benefits

Establish a fair way to select internationally trained healthcare professionals.

- Ensure patient safety and improved quality of care by optimising communication with patients, carers and colleagues.
- Reduce the training burden for hospitals and other employers.
- Attract candidates committed to professionalism and excellence.

Grades accepted

Most healthcare regulators accept a grade B in each sub-test for registration purposes, but the choice of grades is entirely at the individual organisation's discretion.



Healthcare Employers

Ensure employees have the healthcare-specific English language skills needed to deliver quality care and protect patient safety.



Healthcare Regulators

Ensure healthcare professionals have English language skills relevant to their profession and workplace.



Government Ministries

Ensure healthcare professionals have healthcare-specific language skills for work in English speaking environments.



Healthcare Educators

Entry/exit testing and embedding of OET preparation and tests to ensure graduating students have work-ready English language skills.



Immigration Departments

Ensure applicants have work-ready English language skills for visas, where an English test may be required.



Patient safety
and quality of care



"The OET test is a comprehensive and testing exam... I would feel confident as an employer of overseas doctors with a satisfactory OET English language result."

Alistair Flowerdew MBBS, FRCSEd, MS,

Former Medical Director and Responsible
Officer of three NHS Trusts

06.

EMBEDDING OET IN HEALTHCARE EDUCATION

Embedding OET preparation and testing into a healthcare course ensures students develop profession-specific language skills to become work-ready on graduation. It creates a contextualised learning environment in which students learn English based on the healthcare course content. For example, during a unit on asthma management, English is taught using a scenario involving asthma.

Below is an example of how each skill can be developed and refined during the course:



Embedding Listening

Students develop a variety of listening skills, including the ability to comprehend the main points of a healthcare-related discourse.



Embedding Reading

Students are taught how to read in different ways, for example how to 'skim and scan' multiple short texts to extract particular pieces of information.



Embedding Writing

Students learn grammar, vocabulary and paragraph structure while completing a task such as combining medical notes into a sentence with multiple clauses.



Embedding Speaking

Students are taught grammar, pronunciation and other aspects of speech using a scenario, such as reassuring a patient who is nervous or upset.

How OET is embedded

Embedding can be used throughout a healthcare course to build language skills and confidence before clinical placement, culminating in students being able to take the OET test to become registration and work ready.

Healthcare diploma, degree, pathway or bridging program

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 registered and work-ready.



Benefits for students

Learning English using OET materials during a healthcare course means that the language test doesn't have to be a separate hurdle for students to overcome to achieve their goals. The benefits for students are:

> Relevance

Students develop English skills that are directly relevant to the healthcare workplace.

> Retention

Contextualised learning alongside a healthcare course improves language-skills retention.

> Proficiency

Students are proficient in English for clinical placement, registration and their career.



Benefits for educators

Contextualised learning created through embedding OET generates student engagement and development of English skills needed for registration and the workplace. The benefits for educators are:

> Engagement

Relevance and usefulness of English teaching generates student engagement and faster progress.

> Employer reputation

Increasing the number of work-ready graduates improves employer reputation for your institution.

> Performance

Developing English skills with a specific healthcare focus leads to improved performance.



Benefits for employers

Employers can be confident in the reliability of the OET test to ensure newly qualified staff have the language skills to be work-ready, leading to improved safety and quality of care. The benefits for employers are:

> Safety and Quality

Proficiency in English leads to improved safety and quality of care.

> Reliability

Accurate reflection of ability to communicate in an English-speaking workplace.

> Work-ready staff

Confidence that new staff have work-ready language skills.



See how the University of New England, Australia, embedded OET into their Masters of Nursing



07.

PREPARING FOR OET

The official OET Preparation Portal is candidates' online one-stop destination for test preparation and includes many hours' worth of free material.

Free material

- Start for Success package: A comprehensive preparation package containing more than 300 videos, method lessons, sample answers, guides and a complete practice test
- Sample tests
- Masterclasses: Expert advice on all four sub-tests
- Live Q & A on Facebook: A twice-monthly opportunity for candidates to have their questions answered by an OET Expert
- A series of emails to guide you through preparation once you've booked the test
- Facebook: A hive of preparation activity! Daily posts cover language learning tips, test advice, vocabulary and interactive quizzes
- YouTube: A wide range of videos, including OET Speaking role plays
- Healthcare Communication bulletin to support you in the early years of your international career

Material for purchase

- OET Ready – an online course designed to help candidates build their English skills before they take OET
- The Official Guide to OET book by Kaplan Test Prep
- Practice books and eBooks for each profession
- OET Preparation Nursing book

"It is clear that a candidate who completes these tests successfully would be demonstrating a very high level of English language proficiency. All scenarios had current relevancy to healthcare and a strong emphasis was found on concepts that are key to patient safety."

