

**Health Professions Council  
Standards of proficiency for Applied Psychologists  
Professional Liaison Group (PLG)  
4<sup>th</sup> September 2007**

**Applied Psychologists – International English Language Testing  
System (IELTS) requirements**

**Executive Summary and Recommendations**

**Introduction**

The attached paper sets out the background to English language requirements for applicants via the international route to registration for whom English is not their first language.

**Decision**

The group is invited to discuss the attached paper and make recommendations.

It is proposed that a specific question should be asked on an appropriate level of language competence during the public consultation.

**Background information**

None

**Resource implications**

None

**Financial implications**

None

**Appendices**

None

**Date of paper**

21<sup>st</sup> August 2007

# Applied Psychologists – International English Language Testing System (IELTS)

## Introduction

This paper looks briefly at requirements amongst the existing professions for English language competence, and invites discussion on appropriate requirements for the applied psychologists' part of the Register.

## Mutual recognition rights and language testing

Under European legislation, applications from applicants with 'mutual recognition' rights are treated differently compared to those from applicants from outside of the European Economic Area (EEA).

In order to obtain mutual recognition rights, an applicant has to be a national of a country within the EEA and have the right to practise in an EEA country. We assess the applications of such applicants in the same way as other applications. However, if we find that there is a shortfall between the applicant's education and experience and the standards required for registration, we are able to ask them to undertake a 'period of adaptation' to make up this shortfall. A period of adaptation is a period of supervised practice and/or academic training which allows an EEA applicant to reach the standard required to be registered with us.

Under the legislation, HPC is unable to require EEA applicants exercising mutual recognition rights to undergo a language test (except for applicants for speech and language therapy, please see below). Additionally, HPC is unable to language test other applicants for whom English is their first language

## Language testing

HPC is able to require evidence of language proficiency from international applicants who do not have mutual recognition rights under European Legislation and for whom English is not their first language.

HPC currently requires applicants to achieve an overall score in the academic test of the International Language Testing System (IELTS) of at least 7.0, with no element below 6.5. A number of other tests are also approved at levels equivalent to the IELTS.

This requirement, however, is higher for speech and language therapists. The rationale behind this is that communication is a core professional skill for this profession. As such, for this profession, the Council is able to require both EEA and non-EEA applicants to undergo this test.

## **The standards of proficiency and language testing**

HPC's requirements for English language proficiency are included in the standards of proficiency:

### **For speech and language therapists**

2b.4 (Profession-specific)

- be able, as a core professional skill for speech and language therapists, to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 8 of the International English Language Testing System, with no element below 7.5

### **For all other professions**

1b.4 (Generic)

- be able to communicate in English to the standard equivalent to level 7 of the International English Language Testing System with no element below 6.5

### **English language requirements of other regulators**

The follow is sample of the English language testing requirements of other regulatory bodies.

N.B: The test scores given below all relate to the academic rather than the general IELTS test.

- **Pharmacists:** The Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain (RPSGB) require a minimum score of 7 in each part of the parts of IETLS.
- **Doctors:** The General Medical Council (GMC) requires 7.0 as an overall score on the IELTS test, a minimum score of 7.0 in the speaking section and 6.0 in each of the other sections (listening, academic reading and academic writing).
- **Dentists:** The General Dental Council (GDC) requires an overall score of at least 7.0, with no section below 6.5.
- **Nurses:** The Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC) requires an overall score of at least 7.0 with at least 7.0 in the writing and speaking sections.

### **Applied Psychologists – proposals in 2005**

In the Department of Health (England and Wales) consultation document of 2005, the Department said:

*“Applicants outside the EEA will need to supply an International English Language Testing System (IELTS) certificate where English is not the first language. The HPC currently requires an IELTS score of 7 for most of its applicant registrants. Level 8 is*

*required for speech and language therapists and it is proposed that this would also be required for applied psychologists.”<sup>1</sup>*

In its response to the consultation, HPC said:

*“The HPC does not agree that the Test of English for non-EEA Applied Psychologist applicants should be IELTS level 8 or its equivalent. It is the view of the Council that it should be 7.0, the same level as for other HPC regulated professions. The only profession which currently requires a higher level of English proficiency is speech and language therapy, for which the English language is a core professional skill.”<sup>2</sup>*

In their response to the consultation, the British Psychological Society (BPS) said:

*“With respect to English language proficiency we agree that Level 8 is required for applied psychologists. We were both amazed and concerned to see the HPC has proposed Level 7 in its response. We consider this indicates a very worrying lack of appreciation of the work of applied psychologists where verbal communication, and its subtleties, are absolutely central to practice.”<sup>3</sup>*

## **Conclusions**

The PLG is invited to discuss the appropriate level of language proficiency requirements for applied psychologists and to make recommendations.

In particular, if the group is minded to recommend an IELTS requirement equivalent to that for speech and language therapists, the group is requested to provide a clear rationale as to why this level is necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Health, Applied Psychology: Enhancing public protection: Proposals for the statutory regulation of applied psychologists (March, 2005), p.17.

[http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/ClosedConsultations/ClosedConsultationsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT\\_ID=4112787&chk=3FLGIU](http://www.dh.gov.uk/Consultations/ClosedConsultations/ClosedConsultationsArticle/fs/en?CONTENT_ID=4112787&chk=3FLGIU)

<sup>2</sup> Health Professions Council, Response to ‘Applied Psychology: Enhancing public protection: Proposals for the statutory regulation of applied psychologists’ (June 2005), p.10.

[http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100007B4Consultation\\_Applied\\_Psychology\\_HPC\\_response.pdf](http://www.hpc-uk.org/assets/documents/100007B4Consultation_Applied_Psychology_HPC_response.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> British Psychology Society, Response of the British Psychological Society to ‘Applied Psychology: Enhancing Public Protection: Proposals for the Statutory Regulation of Applied Psychologists’ (June 2005), p.10.

[http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download\\$.cfm?file\\_uuid=56265DB2-1143-DFD0-7E39-39D2334B8AD0&ext=pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download$.cfm?file_uuid=56265DB2-1143-DFD0-7E39-39D2334B8AD0&ext=pdf)