



# OET Preparation Support Pack

# Contents

<b>Section 1</b>	<b>What is OET?</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	What is the Occupational English Test (OET)?	2
1.2	Ownership	2
1.3	Benefits of OET	3
1.4	Who recognises OET?	3
1.5	Reporting results	4
<b>Section 2</b>	<b>When and where the test is available and how to apply for OET</b>	<b>5</b>
2.1	Test dates	5
2.2	Test venues	5
2.3	Applying for OET	5
<b>Section 3</b>	<b>Description of OET</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	Test format	6
3.2	The four components of OET	6
3.3	OET practice books and sample tests	8
<b>Section 4</b>	<b>Assessment of OET</b>	<b>9</b>
4.1	Assessment information	9
4.2	Sample answers and markings/comments for Writing and Speaking sub-tests	11
	Writing Sample 1	12
	Writing Sample 2	16
	Speaking Sample 1	20
	Speaking Sample 2	25
<b>Section 5</b>	<b>How to further prepare your students for OET</b>	<b>30</b>
5.1	Listening sub-test	30
5.2	Reading sub-test	33
5.3	Writing sub-test	36
5.4	Speaking sub-test	41
<b>References</b>		<b>44</b>

# Section 1: What is OET?

## 1.1 What is the Occupational English Test (OET)?

OET is an English language test that assesses the language and communication skills of healthcare professionals who seek to register and practise in an English-speaking environment.

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

**OET tests health professionals from the following 12 professions:**

- Dentistry
- Dietetics
- Medicine
- Nursing
- Optometry
- Occupational Therapy
- Pharmacy
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Radiography
- Speech Pathology
- Veterinary Science

## 1.2 Ownership

OET is a well-respected English language test for the healthcare sector, established in the late 1980s. It was developed under contract to the Australian Federal Government. The test was designed by Professor Tim McNamara at the University of Melbourne – one of the original developers of IELTS (International English Language Testing System).

Backed by over 30 years of research by the Language Testing Research Centre (LTRC) at the University of Melbourne, OET has gone through a continuous cycle of research, validation and evaluation to ensure it is fit for purpose and relevant today.

The test is now owned by Cambridge Boxhill Language Assessment, a venture between Cambridge English and Box Hill Institute.

Cambridge English Language Assessment, a part of the University of Cambridge, is the world's leading provider of language assessment for learners and teachers of English.

More than 13,500 organisations around the world accept its exams and qualifications as proof of English language ability.

Each year over 4 million people in more than 130 countries take Cambridge English exams.

Box Hill Institute, based in Melbourne, Australia, is a leading vocational and higher education provider known for its collaborative and creative approach to education in Australia and overseas. The Institute has a rich history, and over the years has been the recipient of many awards, demonstrating recognition for its achievements.

## 1.3 Benefits of OET

OET can help to ensure that the English language skills of healthcare professionals are at the right level to work in the healthcare sector.

- Regulatory authorities, registration boards and councils can ensure that internationally trained healthcare professionals have appropriate standards of English, specific to the healthcare sector. This is key to guaranteeing patient safety and well-being.
- Hospitals and other healthcare employers can ensure that their employees (doctors, nurses and other healthcare professionals) have the necessary English language communication skills for delivering quality healthcare.
- Education institutions can ensure that graduating students have employment-ready or registration-ready language skills by including OET preparation and testing in their courses.

### Other benefits of OET:

- gives confidence in the language competence of practising healthcare professionals.
- optimises communication with patients, carers and colleagues, in turn improving the quality of care.
- establishes a fair way to select internationally trained health professionals.
- attracts candidates committed to excellence and professionalism.

## 1.4 Who recognises OET?

OET is recognised and trusted by regulatory healthcare boards and councils in Australia, New Zealand and Singapore.

Many organisations, including hospitals, universities and colleges, are using OET as proof of a candidate's ability to communicate effectively in a demanding healthcare environment.

### AUSTRALIA

- Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection (DIBP)

OET is recognised by the DIBP for almost all visa categories including skilled migration and student visas.

