

Language Proficiency Requirements for Licensure as a Pharmacist in Canada



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.

Approved by the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities' (NAPRA) Board of Directors November 2006, amended June 2014.

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The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA)
220 Laurier Avenue West, Suite 750, Ottawa, ON K1P 5Z9
E-mail: info@napra.ca | Telephone: (613) 569-9658 | Fax (613) 569-9659

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* (renamed the *Mobility Agreement for Canadian Pharmacists* in 2009), 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. Amendments were made to the document in 2014 to reflect the removal of one of the test options (TOEFL Computer-based test), to update the reference related to the French requirements and to include the accepted Standard Error of Measurement (SEM) for each test for greater clarity.

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

Triggers include, but are not limited to:

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	SEM** + / -
1. Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL)	Internet-based test (iBT)	Speaking	27	2
		Writing	25	3
		Reading	*	
		Listening	*	
		Total	97	5
	Paper-based test (PBT)	Test of Written English (TWE)	5	0.3
		Test of Spoken English (TSE)	50	
		Total	580	14
	Computer-based test (CBT) [†]	-	-	-
2. Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB)	Speaking		3+	
	Writing		82	3
	Reading		*	
	Listening		*	
	Total		85	3
3. International English Language Testing System (IELTS)	Academic format	Speaking	6	0.5
		Writing	6	0.5
		Reading	6	
		Listening	6	
		Overall Band	7	0.5
4. The Canadian Test of English for Scholars and Trainees (CanTEST)		Speaking	4.5	X***
		Writing	4.5	X***
		Reading	4.5	X***
		Listening	4.5	X***
		Total	X***	X***

[†] TOEFL Computer-based Test is no longer administered. CBT scores more than two years old are not current/accepted.

* Standard setting procedures only focused on the writing and speaking components. The minimum total scores implicitly account for the scores for reading and listening.

** SEM = Standard Error of Measurement

*** All final band scores on the CanTEST, account already for the SEM. CanTEST does not report total scores.

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/>

Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB):

<http://www.CambridgeMichigan.org/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 Québec government, as per the Charter of the French language. For more information see http://www.oqlf.gouv.qc.ca/francisation/ordres_prof/documents/FAQ.pdf

Candidates seeking licensure in Québec should also 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 Québec, 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.