

Assessment of Competency to Practise as a Speech Pathologist in Australia

Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)
Guide for Applicants



Speech
Pathology
Australia



1/114 William Street,
Melbourne, Australia 3000
1300 368 835
www.speechpathologyaustralia.org.au

Assessment of Competency to Practise as a Speech Pathologist in Australia
Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) - Guide for applicants 2020

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About this guide

The Guide explains the role of Speech Pathology Australia in the assessment of your application to practise as a speech pathologist in Australia, and:

- The two types of applications for the overseas trained speech pathologist.
- The importance of a high level of competence in professional use of the English language.
- How your application should be presented and what information it must contain.
- The costs of making an application, and
- How your application will be assessed

This Guide is designed to be used with the following documents which are all available on the Speech Pathology Australia website. They are essential reading for the preparation of your application.

Competency Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists – Entry Level (2011, revised 2017)

The Mutual Recognition Agreement Application Form. This Guide is designed to be read with the application form

The Speech Pathology Australia Dysphagia Clinical Guidelines

Speech Pathology Code of Ethics

McAllister, S., Lincoln, M., Ferguson, A. & McAllister, L. (2013) (2nd ed) COMPASS® Competency assessment in speech pathology assessment resources manual excerpt professional competencies. Melbourne: Speech Pathology Australia

1. The role of Speech Pathology Australia

Speech pathologists in Australia are university educated allied health professionals with expertise in the assessment and treatment of communication and/or swallowing difficulties.

Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) is the national peak body for the speech pathology profession in Australia. Speech Pathology Australia:

- Sets the professional standards for the practice of speech pathology in Australia.
- Accredits the university courses which educate speech pathologists in Australia.
- Is the assessing authority for speech pathologists applying for skilled migration to Australia.
- Assesses applications from any person with an overseas qualification who wishes to practice as a speech pathologist in Australia.

The minimum skills, knowledge base and attitudes required for entry-level practice of speech pathology in Australia are set out in the Competency-Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists Entry-Level (2011, revised 2017). This document is also referred to as the CBOS. These standards are applied against the purposes listed above.

Speech pathologists who are assessed as meeting the professional standards of Speech Pathology Australia will be eligible for Certified Practising Membership of Speech Pathology Australia.

1.1 Certified practising membership

Most employers in Australia will require you to be eligible for Certified Practising Membership of Speech Pathology Australia. However, achieving eligibility for Certified Practising membership does not automatically entitle you to employment and is not a job offer.

Eligibility for Certified Practising Membership does not ensure that your application to migrate to Australia will be successful. Approval for migration is the responsibility of the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs: www.homeaffairs.gov.au

If your application for Speech Pathology Australia membership is approved, you will remain eligible for certified practising membership for two (2) years from the date of approval. During that time, you can use the assessment for the purposes of migration or to join Speech Pathology Australia. You must also commence practice in Australia as a speech pathologist. Your eligibility for Certified Practising membership will expire at the end of the two-year period unless you are able to provide additional evidence to show that you should remain eligible to practice.

2.Types of application

There are two types of application. Ensure you select the most appropriate option.

2.1 Application under the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)

Make this application if you are a current member of:

- The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, (ASHA), USA.
- Speech-Language & Audiology Canada, (SAC), Canada
- The Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT), Ireland.
- The New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association (NZSTA), New Zealand.
- The Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists, (RCSLT), United Kingdom.

You must be a Full Member of IASLT and NZSTA to apply via the MRA. Detailed information is provided in the 'Guide for Applications under the Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)'

Eligibility to apply under the MRA is subject to the applicant completing their speech pathology qualification in the country signatory to the MRA.

