

Assessment of Competency to Practise as a Speech Pathologist in Australia

**Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)
Guide for Applicants**





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

Assessment of Competency to Practice as a Speech Pathologist in Australia Mutual
Recognition Agreement (MRA) - Guide for applicants 2023

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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.

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.

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 years (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 within this time. 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 practise.

1. Types of application

There are two types of application for Speech Pathologists who trained outside of Australia. Ensure you select the most appropriate option.

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 pathway.

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

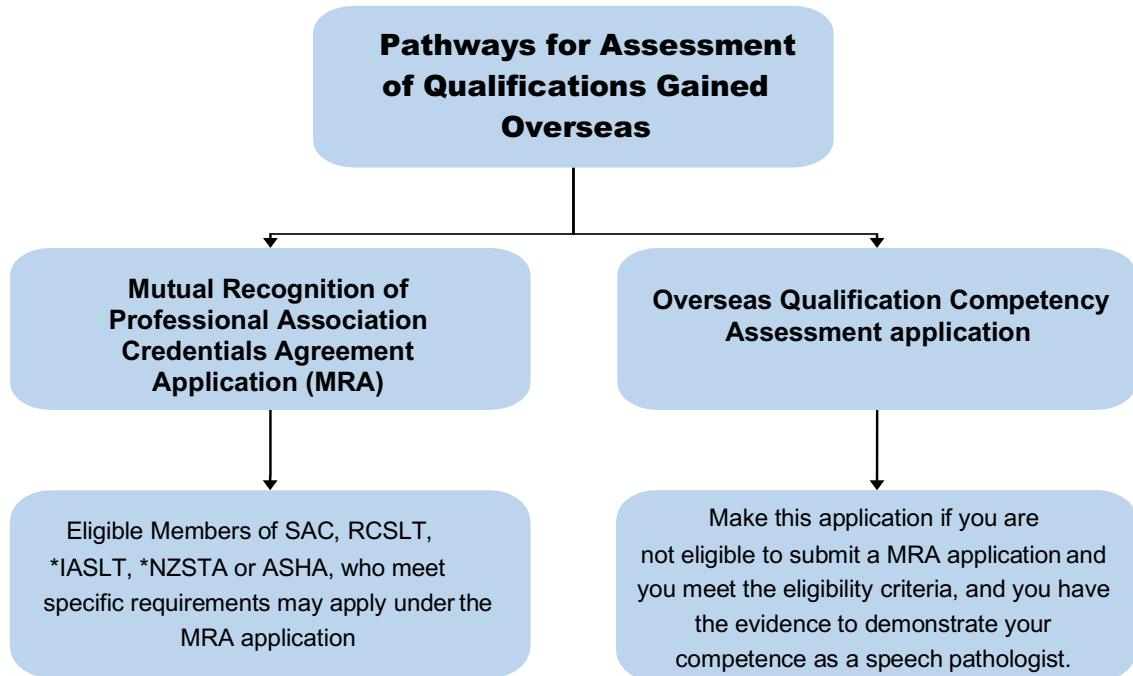
Application for Overseas Qualification Competency Assessment (OSQCA)

Make this application if you are not eligible to apply under the MRA and you meet the eligibility criteria.

The Overseas Qualification Competency Assessment (OSQCA) 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 about the OSQCA application process (including eligibility criteria) is provided in the [Overseas Qualification Competency Assessment - Guide for applicants](#).



2. What to include in your MRA application

1. The completed application form.
2. High quality (300dpi or greater), full coloured photographs of original documents for the following identity documents:
 - Passport,
 - Birth Certificate,
 - At least one other official photograph bearing document (e.g. Driver's Licence)
 - Degree and any post-graduate qualification(s) received in speech pathology, speech therapy, speech sciences, or similar, and

Any document in a language other than English must be accompanied by a translation in English from a professional translator. The name, official title, address, and signature of the translator must be provided.

If your name has changed since graduation either through marriage or other event, please attach a copy of the official document registering your name change.

3. A Letter of Good Standing (LoGS) must be requested from your Home Association as per the information in Section 4 below.
4. Any additional evidence specified for members of your Home Association (see Section 5 below).

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

If there are any issues with the quality of the documents submitted, you will be asked to resubmit them.

Your application will not be processed until all items relevant to your application are received.

3. 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 (or has expired) when assessment of your MRA application commences.

4. Additional requirements

Additional requirements apply to applicants from specific Home Associations. These are listed below.

