

Language competency for teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand

Effective from 1 October 2025

Why we have language competency requirements

Teaching is a linguistically demanding profession. High-quality teaching demands command of a wide range of language skills. These include establishing and maintaining rapport, providing effective feedback, listening, prompting, evaluating, responding, reinforcing, giving praise, eliciting comments and providing instructions¹. Teachers need to be highly flexible with these skills, modifying their approach to suit individual needs as they arise; and need to be able to use these behaviours to establish strong, collaborative relationships with whānau.

These skills require a high level of language competency in speaking, writing, reading and listening. Every child is entitled to high quality teaching and learning, therefore every member of the teaching profession must be competent in the one of languages of New Zealand's national curricula - English or te Reo Māori.

Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa | Our Code, Our Standards for the Teaching Profession capture the importance of language and communication for high-quality teaching. Through the *Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa | Our Code, Our Standards*, teachers commit to engage in positive, collaborative relationships, to communicate effectively with others, to engage in problem-solving, to communicate clear and accurate assessment information and to seek and respond to feedback from learners. Once a teacher has registered and has received their practising certificate, they agree to work to our *Ngā Tikanga Matatika, Ngā Paerewa | Our Code, Our Standards*.

Our approach

The Council focuses on evidence of a teacher's language competency. Many people seeking to register as teachers speak a number of languages. They bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our profession. We recognise this in our approach to language competency by providing opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their competency in English or te Reo Māori, rather than focusing on whether English or te Reo Māori are additional languages. We accept a broad range of specified evidence, informed by the requirements of the New Zealand Qualifications Authority and Immigration New Zealand.

Please note that if we have concerns about language competency or any documentation provided, we may ask for additional information such as results from one of our approved language tests.

¹ Freeman; D, Katz; A, Garcia Gomez; P & Burns; P. (2015). English-for-teaching: Rethinking teacher proficiency in the classroom. ELT journal. Published online. Hollo; A & Wehby: J. (1998). Teacher talk in general and special education elementary classrooms. ELT Journal. (Volume 52, Issue 3), 179–187.

Our requirements: English language

These requirements are for Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Registration.

One of the following types of evidence must be provided to demonstrate English language competency

- The New Zealand University Entrance literacy credits at either NCEA level 2 or 3 **OR**
- New Zealand University Entrance **OR**
- New Zealand tertiary entrance qualification gained on completing senior secondary school prior to the introduction of current University Entrance **OR**
- International Baccalaureate full diploma in English medium (24 points minimum) **OR**
- Cambridge International Examinations minimum 120 points on the UCAS Tariff plus meeting the CIE literacy requirements **OR**
- All primary schooling and at least three years secondary schooling completed in the English language and while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America or South Africa* **OR** * candidates from South Africa must also provide South African Matriculation Certificate Minimum D pass in English (higher grade) **OR** South African Senior Certificate Minimum D pass in English (higher grade) **OR**
- Six years of education comprising secondary schooling to at least year 12 and at least two years of successful tertiary education taught in English as the primary language of instruction and through face-to-face learning and assessment such as tutorials and labs completed in the English language and while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America or South Africa* **OR**
- Evidence that the requirements of our English Language Competency Pathway for Tagata o le Moana | Pacific Peoples (see below) have been met **OR**
- Awarded a Bachelor's degree (with or without Honours), master's degree or other qualification at NZQF level 7 or above which took two or more years of full-time study to complete and
 - was taught in English as the primary language of instruction and through face-to-face learning and assessment such as tutorials, presentations, seminars, and supervisory meetings and
 - was gained while living in New Zealand, Australia, Canada, the Republic of Ireland, the United Kingdom, the United States or South Africa* **OR**
- Awarded Cambridge Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) **OR**
- Awarded Trinity College London Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CertTESOL) **OR**
- Achieved an outcome in one of the approved tests which is equivalent to or better than those specified (see table) within the past two years.

Test	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking	Overall, Mark (In one test)
Cambridge English exams C2 Proficiency (CPE) OR C1 Advanced (CAE) OR Cambridge English exams B2 First (FCE)	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185	minimum of 185
International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Academic	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0
International Second Language Proficiency Ratings (ISLPR)	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0	4.0
Pearson Test of English (PTE) Academic	61	62	73	79	69
TOEFL Internet-based test (iBT)	24	24	27	23	98
Trinity ISE III (3)	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit	Pass with Merit
LanguageCert C2 Mastery IESOL	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50	No less than 25/50
LanguageCert C1 Expert IESOL	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50	No less than 35/50

OR

Our requirements: English Language Competency Pathway (ELCP) for Tagata o le Moana | Pacific Peoples

These requirements are available for applicants who completed schooling or tertiary studies in the Pacific region, and are applying for Initial Teacher Education (ITE), teacher registration or a Limited Authority to Teach (LAT).

One of the following types of evidence must be provided to demonstrate English language competency:

- All primary schooling and at least three years secondary schooling completed in the English language or as part of a structured bilingual approach to teaching and learning while living in the Pacific region

OR

- Six years of education comprising secondary schooling to at least year 12 and at least two years of tertiary education, taught in the English language or as part of a structured bilingual approach to teaching and learning while living in the Pacific region.

If the applicant is unable to provide these evidence options, the other options within the policy would apply – **see above**.

Our requirements: Te Reo Māori

- Achieved Whakamātauria Tō Reo Māori Level 3 (National Māori Language Proficiency Examinations) **OR**
- All primary schooling and at least three years secondary schooling in te Reo Māori **OR**
- Five years of secondary schooling in te Reo Māori.

Exceptional cases for English language

The Council considers exceptional cases where the specified evidence cannot be provided but there is other evidence of a high standard of English language competency. We consider exceptional cases to ensure we accommodate high-quality applicants with the right level of competency.

We will consider other evidence on a case-by-case basis. Exemptions requests for Initial Teacher Education must be made by the provider. Please email exemptions@educationcouncil.org.nz in the first instance.

Disclaimer

This version of Language competency for teaching in Aotearoa New Zealand (the policy) replaces the previous version. This policy may be reviewed and updated or amended from time to time.

Revisions to this policy are listed below:

Policy revisions	
Version	Amendment
1.1 11 January 2021	Amendment to LanguageCert requirements to reflect changes that organisation has made the way it reports results.
1.2 30 October 2024	Amendment to the English language competency requirements to reflect changes for evidence that can be used for applicants schooled in or who have undertaken tertiary studies while living in the Pacific region.
1.3 January 2025	Amendement to the placement order of the English language competency requirements. There are no changes to the content.
1.4 1 October 2025	Amendment to reflect the revised Pearson Test of English (PTE) scoring thresholds, rounded to midpoint values, for each component and the overall required score.