

AASW English Language Policy

MIGRATION ELIGIBILITY AND ASSESSMENT

1. Background

English language proficiency is essential for respectful, effective and safe social work practice in Australia.

AASW REQUIREMENTS MAY BE DIFFERENT TO DEPARTMENT OF HOME AFFAIRS REQUIREMENTS

The Department of Home Affairs sets the English language requirements for migration and visa purposes in Australia. The AASW sets the English language requirements for professional social work practice in Australia. Given that social work is a communication-based profession, it is essential that social workers have a high level of English language proficiency, which is why the AASW's English language requirements are higher than the Department of Home Affairs' requirements in some instances.

FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS COMPLETING AASW ACCREDITED COURSES

Higher Education Providers (HEP) set the English language entry requirements for social work education in Australia. The AASW sets the English language requirements for professional social work practice in Australia. It is important to note that the AASW's English language requirements for practice in Australia may be higher than some HEP entry requirements. All international graduates of AASW accredited courses will be required to meet the AASW English language requirements for migration purposes.

FOR GRADUATES OF INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL WORK QUALIFICATIONS

To live and work in Australia, applicants are required to evidence English language proficiency for both migration and/or eligibility for AASW membership for employment purposes.

2. AASW English language skills standard

All applicants applying for an AASW assessment for migration and/or employment purposes must demonstrate English language proficiency. This requires:

OPTION 1: A minimum overall score of 7.0 achieved in one sitting of the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic test;

Where the policy requirements are met in **one sitting**, a minimum score of 7.0 must be achieved in all four components.

For example:

- IELTS Academic Test: Writing 7.5, Reading 7.0, Speaking 7.5, Listening 7.0

or

OPTION 2: A minimum score of 7.0 in each of the four components (listening, reading, writing and speaking), achieved in a maximum of two sittings in a six (6) month period; and no component score is below 6.5;

Applicants may demonstrate English language proficiency in two IELTS Academic test sittings completed within a six-month period, provided that:

- a minimum score of 7.0 is achieved in each component across the two sittings, and
- no individual component score is below 6.5. Any component score below 6.5 will render the test results unacceptable.

For example:

- Test 1: Writing 6.5, **Reading 7.0**, Speaking 6.5, **Listening 7.0**
- Test 2: **Writing 7.0**, Reading 6.5, **Speaking 8.0**, Listening 6.5

The bolded scores demonstrate how the minimum requirement of 7.0 in each component can be met across two sittings.

or

OPTION 3: One test sitting of the IELTS Academic Test with a minimum score of 7.0 in three of the four components of the test **AND** the inclusion of one IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test. Where the component score did not achieve the minimum score of 7.0 it must not be below 6.5. The IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test must achieve a minimum score of 7.0 in the retaken component.

Eligibility for IELTS One Skill Retake occurs when applicants have **completed a full [IELTS on computer](#)** test at an eligible test centre, and they have received their IELTS test score. The IELTS One Skill Retake must be taken within 60 days of the original test date.

Applicants may demonstrate English language proficiency in one IELTS Academic test sitting and one IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test provided that:

- a minimum score of 7.0 is achieved in three of the four components in the first sitting and the IELTS Academic One Skill Retake is undertaken to achieve a minimum score of 7.0 in the retaken component,
- no individual component score is below 6.5 in the first IELTS Academic Test sitting,
- the IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test is within 60 days of the original test date, and
- applicants have completed a full [IELTS on computer](#) test at an eligible test centre and have received their IELTS score.

For example:

- IELTS Academic Test: **Writing 6.5**, Reading 7.0, Speaking 7.5, Listening 7.0
- One Skill Retake: **Writing 7.0**

The bolded scores indicate the component requiring a IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test to ensure successful demonstration of the minimum required scores across all four components of English language proficiency.

Parameters:

- test results must be obtained within three (3) years prior to submitting an AASW qualification assessment.
- where Option 3 applies, applicants must have obtained their IELTS Academic One Skill Retake test within 12 months of the date of their AASW Migration Eligibility and Assessment (MEA) application.
- these requirements may be waived where applicants have met the educational requirements for English language proficiency. See Exemptions below.

3. Exemption ground

The AASW may grant an exemption from the requirements where the applicant provides evidence that they:

- completed all secondary education (Years 7 to 12), that was taught and assessed in English, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America,
AND;
- successfully completed (with a pass grade or higher) the equivalent of three years or more full-time tertiary study (at Bachelor Degree level or higher), that was taught and assessed in English, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America.

Applicants can evidence this with the following:

- Submission of all secondary education (high school Years 7 to 12) results
- A letter from your secondary school or the relevant department of education in the country of study which states that your secondary education was successfully completed and were taught and assessed in the English language,
- Submission of tertiary results evidencing that you successfully completed and were taught and assessed in the English language.
- Where secondary and/or tertiary results cannot be supplied, a Statutory Declaration certifying that your secondary education was successfully completed, taught and assessed in the English language may also be acceptable. This must include name of school/s, years studied and country in which studied.

If you have not completed your secondary and tertiary education (years 7 to 12) in English, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America, you will not be exempt from sitting an IELTS Academic test.

The AASW reserves the right to ask an applicant to take the Academic IELTS examination if there is uncertainty about their level of English proficiency.

4. English language tests accepted by the AASW

Currently the AASW only accepts the Academic IELTS test and IELTS One Skill Retake Test.

Our policy is aligned with industry and health professions' standards. We regularly monitor industry standards and review our policy as required.

5. Evidence of English language proficiency

Applicants may demonstrate/ evidence English language proficiency in the following ways:

- submission of certified Academic IELTS test results which apply to Options 1, 2 or 3 outlined on Page 1, **or**

If eligible for the exemption ground above:

- submission of certified copies of all secondary/high school results (Years 7 to 12), or
- a letter from your secondary school or the relevant department of education in the country of study which states that all your secondary education (Year 7 to 12) was completed, taught and assessed in the English language, and

- submission of certified copies of tertiary results evidencing that they were successfully completed, taught and assessed in the English language.

Where certified copies of secondary and/or tertiary results cannot be supplied, a Statutory Declaration certifying that the education was successfully completed, taught and assessed in the English language may also be acceptable, include name of school/s, years studied and country in which studied.

If you have not completed your secondary and tertiary education (years 7 to 12) in English, in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Republic of Ireland, South Africa, United Kingdom or United States of America, you will not be exempt from sitting an IELTS Academic test.

For more information please read our [frequently asked questions](#) page.

6. More information about English language test requirements

Applicants may take the Academic IELTS test as many times as required to achieve the required scores. The IELTS One Skill Retake Test can only be taken once according to IDP Policy. However, submissions must be in accordance with Options 1, 2 or 3 outlined on Page 1. Applicants are responsible for the cost of the IELTS test/s.

The AASW advises applicants to contact IELTS (www.ielts.org) for further information regarding Academic IELTS tests and IELTS One Skill Retake Test, test times, test centre locations and costs associated with undertaking the test.

NB. Please only attach your IELTS Academic test results and IELTS One Skill Retake Test result where appropriate, to your AASW MEA application online.

7. General information

The AASW reserves the right to verify any information submitted, interview any applicant and their education provider, employer or referee, or request further English language testing, if the AASW has concerns in relation to the applicant's capacity to communicate at an effective level using the English language.

Effective as of 20 May 2026.