Please visit: [www.immi.gov.au](http://www.immi.gov.au) for more details.

- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)  
A national agency responsible for the registration of 14 health professions in Australia. The following AHPRA Boards accept OET as proof of English language proficiency for registration purposes:
  - Dental Board of Australia
  - Medical Board of Australia
  - Medical Radiation Practice Board of Australia
  - Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia
  - Occupational Therapy Board of Australia
  - Optometry Board of Australia
  - Pharmacy Board of Australia
  - Physiotherapy Board of Australia
  - Podiatry Board of Australia.
- Australasian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC)
- Australian and New Zealand Podiatry Accreditation Council (ANZPAC)
- Australian Dental Council (ADC)
- Australian Institute of Radiography (AIR)
- Australian Nursing and Midwifery Accreditation Council
- Australian Pharmacy Council
- Australian Physiotherapy Council (APC)
- Australian Veterinary Boards Council (AVBC)
- Dieticians Association of Australia (DAA)

- Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and NZ) (OTC)
- South Australian Medical Education and Training (SA MET) Health Advisory Council
- Speech Pathology Australia

#### NEW ZEALAND

- Australian & New Zealand Podiatry Accreditation Council (ANZPAC)
- Dental Council of New Zealand
- Medical Council of New Zealand (MCNZ)
- Midwifery Council of New Zealand
- New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA)
- Nursing Council of New Zealand
- Occupational Therapy Council (Australia and NZ) (OTC)
- Pharmacy Council of New Zealand
- Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand
- Podiatrists Board of New Zealand
- Veterinary Council of New Zealand

#### SINGAPORE

- Allied Health Professions Council
- Singapore Dental Council
- Singapore Medical Council
- Singapore Pharmacy Council

## 1.5 Reporting results

There are many aspects to being able to communicate in a language effectively. OET therefore has four sub-tests – Listening, Reading, Writing, and Speaking – to acknowledge that these involve different sub-skills and strategies.

Candidates receive a separate grade for each sub-test, ranging from A (highest) to E (lowest). There is no overall grade for OET.

Here are the descriptions for each grade that appear on the printed Statement of Results that candidates receive:

OET grade	Description of ability
A	Very high level of performance
B	High level of performance, i.e. able to use English with fluency and accuracy adequate for professional needs
C	Good level of performance; however, not acceptable to a range of health and medical councils
D	Moderate level of performance: requires improvement
E	Low level of performance: requires considerable improvement

Results are published on the website approximately 15 business days after the test. Candidates log in to a secure online profile to view them. Official Statements of Results are posted to the candidate's nominated address following the publication of results online.

#### Online Results Verification Service

We provide a free and secure online results verification service to help organisations and authorities to verify candidates' results.

The service provides access to a secure database through which candidates' results – across a period of three years – can be checked for authenticity. The site is securely encrypted and designed for use in high-stakes environments.

Find out more about OET assessment and results by visiting the OET website:

[www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

# Section 2: When and where the test is available and how to apply for OET

## 2.1. Test dates

Please refer to the following OET website for available test dates for your chosen profession before registering for the exam:  
[www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

## 2.2. Test venues

OET can be taken in many locations around the world, however, for various reasons the test is not offered at every venue on every date.

Please refer to the following OET website for available test dates in various locations throughout the year:  
[www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

If the minimum of candidates required are not met for a given venue, The OET Centre reserves the right to defer candidates to a mutually agreed venue and date.

## 2.3. Applying for OET

Applying for OET is done via the website. Please visit [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

CBLA will advise the venue or candidate on matters such as the test dates, test closing dates and test fees.

Candidate fees for OET are charged by CBLA for each candidate registered.

CBLA does not advise on textbooks or courses of study, or recommend teaching establishments. Where a venue is permitted to use OET branding, this only indicates that they are certified to administer OET. It does not indicate they are endorsed as a teaching establishment.

CBLA is committed to providing access to candidates with health-related and any other special needs. Requests for special requirements should be made via the “Help and Information” section of the OET website during the application process.

We endeavour to accommodate special requirements where reasonably possible.

Applications will not be accepted after the application closing date, which is published on the OET website.