2.2 Application for Overseas Qualification Competency assessment (OSQCA)

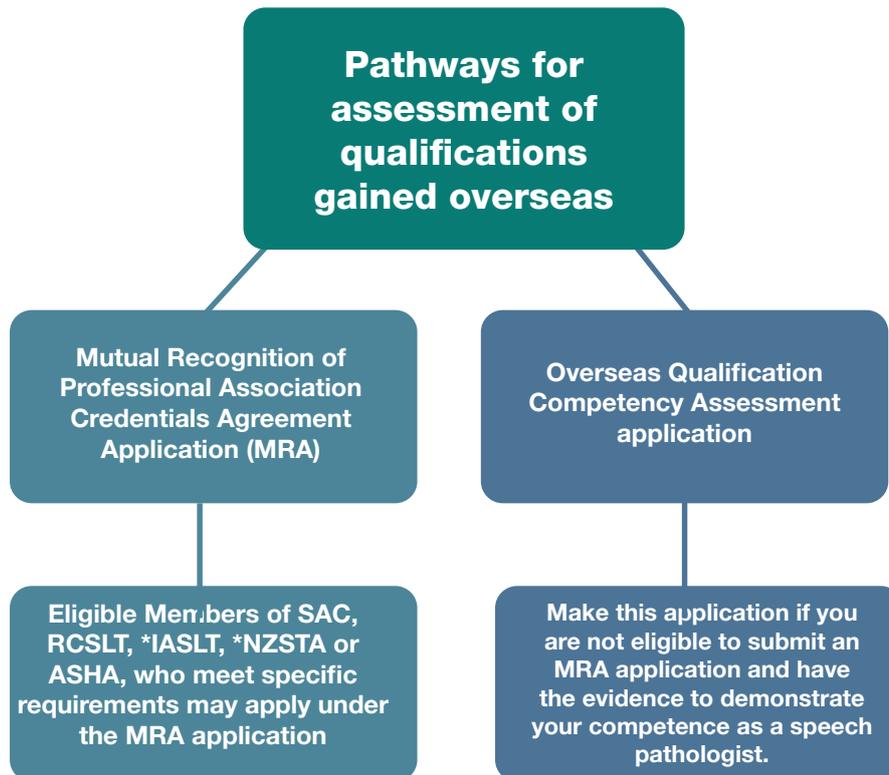
Make this application if you are not eligible to apply under the MRA and if you have evidence to demonstrate your competence to practice as a speech pathologist in Australia. You should also be confident that you are applying to the correct profession.

The **Overseas Qualification Competency Assessment** process assumes you have experience working as a speech pathologist. Individuals must demonstrate that they have worked for a minimum of 1000 hours or approximately 12 months to be eligible to apply. Evidence from student work will not be accepted on its own.

It is strongly recommended that you submit your application from your home country as it is easier to obtain further evidence to support your application if requested.

Detailed information is provided in the Overseas qualification competency assessment - Guide for applicants.

*You must be a Full Member of your home MRA association to submit an application under the MRA.



*You must be a Full Member of your home MRA association to submit an application under the MRA

3. The Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA) assessment

To be eligible to apply under the Mutual Recognition Agreement you must hold certification from or have membership of one of the signatory MRA Associations. You must also have completed your professional education to become a speech pathologist in a country that is signatory to the MRA Agreement as below:

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) – Certificate of Clinical Competence– Speech-Language Pathology (CCC-SLP)

Speech-Language & Audiology Canada (SAC) – Certified Speech-Language Pathologist (S-LP(C))

Royal College of Speech & Language Therapists (RCSLT) – Certified Member (Cert MRCSLT)

Irish Association of Speech and Language Therapists (IASLT) – Full Member

New Zealand Speech-Language Therapists' Association (NZSTA) – Full Member (with the exception of those who graduated before 1993, who are not eligible to apply under this agreement).

*You must be a Full Member of NZSLT and IASLT to submit an MRA application

3.1 English language competence

Many languages other than English are used in Australia. Speech Pathology Australia is keen to increase the number of languages in which competent clinical practice is available, but this does not replace or remove the requirement for competent professional use of English. Speech pathologists in Australia need to work with English as the vehicle of communication and as the focus of assessment and treatment.

Applicants are exempt from providing evidence of the Occupational English Test (OET) if they hold an entry level speech pathology qualification conducted in English from a university in the United Kingdom, Canada, New Zealand, United States of America, or the Republic of Ireland.