For ASHA Certification Holders

- The letter from your state board or equivalent regulatory body, attesting that you are currently recognised as a practitioner in a speech-language pathology, that you are fit for practice, and that there are no current pending ethical or legal issues against you.
- Evidence that you have completed an ASHA approved Clinical Fellowship within the last five years or that you have 1000 hours of speech pathology practice within the last five years.
- If you graduated with a Masters degree in speech-language pathology prior to 1998: Evidence of dysphagia competency needed.

For SAC Certified Members

- Evidence that you have completed a minimum of 1000 hours of speech pathology practice since graduation.
- Evidence of recency of practice – 1000 hours of speech pathology practice within the last five years.
- Members who were certified prior to 1999: Evidence of dysphagia competency needed.

For RCSLT Certified Members

- Evidence of dysphagia competency (Members who graduated prior to 2015, the RCSLT Dysphagia Training & Competency Framework at Level C is not sufficient on its own. Members who graduated after 2015, RCSLT Dysphagia Training & Competency Framework at Level C is sufficient. A copy of the Framework with competencies signed off by your clinical supervisor is required.)

For IASLT Full Members

- Evidence of dysphagia competency is required for Members who graduated prior to 2011.

For NZSTA Full Members

- No additional requirements for Members who graduated after 1993.
- Members who graduated prior to 1993 are ineligible to apply through the MRA.

5. What counts as speech pathology practice?

The SPA Board of Directors defines 'practice' as encompassing roles in which a speech pathologist uses their knowledge, skills, professional attributes and ethical judgement to contribute to culturally responsive, lawful, safe and effective delivery of evidence-based speech pathology services. Practice in speech pathology is not restricted to direct services to individuals and is inclusive of all activities related to the provision of services to individuals, communities and populations with communication and swallowing needs.

Speech pathology practice may be remunerated or part of a formal volunteer arrangement. Speech pathologists may work in various roles such as practitioner, regulator, consultant, advocate, manager, academic, student educator, researcher, and in policy development and prevention and promotion and other roles that result in evidence-based speech pathology service provision. The definition of practice is used across SPA functions for membership and certification and is consistent with the NASRHP's description of 'practice' as use of relevant professional knowledge and skills in the course of an individual's work to contribute to safe and effective delivery of services within one's profession (NASRHP, 2016).

For more information about the definition of speech pathology practice please refer to SPA's Scope of Practice document available on the website.

5.1 Acceptable evidence of hours of speech pathology practice

Information of acceptable evidence for MRA applicants who are required to provide additional evidence for hours of speech pathology practice

Employees:

1. a letter or statement of service from an employer*; *OR*
2. a position description or contract AND a statutory declaration to attest to meeting the minimum practice hour requirement, *OR*
3. a screenshot of your online employee service system profile if it includes or indicates:
 - the employer's logo,
 - you are employed as a speech pathologist,
 - your commencement date, and
 - the hours you are employed per week or fortnight.

*Information to be included in a letter or statement of service from an employer:

- confirmation of your employment as a speech pathologist,
- commencement date,
- finish date, if applicable, and hours employed per week or fortnight *OR* total number of hours worked within the applicable recency of practice audit period

Self-employed speech pathologists:

- a. a letter from an accountant** (or information from a tax return) confirming that your main salary and wage occupation is/was speech pathology AND
- b. a statutory declaration to attest to meeting the minimum practice hour requirement[#]

**The purpose of the letter from an accountant is to confirm your occupation.

#Some accountants may also be able to confirm that their client has met the minimum practice hour requirement based on appraisal of their income. In this case, a statutory declaration is not required.

6. 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 competence in the workplace.

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 some revision and expansion of your current skills and knowledge in dysphagia, it may be possible to meet requirements through reading of textbooks and journal articles, through professional development activities or through shadowing at a clinic where there are expert dysphagia practitioners.

If you require comprehensive study in dysphagia, completion of a 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.

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.

7. Assessment process

Speech Pathology Australia will acknowledge receipt of your application within one week of its receipt.

Your application will be assessed by the Professional Recognition Panel. All 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 the application. If your application is not successful, you will be provided with feedback as to why your application was unsuccessful.

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.

8. Appeals process for unsuccessful applications.

Speech Pathology Australia will only consider an appeal in relation to 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.

8.1 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 skillsassessment@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.

8.2 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.

8.3 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.

9. References

Speech Pathology Australia (2012), *Dysphagia Clinical Guideline*. Melbourne, Australia. The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Ltd.

Speech Pathology Australia. (2022) *Scope of practice*. Melbourne, Australia. The Speech Pathology Association of Australia Ltd.