# Section 3: Description of OET

## 3.1. Test format

OET assesses listening, reading, writing and speaking.

There is a separate sub-test for each skill area. The Listening and Reading sub-tests are designed to assess the ability to understand spoken and written English in contexts related to general health and medicine. The sub-tests for Listening and Reading are common to all professions.

The Writing and Speaking sub-tests are specific to each profession and are designed to assess the ability to use English appropriately in a relevant professional context.

## 3.2. The four components of OET

Paper (duration)	Content	Shows candidates can:
Listening (approx. 50 minutes)	2 tasks Common to all 12 professions	follow and understand a range of health-related spoken materials such as patient consultations and lectures.
Reading (60 minutes)	2 tasks Common to all 12 professions	read and understand different types of text on health-related subjects.
Writing (45 minutes)  Reading time: 5 minutes Writing time: 40 minutes	1 task Specific to each profession	write a letter in a clear and accurate way which is relevant for the reader.
Speaking (20 minutes)	2 tasks Specific to each profession	effectively communicate in a real-life context through the use of role-plays.

### LISTENING (approximately 50 minutes)

The Listening sub-test consists of two parts, with approximately 20-28 tasks.

The topics are of generic medical interest, accessible to candidates across all professions.

Each part consists of about 15 minutes of recorded speech, containing pauses to allow candidates time to write their answers.

Candidates will hear each recording once and are expected to write their answers while listening.

**Part A (approximately 20–25 minutes)** assesses candidates' ability to follow facts during a consultation between a health professional and a patient.

Candidates listen to a recorded health professional–patient consultation and complete a note-taking task, guided by relevant headings.

**Part B (approximately 20–25 minutes)** assesses candidates' ability to understand a short talk on a health-related topic that might realistically occur in the workplace.

Candidates listen to a recorded talk or lecture (monologue) by a health professional and complete a range of open-ended and fixed-choice tasks.

Tasks include:

- multiple-choice questions
- sentence completion
- short-answer questions
- summary completion
- lecture notes completion
- table/flow-chart/mind-map completion
- word replacement response
- matching responses

## READING (60 minutes)

The Reading sub-test consists of two parts:

Part A – summary task

Part B – multiple-choice questions.

The topics are of generic medical interest and are therefore accessible to candidates across all professions.

**Part A (15 minutes)** assesses candidates' ability to source information from multiple texts, to synthesise information in a meaningful way and to 'skim' and 'scan' material to retrieve information quickly. Candidates are required to read 3-4 short texts (a total of approximately 650 words) related to a single topic, and complete a summary paragraph by filling in the missing words (25-35 gaps in total).

**Part B (45 minutes)** assesses candidates' ability to read and understand comprehensive texts on health-related topics similar to those in academic or professional journals.

Candidates are required to read two passages (600-800 words each) and answer a set of multiple-choice questions (16-20 in total).

## WRITING (45 minutes)

The Writing sub-test is specific to each profession, based on a typical workplace situation and the demands of the profession.

Candidates are asked to write a letter (referral, transfer or advice) to another health professional, patient or client based on a set of clinical case notes. It must consist of approximately 180-200 words. The type of letter and audience is specific to each profession.

The letter must record treatment offered to date and the issues to be addressed by the health professional, patient or client, drawing selectively on the stimulus material presented in the case notes.

**Candidates are assessed against the following criteria:**

1. Overall task fulfilment
2. Appropriateness of language
3. Comprehension of stimulus
4. Linguistic features (grammar and cohesion)
5. Presentation features (spelling, punctuation and layout).

## SPEAKING (approximately 20 minutes)

The Speaking sub-test is specific to each profession, based on a typical workplace situation and the demands of the profession.

The test assesses candidates' ability to communicate in English, in a simulated health-related consultation.

It consists of two simulated consultations in the form of face-to-face role-plays between a patient and a health practitioner. The candidate takes the role of the practitioner and the interviewer plays the patient or patient's relative/carer (or for veterinary science, the animal's owner/carer).

