



Registration standard: English language requirements

Effective date: 1 October 2025

Summary

This registration standard sets out the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria's (the Board's) minimum English language requirements for registered disability workers. It outlines how an applicant can self-assess this requirement for speaking and communicating in English.

In assessing whether a worker is suitable to practise as a disability worker, the Board considers whether the person's competency in speaking or otherwise communicating in English is sufficient to practise as a disability worker.

It is important for someone providing disability services to be able to communicate with the person with disability using the service, as well as to their family, advocates, other service providers and regulators. Disability workers must also be able to read and understand a person's disability support and healthcare plan to ensure they address the person's needs.

This standard outlines the English language skills for registered disability workers. In their registration application, applicants will have to self-declare whether they are competent communicating in English.

Does this standard apply to me?

This standard applies to all applicants for registration as a registered disability worker.

What must I do?

When you are registered

The Board requires a person to be competent in speaking or otherwise communicating in English, sufficient to practise as a disability worker.

When you apply for registration

When you apply for registration, you will make a declaration that you meet the English language competency standard.

Tools for self-assessing English competency – Vocational English level

The Board assesses English competency using the level required for Vocational English. Vocational English language level refers to the ability to use English effectively in a specific job or trade. It means you can understand and use the language needed for work tasks, communicating with colleagues, following instructions and handling job-related documents.

You are asked to self-assess your Vocational English level. You don't need to show us your self-assessment, but you can use the following questions to help make your declaration. If at least one of the below circumstances apply, then you can declare that you meet the English language competency standard

Methods for self-assessing if you meet the English language competency standard at the Vocational English level

1. You have undertaken and satisfactorily completed: a) all years of primary and at least 3 years of secondary study in or outside Australia – instruction was in English b) at least 5 years of study at secondary school level in or outside Australia – instruction was in English c) at least one year of full-time study towards an award in or outside Australia – instruction was in English d) part-time equivalent of one year of full-time study towards an award in or outside Australia – instruction was in English.	2. Undertaken a recognised test of English language and scored a minimum level equivalent to Vocational English. A selection of tests are available online from the Department of Home Affairs website. If you choose to take an English language test, you are responsible for the cost.	3. If you don't hold an Australian passport but hold a valid passport from either: a) the United Kingdom b) the United States c) Canada d) New Zealand e) the Republic of Ireland. British National (Overseas) passports are not acceptable as evidence of Vocational English.
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These methods of self-assessment are based on the Vocational English International English Language Testing System (IELTS) level 5 requirements for relevant migrant working visas for aged care and disability set by the Department of Home Affairs [Vocational English \(homeaffairs.gov.au\)](https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au).

The Board may at any time require an applicant to undertake a specified English language test.

When you apply for renewal of registration

Not applicable. You need to meet this standard when you apply for registration for the first time. You are not asked to declare your competence on renewal of registration.

What if I can't speak or otherwise communicate in English at the Vocational English level?

In assessing if a person is suitable to be registered, the Board will consider the person's competence in speaking or otherwise communicating in English, sufficient to practise as a disability worker.

The Board will consider the declaration made by a registration applicant about whether they are competent practising in English to the Vocational English level.

If a disability worker declares they are not competent to the Vocational English level, the Board will assess their suitability to practise.

A disability worker must be able to show they can speak or communicate with people accessing services, as well as their representatives and other service providers to understand and effectively respond to their needs.

If a disability worker practises exclusively with service users from a particular language group, they must be able to show they can communicate with those service users, as well as their representatives, other service providers and regulators, to understand and effectively respond to their needs.

What does this mean if I am already registered?

Your compliance with this registration standard may be checked from time to time. The Board may ask you to provide evidence to support the declaration you made.

If you have taken a language test to satisfy that you meet the required Vocational English level, you should keep records of that test.

What if I do not meet the English language standard?

The Board may place a condition on your registration about communication requirements.

When applying a condition, the Board will consider your area of practice, level of supervision and any assistive technology you use to communicate.

You may apply to have a condition removed at any time if you believe there has been a significant change in circumstances.

If you do not meet the English language standard, the Board may either:

- refuse your application for registration, or
- approve your registration subject to a condition or accept an undertaking.

Authority

This standard was approved by the Disability Worker Registration Board of Victoria.

Registration standards are developed under Part 10, Division 1 of the *Disability Service Safeguards Act 2018*.

Review

This registration standard will be reviewed from time to time as required.

This standard replaces the Competency in English registration standard that applied in the annual registration periods between 1 October 2021 to 30 September 2025.

Definitions

Award of study is the formal recognition received on completing an educational program, such as a certificate, diploma or degree.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is an internationally recognised system for testing English language proficiency in 4 categories: listening, reading, writing and speaking.

IELTS level 5 – Modest user, should be able to handle basic communication in their own field.

English language competency means having the necessary skills to understand, speak, read and write proficiently in English.

Evidence is information or facts that support a claim.

Secondary education means Australian school years 7 through to 12, even where year 7 is classified as part of primary school in a particular state or territory.

Vocational English language level refers to the ability to use English effectively in a specific job or trade. It means you can understand and use the language needed for work tasks, communicating with colleagues, following instructions and handling job-related documents. Vocational English is equivalent to IELTS level 5.