Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

Language Proficiency Policy

Manual:	Policy – Operations	**Policy #:**	Op-3
Approved by:	Council	**Date:**	November 27, 2025

1. Purpose

Under the terms of the *Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998 (*the "**Act**"*)* and the regulations made under the Act, the Registrar of the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (the "**College**") must ensure in accordance with section 5.(2) 4 of the *Ontario Regulation 383/00*, that applicants for registration with the College must "demonstrate the ability to speak and write either English or French with reasonable fluency".[1]

As the regulatory body for social workers and social service workers in Ontario, the College's mandate is to serve and protect the public interest. One of the ways the College fulfills its public protection mandate is by ensuring that all applicants to the College can communicate effectively with the College, other professionals, the public, and the individuals, families, and communities they wish to serve.

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the standards and criteria an applicant must meet to demonstrate to the College their ability to speak and write English or French with reasonable fluency.

2. Scope

This Policy applies to all applicants to the College and the College staff involved in the registration process.

3. Language Fluency Requirement

An applicant meets the College's language fluency requirement if they satisfy one of the following criteria:

a. Completion of a social work or social service work program entirely in English or French. Verification of language of instruction must be provided through an official transcript, a third-party credential assessment report, and/or a formal letter issued by the academic institution and sent directly to the College.
b. Completion of at least one year of post-secondary studies entirely in English or

[1] There is a distinction between the term "fluency" and "proficiency". The term "fluency" refers to one's speed or smoothness of speech, whereas the term "proficiency" refers to one's ability to use the language at a more sophisticated level.

French. Verification of language of instruction must be provided through an official transcript, a third-party credential assessment report, and/or a formal letter issued by the academic institution sent directly to the College.

c. Completion of current or past professional experience of at least 6 months in the role of a social worker or social service worker, where services are or were provided primarily in English or French.
d. Achievement of the minimum required scores on a language proficiency test accepted by the College (see Appendix A).

4. Language Fluency Self-Declaration

Applicants are required to self-declare their fluency in English or French by responding to the following questions in writing:

1. Is English the applicant's primary language of communication?
2. Is French the applicant's primary language of communication?
3. Was English the language of the applicant's educational instruction in social work or social service work?
4. Was French the language of the applicant's educational instruction in social work or social service work?
5. Does the applicant currently provide social work services, or social service work services, principally in English?
6. Does the applicant currently provide social work services, or social service work services, principally in French?

Applicants who answer “No” to some or all questions must demonstrate their ability to speak and write either English or French with reasonable fluency by achieving the minimum scores on a language proficiency test accepted by the College (see Appendix A).

5. Evaluation

This Policy will be reviewed by the Office of the Registrar every three (3) years or as required. Changes to the Policy will be recommended by the Office of the Registrar to Council for approval.

Appendix A

Language Proficiency Tests

The applicant is responsible for:

1. All costs associated with taking the language proficiency test(s).
2. Arranging for the test results to be forwarded directly from the testing agency to the College.

The College will not accept test results from a language proficiency test that the applicant completed more than two years prior to the date the application for registration is received by the College.

I. Written and Spoken Fluency (English)

Each of the following English Language proficiency testing systems is acceptable to the College:

i. TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) Internet-based (iBT) Test
ii. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Academic Test
iii. IELTS (International English Language Testing System) General Test
iv. CELPIP (Canadian English Language Proficiency Index Program) General Test
v. PTE (Pearson Test of English) Core

An applicant must achieve the test result scores indicated below from one of the above-mentioned language proficiency testing systems in order to demonstrate the ability to speak or write English with reasonable fluency:

i. TOEFL Internet-based Test (iBT)
    a. Overall: 92, Writing: 22, Speaking: 26, Listening: 22, Reading: 22

ii. IELTS Academic
    a. Minimum score of no less than 7 in each component: reading, listening, writing, speaking.

iii. IELTS General
    a. Minimum score of no less than 7 in each component: reading, listening, writing, speaking

iv. CELPIP General
    a. Minimum score of no less than 7 in each component: reading, listening, writing, speaking

v. PTE
    a. Core – Minimum score of no less than CLB 7 or as described below:
        i. Listening comprehension: 60-70
        ii. Reading comprehension: 60-68
        iii. Verbal skills: 68-75
        iv. Written skills: 69-78

II. Written and Spoken Fluency (French)

The following French language proficiency testing systems are acceptable to the College:

i. TEF (Test d'évaluation de français) Canada
ii. TCF (Test de connaissance du français) Canada

An applicant must achieve the test result scores indicated below from one of the above-mentioned language proficiency testing systems in order to demonstrate the ability to speak or write French with reasonable fluency:

i. TEF (Test d'évaluation de français)
    a. Minimum test scores of no less than C1 or as described below:
        i. Written comprehension (Reading) C1 = 233 or higher
        ii. Oral comprehension (Listening) C1 = 280 or higher
        iii. Lexicon and structure (Vocabulary and Grammar) C1 = 187 or higher
        iv. Written expression (Writing) C1 = 349 or higher
        v. Oral expression (Speaking) C1 = 349 or higher

ii. TCF (Test de connaissance du français)
    b. Minimum test scores of no less than CLB 7 or as described below:
        i. Listening comprehension: 458 or higher
        ii. Reading comprehension: 453 or higher
        iii. Verbal skills: 10 or higher
        iv. Written skills: 10 or higher