If any aspect of your application raises concerns about your English language competence, you will be asked for additional information about your competence in English or directed to complete the OET, even if you indicated that your dominant language is English.

All other applicants will need to provide evidence of successfully completing the OET.

Your English language skills must remain current during the application period (which can take up to two years if your portfolio is not acceptable). You may be asked to provide evidence of the maintenance of your English language competence.

3.1.1 Occupational English Test (OET) requirements

The OET provides a global evaluation of the applicant's ability to use English in professionally relevant reading, writing, listening and speaking tasks. It also considers features such as naturalness and general effectiveness.

Speech Pathology Australia requires a 'superior' English level, with at least three subtest results in the Band 450 – 500 and 1 subtest result in the Band 350 – 440 (listening or reading subtests only) or with OET results achieved prior to September 2018 at least three As and one B (listening or reading subtests only).

- You must achieve the OET requirements before submitting your application.
- OET results must be available through the OET website on the date of your application. The results must be no more than 6 months old at the date of submission.
- You may have no more than two attempts at the OET in six months. You must be tested on all four components in each sitting.
- Your application will not be accepted if you have NOT achieved the required OET results.

You will be responsible for meeting the cost of sitting the OET.

Further information regarding the OET may be found online.

3.1.2 English language competence for skilled migration

The requirements for Skilled Migration visas are DIFFERENT to the requirements for Certified Practising Membership of Speech Pathology Australia. The Department of Home Affairs requires demonstration of 'competent' English. A higher level of English language competence is required for the practice of speech pathology in Australia.

Applicants who hold a valid passport from, are citizens of, and trained in, one of the countries listed below automatically satisfy the English language requirements for skilled migration and will not be required to complete the OET unless there are aspects of your application raising concerns about English language competence.

- United Kingdom (UK)
- Canada
- New Zealand
- United States of America (USA)
- Republic of Ireland

For further information concerning skilled migration refer to the Department of Home Affairs.

4. What to include in your MRA application

The completed application form.

- Your application will not be processed if each item relevant to you is not completed.
- The documents which support your application. Each copy of an original document should be certified or notarized as a true copy and, if necessary, translated in accordance with the instructions on the application form.
- The Additional Requirements specified for members of your Home Association.
- Your payment.

All of the documentation and portfolio evidence that you provide will be checked for fraudulent representation. Any evidence of fraud or plagiarism will result in refusal to process your evidence and your application will not succeed.

5. Letter of good standing

This is required of all applicants. You need to request it from your Home Association. They will provide it directly to Speech Pathology Australia in response to your request. The letter must:

- Be sent directly from your Home Association to Speech Pathology Australia.
- Be dated no more than six months prior to the date of your application.
- Be signed by a recognised signatory of the Association.
- Be on official letterhead.
- Contain confirmation of your certification with your Home Association.
- Contain confirmation that no breach of the Association's Code/Canon of Ethics has been upheld against you.

You will be required to submit a new Letter of Good Standing if it is dated greater than 6 months at the time of completion of all tasks in your application.

6. Additional requirements

Additional requirements apply to applicants from specific Home Associations. These are listed on the application form.

6.1 Definition of speech pathology practice

Speech pathology practice is defined as engagement in activities of speech pathology as a practitioner, administrator, manager, educator, researcher or any combination of these. Practising speech pathologists generally receive remuneration. Practice within Australia or overseas in formal volunteer programs may also be recognised.

- Direct client-related activities including work with the client and/or the client's significant others (e.g. parent, spouse, carer, medical practitioner, teacher).
- Activities without direct client contact which support service to the client, such as report writing, session preparation and the maintenance of the practice. These should not be in excess of 50% of hours counted. Travel time which is directly related to client contact or practice maintenance (e.g. a home visit or school visit, collection of work material for the client) is countable. Travel to and from your place of work is not countable.

- Attendance at professional development related to speech pathology practice including: attendance at workshops or conferences, independent study, mentoring, formal study. Travel for professional development is not countable.
- Administration or management which involves significant clinical supervision of speech pathologists and the management of speech pathology service delivery, and/or where the position is significantly in and/or related to speech pathology.
- Education and research in discipline-specific or inter-professional teaching and research settings where the position is significantly in and/or related to speech pathology.

