



National Association
of Pharmacy
Regulatory Authorities

Association nationale
des organismes de réglementation
de la pharmacie

LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS FOR LICENSURE AS A PHARMACIST IN CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

Language proficiency is an essential skill required of all pharmacists in the day to day practice of pharmacy in Canada. This has been recognized in the *Mutual Recognition Agreement for the Profession of Pharmacy in Canada*, where Signatories agree to license pharmacists from other Signatory jurisdictions based on recognition of common competencies. Although language proficiency does not guarantee that effective communication will take place, it is the foundation for reading, speaking, listening/comprehension, and writing skills – all components of communication. A pharmacist’s ability to communicate is critical in the delivery of safe and effective patient care.

The primary intent of this report is to publish model language proficiency standards for consideration by pharmacy regulators across Canada to use in the licensure of pharmacists.

It must be noted that all provinces have regulations set by the provincial governments regarding language requirements for professions. Pharmacists must meet these respective requirements in order to practice in the province for which they are licensed.

Initial standards for English and French were published in 1999. English standards were revised in 2006 (based on new developments in language testing). The current standards were approved by the NAPRA Board of Directors on November 12, 2006 based on the recommendation of NAPRA’s National Advisory Committee on Licensing.

METHOD

The procedures used for standard setting are those conventionally recommended for professional organizations to establish minimally acceptable performance standards on tests for certification or credentialing purposes. This involves analytic judgments by appropriately qualified panelists on benchmark samples of examinees’ performances on tasks from each test under the guidance of a facilitator knowledgeable about language assessment.

PRINCIPLES

1. All applicants who have received an accredited Canadian or American university degree in Pharmacy will not be required to undergo further testing unless a “trigger” suggests that a test for language proficiency is necessary.
2. Language proficiency standards are to be applied on entry to practical training. Application at this time (rather than at the point of licensure) supports public protection and enables the candidate to derive the expected educational benefits

from the program, while at the same time allows for language proficiency to improve through the program's emphasis on communication, prior to licensure.

3. Prior language proficiency test results should be accepted by the pharmacy regulatory authority as valid if completed within two years prior to commencement of practical training.
4. These national model proficiency standards will be reviewed by NAPRA every two years to maintain their currency.

TRIGGERS

1. A pharmacist, who has been recognized as a preceptor by a Provincial or Territorial Regulatory Authority, identifies a candidate who has demonstrated less than adequate language proficiency. This perceived inadequacy must be confirmed through an appropriate process approved by the Provincial or Territorial Regulatory Authority.
2. A complaint is received by the University or Provincial or Territorial Regulatory Authority from a customer, patient or health professional about the candidate concerning a lack of language proficiency skills. The alleged deficiency in communication must be confirmed through an appropriate process approved by the Provincial or Territorial Regulatory Authority.

ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS

Test	Details		Minimum Score
1. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)	Internet-based test (iBT)	Speaking	27
		Writing	25
		Reading	-
		Listening	-
		Total	97
2. TOEFL	Computer-based test (CBT)	Writing	26
		Test of Spoken English (TSE)	50
		Total	237
	Paper-based test (PBT)	Test of Written English (TWE)	5
		Test of Spoken English (TSE)	50
		Total	580
3. Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)	Written composition		82
	Listening comprehension		-
	Grammar, cloze, reading, vocabulary, comprehension		-
	Oral component		3+
	Total		85
4. International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	Academic format	Speaking	6
		Writing	6
		Reading	6
		Listening	6
		Overall Band	7
5. The Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST)		Speaking	4.5
		Writing	4.5
		Reading	4.5
		Listening	4.5

Additional information about the tests can be accessed via the following weblinks:

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and Test of Spoken English (TSE):
<http://www.ets.org/portal/site/ets/menuitem.3a88fea28f42ada7c6ce5a10c3921509/?vgnextoid=85b65784623f4010VgnVCM10000022f95190RCRD>

Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB):
<http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/testing/melab/>

International English Language Testing System (IELTS):
<http://www.ielts.org/default.aspx>

The Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST)
<http://www.cantest.uottawa.ca/>

FRENCH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS

1. A minimum score of 5 in each of four testing categories for the Test pour étudiants et stagiaires au Canada (TESTcan), or
2. Tests approved by the Quebec government, as per the Charter of the French language. For more information see:
http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/english/regulations/reg_knowledge.html

Candidates seeking licensure in Quebec should note that Article 35 of the Charter of the French Language (R.S.Q.c.C-11) regulations requires:

1. no less than three years of full time secondary or post-secondary instruction in French;
2. successful completion of the fourth or fifth year secondary level examinations in French as the first language; or
3. a secondary school certificate in Quebec, from and after the school year 1985-86

In all other cases, candidates must obtain a certificate issued by the *Office de la langue française* or hold a certificate defined as equivalent by regulation of the Government.