**Candidates are assessed against the following criteria:**

1. Overall communicative effectiveness
2. Intelligibility
3. Fluency
4. Appropriateness
5. Resources of grammar and expression.



### 3.3. OET practice books and sample tests

#### OET practice books

OET practice books include sample past tests and a short study guide. The Listening books come with CDs.

Please find information about the OET official practice books at: [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

#### OET sample tests

We also offer free online sample tests for all professions. Please refer to the sample tests of all the four sub-tests at [www.occupationalenglishtest.org](http://www.occupationalenglishtest.org)

For the **Listening sub-test**, you can download the following materials:

- Sample Listening Test Booklet;
- Audio file of the sample Listening test;
- Transcripts;
- Detailed marking key.

For the **Reading sub-test**, you can download the following materials:

- Sample Reading Part A Text Booklet;
- Sample Reading Part A Answer Booklet;
- Sample Reading Part A answer key;
- Sample Reading Part B Test Booklet;
- Sample Reading Part B answer key.

For the **Writing sub-test**, you can download the following materials:

- Sample Writing test papers of the 12 professions;
- Sample answers of the Writing tasks.

For the **Speaking sub-test**, you can download the following materials:

- Sample Speaking role-play cards of the 12 professions;
- Audio file of a sample Speaking role-play.

# Section 4: Assessment of OET

## 4.1. Assessment information

This section includes key assessment information about:

- How each sub-test is marked.
- How the reporting results are generated.
- How OET results are issued.

### HOW IS EACH SUB-TEST MARKED?

Each of the four sub-tests is assessed in a specific way.

#### How is the Listening sub-test assessed?

The Listening sub-test is marked by fully trained assessors who follow a detailed marking guide prepared by the test designers.

This sets out which answers are given marks and how the marks are counted. Assessors use the guide to decide for each question whether the candidate has provided enough correct information to be given the mark(s) available.

#### How is the Reading sub-test assessed?

The Reading sub-test Part A is marked by fully trained assessors who follow a detailed marking guide prepared by the test designers.

This sets out which answers are given marks and how the marks are counted. Assessors use the guide to decide for each question whether the candidate has provided enough correct information to be given the mark(s) available.

The answer sheet of the Reading sub-test Part B is computer marked.

#### How is the Writing sub-test assessed?

The Writing sub-test is scored by experienced assessors who receive ongoing training, monitoring and feedback on their performance after each administration of the test.

Assessors give a score from 1 to 6 for each of the five criteria listed on page 10, using a detailed set of level descriptors to guide their decisions. A score of 6 is the highest for each criterion. The five criteria are equally weighted in the scoring and analysis process.

Each candidate's script is graded by two assessors independently. Neither assessor knows the scores the other assessor gives or the scores awarded to the candidate for other sub-tests.

The two separate sets of raw scores for each candidate's script are analysed for the whole group of candidates taking the sub-test at the same administration. A multi-faceted Rasch analysis of the data is done using FACETS software (Linacre 2010). This analysis takes account of patterns of assessor behaviour and compensates for assessors whose scores are consistently lenient or severe.

After the initial analysis, any scripts which have misfitting scores (i.e. which do not fit the pattern expected for the analysis) are re-scored by a third assessor (again without any knowledge of the previous scores given) and the statistical analysis is repeated.

The final score for each candidate's script is therefore not a mean average of the two (or three) assessors' raw scores. Instead, it is a 'fair score', compensating for particular assessors' severity or leniency.

#### How is the Speaking sub-test assessed?

The Speaking sub-test is scored by experienced assessors who receive ongoing training, monitoring and feedback on their performance after each administration of the test.

Assessors listen to the audio recording of each interview and give a score from 1 to 6 for each of the five criteria listed on page 10, using a detailed set of level descriptors to guide their decisions. A score of 6 is the highest for each criterion. The assessor gives a set of five scores for each role-play and then decides on a final set of five scores for the overall performance across the two role-plays. The five criteria are equally weighted in the scoring and analysis process.

Each candidate's recording is graded by two assessors independently. Neither assessor knows the scores the other assessor gives or the scores awarded to the candidate for other sub-tests.