6.2 Acceptable evidence of hours of speech pathology practice

If you are an employee, an outline of the 'practising' hours, along with a position description showing hours of employment, letter from employer, statutory declaration or similar documentation;

If you are not an employee (for example if you work in private practice), a statutory declaration which outlines the 'practising' hours and attests to meeting them supported by other documentation i.e. information from an accountant

If you are engaged in a recognised voluntary capacity, a statutory declaration which outlines the nature of the position, the 'practising' hours and attests to meeting them.

(A statutory declaration is a written statement which you sign and declare to be true before an authorised witness i.e. a person on the list of authorised witnesses in the current Statutory Declarations Regulations or the equivalent in your country)

6.3 The evidence in your portfolio

Select evidence for your portfolio which will show that the skills and knowledge you have achieved through your professional education, your continuing professional development and your experience are equivalent to the Australian CBOS (2011, revised 2017). A comprehensive understanding of the CBOS document is essential for the preparation of your portfolio.

6.3.1 CBOS Overview

SPA prescribes the Competency Based Occupational Standards for Speech Pathologists – Entry level (CBOS 2011, revised 2017) as the minimum standards of competency required for practice of speech pathology in Australia.

CBOS specifies the competencies needed to work in the areas of speech, language, voice, fluency, swallowing and multi-modal communication with both adults and children, and with both developmental and acquired disorders. CBOS also specifies the general principles of practice that guide work practices and decision-making by speech pathologists.

Each item of evidence may be cross-referenced and used to document more than one area of the CBOS. For example:

- A session plan could provide evidence for Planning evidence-based intervention (CBOS Unit 3), for the interpretation of the assessment (CBOS Unit 2) and for evidence-based practice (Range of Practice Principle).

A full case study might provide evidence for CBOS Units 1, 2, 3 and 4

Applicants are encouraged to consider transferability of skills and knowledge of speech pathology competency across populations in the development of evidence. For example, an item of evidence may have a focus on paediatrics you may wish to

discuss how you would transfer this knowledge to working with adults. Discuss your clinical practice with respect to the current evidence-based literature.

6.3.2 Quality and quantity of evidence

The quality of your evidence is critical. Quality is more important than quantity. Quality evidence demonstrates integration of skills and knowledge rather than discrete skills.

Consider what each item of evidence reveals to the Professional Recognition Panel and what they will conclude about your competence. You **MUST** include a rationale for why you have selected the chosen evidence. Evidence items without a rationale will not be assessed.

Assessment and treatment plans require goals to be explicitly stated. Goals need to be specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time bound.

Examples of acceptable evidence:

- Acceptable evidence would include a thorough assessment, analysis and interpretation of the data, accompanied by planning and implementation of the intervention for the same client. Evidence such as this, would cover CBOS Units 1 to 4 and would refer to the ICF and EBP.
- All items of evidence explain how each item demonstrates your competence. It is likely that you will need supplementary information to support your decisions and conclusions, such as a copy of raw assessment scores to confirm your interpretation of assessment results and your diagnosis, your rationale for an assessment or intervention technique based on evidence-based practice, a reflection on your learnings following attendance at a seminar or conference.
- If you undertake a continuing professional development activity, prepare a reflection indicating what you learned. Certificates of Attendance or notes from a professional development activity alone do NOT demonstrate your competence.

Examples of poor quality evidence:

- Copies of assessment data with no interpretation or conclusions without provision of raw data.
- Notes compiled at a professional development activity without reflection on learning.
- Assessment reports or therapy plans with no justification or rationale for your decision making and without reference to the current literature.

6.4 Entry level competence in dysphagia

In the Australian context, speech pathologists who have entry level skills and knowledge can work independently with non-complex dysphagia clients of any age. Entry level competence in dysphagia is comprehensively outlined in the current Speech Pathology Australia Dysphagia Clinical Guideline. This guideline is available on the website.

