

PAAs and AAs: English language requirements

Introduction

1. This policy sets out how physician associates (PAs) and anaesthesia associates (AAs) can satisfy us they have the necessary knowledge of English language when applying for first registration or re-entry to the register.
2. Applicants are required to provide evidence of how they meet the standard of proficiency in the English language¹ determined by us under article 3(1) of the Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates Order (AAPAO). This is one of the nine standards required for registration as a PA or AA.
3. In the General Medical Council (Registration) (Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates) Rules ('the registration rules') we state that applicants must provide evidence of having the required English language knowledge when applying for registration² and re-entry to the register³.
4. The registration evidence [framework](#), explains that to meet this standard, applicants will need to provide evidence to satisfy us that they have the necessary knowledge of English to practise safely in the UK. We have set the standard at the level we can be assured that applicants can communicate effectively with patients and healthcare professionals in English across all four areas of proficiency (listening, speaking, reading, and writing).
5. This policy sits under the [registration evidence framework](#), and describes the evidence we accept, or may accept, as demonstrating the applicant meets the standard for English language for the purposes of registration and re-entry to the register.
6. In line with good practice, we'll regularly review this policy to ensure it remains up to date, fair, proportionate, and effective.

What evidence will we accept?

7. Applicants can provide the following evidence to demonstrate that they meet the standard for proficiency in the English language. We accept evidence that is up to two years old prior to an application being submitted, as evidence shows that language skills may deteriorate after this time⁴.

¹ Part 2 Article 3(2)(e) *The Anaesthesia Associates and Physician Associates Order*.

² Part 2 rule 5(2)(i).

³ Part 4 rule 22(6)(c) and 22(7)(a) the rules.

⁴ The British Council recommend English language test scores are valid for two years to ensure reliability of the test results since language skills may deteriorate over two years ([2013 research](#)).

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8. The types of evidence applicants provide may differ depending on their individual circumstances, and we can exercise discretion when assessing evidence.

UK PA/AA qualifications

9. If an applicant holds a UK PA/AA qualification, we will accept this as evidence to demonstrate that they can communicate with patients, their relatives and other healthcare professionals in English to the required standard.

English language tests

10. We accept the following tests as evidence that an applicant has the necessary standard of English language. Test certificates are valid up to two years prior to the application being submitted.

International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

11. Using [IELTS](#) the applicant must demonstrate all of the following:
- they achieved our minimum score (overall score of at least 7.5 and at least 7 in each area of reading, writing, speaking and listening);
 - the scores must be achieved in the same sitting;
 - they took the academic version of IELTS;
 - that they achieved these scores in their most recent sitting of the test; and
 - the test was taken in person, in an authorised test centre.

Occupational English Test (OET)

12. Using [OET](#) the applicant must demonstrate all of the following:
- they achieved the minimum score (at least a B in each area of reading, writing, speaking and listening);
 - the scores must be achieved in the same sitting;
 - they took the medical version of OET;
 - that they achieved these scores in their most recent sitting of the test; and
 - the test was taken either on paper, on computer version, or the @Home version.

Extensions to tests

13. If an applicant's IELTS or OET certificate is over two years old and they have recently passed a GMC approved registration assessment, we may extend the validity of their certificate. To be

eligible for this extension, the applicant must meet both of the following criteria:

- their IELTS or OET certificate must be less than three years old on the date their application for registration was submitted; and
- they must have passed a GMC approved registration assessment less than three months before the date their application for registration was submitted.

Evidence we may accept

14. Where it is not possible for an applicant to provide the evidence above to demonstrate their knowledge of English, we may consider other evidence on a case-by-case basis. The other types of evidence we may accept are listed below.

Relevant qualifications taught and examined in English

15. We may accept other relevant qualifications⁵ as evidence of acceptable knowledge of English language where all the following criteria are met:

- the relevant qualification was awarded within the two years prior to the application being submitted, and
- all elements of the relevant qualification were taught and examined solely in English, and
- at least 75% of course related clinical interaction, including personal contact with patients, their families and other healthcare professionals, was conducted in English i.e. without any translation support

or,

- where applicants have a relevant qualification from a country on our [list of acceptable English language speaking countries](#), and they have practiced there continuously since it was awarded

or,

- where applicants have a relevant qualification from a country on our [list of acceptable English language speaking countries](#), and are also a national of a country on this list.

Alternative UK healthcare qualification

16. We may accept other UK healthcare qualifications as evidence of English language where the applicant has been registered in the UK with another healthcare regulator and we have confirmation that the other regulator has no concerns about the applicant's English language proficiency. This is because other UK healthcare qualifications demonstrate that the applicant

⁵ 'Relevant qualification' as defined in the Registration rules, means 'an approved qualification or a qualification which is accepted by the Regulator for the purposes of registration as an associate'.

has been taught and examined in English and is able to communicate to a sufficient level in a UK clinical setting.

17. This only relates to evidencing that the applicant meets the standard for English language knowledge, it does not constitute accepting the qualification for the purposes of entry, or re-entry, to the register as a PA or AA.

Employer references

18. We may accept employer references as evidence of the required standard of English language where the applicant has practised continuously as a PA or AA (or other comparable title) in a country on our [list of acceptable English language speaking countries](#) for at least the two years before their application was submitted.
19. Structured English language references from employers must provide robust independent and verifiable confirmation about knowledge in all four areas of English language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

English language tests accepted by another regulatory authority

20. Where an applicant has used another English language test to gain registration as a PA or AA with a regulatory authority in a country on our [list of acceptable English language speaking countries](#)⁶, we may accept it as evidence if:
- the applicant passed the English language test required for registration with the regulatory authority within the two years prior to their application being submitted, and
 - the test assessed knowledge in all four areas of English language proficiency: reading, writing, speaking and listening.

What further evidence requests or enquiries might we make?

21. We may make enquiries or request further information from the applicant relating to their English language knowledge⁷.
22. We might make enquiries, and/or seek advice from other organisations, including:
- the applicant's current or previous employer(s),
 - any other regulatory body who the applicant is, or has been, registered with,

⁶ We maintain a [list of acceptable English language speaking countries](#), which is based on the [UK government list of nationals who do not need to prove their knowledge of English language](#). We retain discretion to add or remove countries on the list on receipt of new and verifiable evidence.

⁷ Part 2, rule 6(1).

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- the institution which awarded the applicant's qualification.

23. Examples of circumstances in which we might request further evidence include:

- to verify evidence and information provided⁸
- where concerns have been raised about the applicant's knowledge of English language.

How will we assess the evidence?

24. In all cases the burden of proof is on the applicant to satisfy the Registrar, and evidence will be assessed on the basis of robustness, objectivity, and independence and be subject to verification.

25. Assessing this evidence forms part of the application process, however, holding acceptable English language evidence does not necessarily mean an applicant will be granted registration. To be granted registration, applicants must satisfy us that they meet all nine of the registration standards, and other requirements, as outlined in the registration evidence framework⁹.

26. Where we are not satisfied that an applicant meets the standard for proficiency in the English language, we will refuse the application¹⁰.

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⁸ Part 2, rule 6(5).

⁹ As determined under Article 6(1) of the AAPAO.

¹⁰ Part 2, rule 6(9)(b)(i).