Joy J Ingwerson

MSN, RN, CNE (Certified Nurse Educator)

OET PREPARATION PROVIDER PROGRAM

The OET Preparation Provider Program (PPP) is a comprehensive training program that gives teachers and educational institutions the knowledge and tools to run high-quality OET preparation courses.

Benefits

- Gain the skills and knowledge required to develop an OET preparation curriculum.
- Access high-standard OET preparation materials, sample tests, teacher webinars and guides.
- Be awarded Preliminary or Premium Provider status and receive the associated benefits.
- Quality assurance for students, teachers and schools.

Who is PPP for?

PPP is designed for educational institutions and teachers currently preparing students for OET or those interested in starting a new course.

What does PPP include?

PPP includes five lesson modules delivered via an online learning platform that you can access anytime, anywhere, and on any device.

The sample materials have been created by OET experts and are exclusively available to teachers enrolled in PPP.

The lessons are provided in two stages:

1. Lessons one to three: Complimentary access to all eligible preparation providers. Upon completion, the preparation provider attains preliminary provider status and will be listed on the OET website.
2. Lessons four to five: Access for an administration fee to eligible providers who apply for Premium Provider status.

What is Premium Provider status?

After attaining Preliminary Provider status, schools will have the option of applying for Premium Provider Status. Premium Provider status is awarded to teachers and organisations who meet eligibility criteria and have completed all five lessons. Premium Provider status suits providers who already have highly qualified teachers with experience developing and delivering OET courses or other medical English courses.

What benefits will I get as a Premium Provider?

As well as the benefits from being best placed to provide outstanding OET Preparation, Premium Provider status also gives you the following:

- Priority listing on the OET website
- Use of the OET Premium Provider logo
- Access to the OET Promotional Toolkit of marketing materials to help you grow your business
- Promotion to OET candidates via OET's social media sites
- Support with course content from our team of OET experts
- Access to the teacher shared library



PRELIMINARY TRAINING

LESSON 1

INDUCTION

This lesson focuses on general information about the Preparation Provider Program including:

What is PPP?

Teacher qualification checkpoint

LESSON 2

OET OVERVIEW

This lesson focuses on teaching skills

What is OET?

Description of OET

LESSON 3

OET TEACHING

This lesson focuses on general information about OET including:

A detailed look at each of the sub tests

OET teaching best practice

Lesson plan design assessment

PREMIUM TRAINING

LESSON 4

OET TEST EXPERIENCE

This lesson focuses on gaining a more detailed understanding of OET and includes:

Test Experience assignment – analysis and reflection on an official practice test

Creating OET lessons

LESSON 5

OET MATERIALS DEVELOPMENT

This lesson focuses on applying the skills you have learnt in the previous four lessons to create OET lesson materials.

You will submit your lessons which will be assessed by our OET experts who will then provide feedback.

OET RESEARCH

OET is underpinned by over 30 years of extensive research by the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC) at the University of Melbourne. This work is now supported by the Research and Validation department at Cambridge Assessment English. The test is regularly updated to keep pace with changes in language testing in a healthcare context, in turn ensuring the ongoing validity and reliability of the test.

Leading language testing academics contribute to the continued development and improvement of the test, placing it at the forefront of research and practice in the assessment of English for specific purposes.

Input from subject matter experts provides for authentic test materials, underpinning OET's validity. This ensures that tasks are based on a typical workplace situation and reflect the demands of the profession.

Numerous studies have been published exploring various aspects of the test's validity.

To see the complete list of research visit

www.occupationalenglishtest.org/research



10.

ABOUT OET

OET was established in the late 1980s under contract to the Australian Federal Government.

Since 2013, OET has been owned by Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment, a venture between Cambridge Assessment English and Box Hill Institute.

Cambridge Assessment English, part of the University of Cambridge, helps millions of people learn English and prove their skills to the world. Box Hill Institute is a leading Australian vocational and higher education provider.





**The world's only international
English language test specifically
for healthcare professionals**

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