Full competence in areas of complex clinical practice is not expected.

Be aware of requirements in Australia to detail oro-motor assessment, including cranial nerve assessment, intervention, rehabilitation and modified diet terminology.

Evidence that you have entry level skills and knowledge in dysphagia is likely to come from a combination of two or more of the following:

- Details of coursework and clinical experiences during your speech pathology education.

- Details of subsequent professional development in dysphagia which meets entry level requirements.
- Confirmation from a work supervisor that you have demonstrated entry level competencies in the workplace.

Please note professional development certificates must be supported with a reflection on learning and application to clinical practice.

If you do not have such evidence, you will need to undertake additional study in dysphagia. It is recommended that you do this before you arrive in Australia.

If you require comprehensive study in dysphagia, completion of a formal tertiary course is likely to be necessary. You may decide to use a course available in your home country. Provide the course details on the application form and you will be advised whether it meets entry level requirements.

If you require some revision and expansion of your current skills and knowledge in dysphagia, it may be possible to meet the requirements through reading of textbooks and journal articles, through professional development activities or through shadowing at a clinic where there are expert dysphagia practitioners. Provide your Learning Plan/Evidence of Learning with your application and you will be advised whether it meets entry level requirements when your application is assessed.

Applicants are encouraged to consider transferability of skills and knowledge of speech pathology competencies across contexts and populations in the development of evidence. For example, if you only have experience working with adult dysphagia clients you may wish to provide evidence around how you would transfer your knowledge and skills to child dysphagia clinical practice with reference to current evidenced based literature, comparing and contrasting practice.

Dysphagia study which satisfies entry level requirements:

- Dysphagia SPCHSCI 701: The University of Auckland offers an e-learning course on dysphagia that meets SPA requirements for entry level practice of dysphagia. This one-semester course is designed as a professional entry-level qualification covering all aspects of swallowing and feeding rather than a professional development course for dysphagia-trained therapists. Successful completion of this resource is sufficient on its own.

6.5 Confidentiality

If you provide case-based evidence to ensure quality of your evidence, you should include the client's age and all assessment and diagnostic details. You should remove any details that could identify your client, such as the name, address and phone number. Replace the client's name with initials or a pseudonym.

All breaches of client confidentiality will be treated seriously and may result in the cancellation of your application.

6.6 Australian context

Your evidence should demonstrate use of terminology and evidence-based practice. You must provide sufficient reasoning and reference to the literature to demonstrate your decision making. You should utilise or reference resources relevant to the Australian context wherever possible.

6.7 Authenticity of your evidence

The evidence of your competence must be the result of your own independent work. You will sign a declaration to this effect on the Application form. All the documentation and evidence that you provide will be checked for fraudulent representation. Any

evidence of this will result in refusal to process the documents and your application will not proceed.

7. How to present your evidence

You should present your portfolio of evidence in a clear, sequential manner.

Your portfolio will consist of written documents hard copy and soft copy saved on a USB compatible with Microsoft Office. You are required to submit:

Application and certified documents

- One hard copy of each document.

Portfolio of evidence

- One hard or electronic copy via USB compatible with Microsoft Office containing written evidence.
- Ensure each piece of evidence is numbered.

Ensure you include:

- Rationale for Claims of Competency for each evidence item.
- Provide goal setting for all assessment and treatment reports.
- Assessment and treatment decisions demonstrate application of evidence-based principles and clinical reasoning.
- Utilise the SPA Dysphagia Clinical Guidelines.
- Cite references using the APA style guide.

8. How your application will be assessed

Your portfolio will be assessed by the Professional Recognition Panel.

Your evidence items will be evaluated based on two dimensions:

- Relevance to CBOS; and
- The accuracy and appropriateness of each rationale.

You must submit a rationale on how each evidence item demonstrates your competence as it is described in the CBOS. This may require additional information to support your decisions and conclusions, such as assessment data to confirm that your analysis and interpretation is appropriate, your rationale for assessment or intervention techniques, or a reflection on your learnings from a professional development activity.

Failure to provide this information will result in rejection of the evidence item.

9. How your application will be processed

We will notify you that your application has arrived at Speech Pathology Australia's National Office within **one week** of its receipt.

The Professional Recognition Panel will examine your application for evidence of competence in clinical practice and for competence in professional use of English.

The Panel may contact you to clarify specific points or to request supplementary evidence. It is therefore important that you provide current, accurate contact details. An email address which you check regularly will allow us to communicate directly with you.

All the documentation and evidence will be checked for fraudulent representation. Any evidence of this will result in refusal to process the documents and your application will not proceed.

The Panel will provide written feedback on your first and any subsequent submissions of evidence within **10 weeks** of receiving evidence of competency. If your application is not successful, your feedback will list the area(s) that did and did not meet requirements.

You may submit additional evidence on **two** further occasions following feedback from the Panel.

The time required for assessment of your application depends on the thoroughness of your evidence and how quickly you respond to questions or clarify ambiguities.

The processing of your assessment and submissions of additional evidence must be concluded within **two years** of your original application. We allow this timeframe to enable you to gather additional evidence and/or undertake further training, testing or professional development in order to meet requirements.

10. Appeals process for unsuccessful applications

Speech Pathology Australia will only consider an appeal the outcome of unsuccessful applications under the following circumstances.

The assessment procedures and processes as approved by Speech Pathology Australia have not been implemented or adhered to in the established manner or format.

There is proven prejudice or bias exhibited by the Professional Recognition Panel or an individual Professional Recognition Assessor in the undertaking of the assessment.

Significant new information or documentation becomes available after the assessment process which would add to or change the applicant's claims and capacities to demonstrate competence in the practice of the profession.

The appeal process is not to be used by applicants as an alternative to the established assessment process. A review cannot reverse or change the decision of the Professional Recognition Panel, nor will it exempt an applicant from any component of the assessment process. The review can only request that the assessment process be repeated or that it not proceed.

An appeal will NOT be considered on the basis of:

- Disputing or questioning the standards set.
- Disputing or questioning the assessment process as established by Speech Pathology Australia and/or;
- Contesting the nature and extent of the information and advice provided to the applicant.

The three examples provided for the rejection of an appeal are a non-exhaustive list of circumstances where the threshold requirement for an appeal is not met.

10.1 Timeline and sequence of the appeal process

An appeal against Speech Pathology Australia's decision must be made within 28 days of the date of receiving the letter stating that your assessment was unsuccessful.

You must lodge your appeal in writing and directed to the Chief

Executive Officer of Speech Pathology Australia. The reason for the appeal must be clearly stated.

The Appeal Application Fee of 25% of initial application fee must be paid at the time of submitting the written appeal. The Appeal Application Fee is only refundable if the appeal is upheld. Please contact membership@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au to arrange payment.

Speech Pathology Australia will forward confirmation that the appeal has been received within ten days of receipt of the appeal information.

The Appeal Committee may take up to three months to provide a decision.

10.2 The Appeal Committee

The Appeal Committee consists of three voting members of Speech Pathology Australia and will include a Board member and two senior members of the profession.

The Appeal Committee has access to the Manager of Professional Standards and a Professional Recognition Assessor who was not involved in the original assessment for advice on technical process and content issues only.

The Appeal Committee meets in person or by teleconference, as required.

The Appeal Committee may permit you to appear personally to present your case. Any costs incurred will be at your own expense.

No legal representation before the Appeal Committee will be permitted.

If your review is upheld and you are permitted a re-assessment, you must comply with the conditions, directions and time periods imposed by the Appeal Committee.

10.3 The outcome of the appeal

The appeal process has the capacity to review the circumstances of your application. The appeal outcome may:

- Set aside the assessment outcome and direct that a new assessment process is undertaken on the disputed aspect of the assessment without any further cost to you, or;
- Direct a new Professional Recognition Panel to review the case in light of the information available and confirm the result without any further cost to you, or;
- Reject the review on the grounds that the circumstances for the appeal have not been clearly established.

11. References

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