## Admission Requirements

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### What are admission requirements, and why are they important?

Admission requirements are the skills, knowledge and/or other background a student must have to be admitted to a program and that make it likely the student will successfully complete the program. Appropriate admission requirements support student retention, success and satisfaction, which is good for both students and the school.

Admission requirements may not be varied or waived by either an institution or a student, and they must be applied consistently to all students in the program.

Student records must show that admission requirements have been met by each student, and have been applied consistently to all students.

Should you want to change the admission requirements listed with PTIB, you must first obtain PTIB’s consent.

**Effective September 1, 2021:**

* admission requirements are one of the required elements of a program outline
* a certified institution must list the admission requirements for its Class A and Class B programs on its website

### Admission requirements or admission procedures?

**Admission requirements are different from admission procedures.**

In general, any requirement on which the decision to admit a student to a program will be based, in whole or in part, is an admission requirement.If it is part of the admitting process, but will not influence the decision whether to admit a student, it is an admission procedure.

Admission procedures might include the following:

* Completion of application form
* Payment of application fee
* Proof of identity
* Parental signature for minors

You may include admission procedures in your program materials (program outline, etc.), but PTIB does not list these with program information. Some processes are administrative in nature (e.g. completion of forms, payment of fees) or may be legal requirements (parental signature for minors). These are either not subject to regulation or are covered in another context, such as requirements for the student enrollment contract.

### What should admission requirements include?

Admission requirements should be clear and specific, and state a minimum standard to be met. Most programs should include a language proficiency requirement.

When developing admission requirements you should consider the following:

* Language proficiency: in English, and/or other language(s) of instruction if applicable, to a specified standard appropriate to the program. All programs, except language instruction (such as ESL), require proficiency in reading, writing, listening and speaking in the language(s) of instruction, at the level appropriate for the curriculum.   
    
  For example, if your students will be reading textbooks and other materials in English, they must read English at a level that will enable them to understand those program materials *from the first day of classes*. If there will be written assignments, essays or reports in English, students must be able to write at the level the program demands. The same is true for speaking and listening skills.
* Prior education, if required: e.g. Grade 12 or equivalent; Bachelor’s degree; Grade 10 math with minimum grade of C+.
* Prior experience, if applicable: e.g. program-related work or volunteering, with minimum duration and type of documentation required.
* Membership: registration, certification, licensure (for example, private pilot’s license, registered counsellor).
* Minimum age. (Having a parent or guardian sign for a minor is a legal requirement. It is not an admission requirement.) “Grade 12 or minimum 19 years of age” is common and meets StudentAidBC requirements.
* ‘Mature student’ status may be an admission requirement *if* it is an alternative to other requirements such as prior education, *and* it has a documentable definition.

### Setting your program’s admission requirements

* Choose admission criteria and standards that address all skills and/or knowledge students will need to succeed from their first day in this program.
* Ensure each requirement you set effectively addresses the criterion it is meant to. For example, to prove a level of language proficiency, choose assessment tests or proof of prior education in the language of instruction. Citizenship or residency does not guarantee fluency in a language.
* Set clear standards by specifying minimum levels and acceptable scores: for example, IELTS 6.5; English 12 with a minimum grade of C+; 80 hours documented work or volunteer experience; etc.
* The criteria and standards you set must be documentable, by the student or another organization (e.g. Grade 12 diploma, IELTS results, prior credential or transcript, letter of reference), or by means of a test or process designed and administered by your institution.
* If you design a test of your own, it must effectively assess the applicant’s knowledge of the subject. Be prepared to provide a copy to PTIB if requested. (See also following section.)
* **If there are equivalents you will accept, they must be specified and are considered part of the admission requirements**. A detailed Language Proficiency Policy is also considered part of your Admission Requirements for each program it applies to. Both must be included in the program outline and posted on your website. **Changes to a Language Proficiency Policy or to the list of accepted tests, scores, educational equivalents, etc. for a program require consent as changes to Admission Requirements**.
* A program designed to teach intermediate or advanced skills must have admission requirements that ensure students already have an appropriate level of skills and knowledge in the program area.
* If your program is in a regulated field (e.g health occupations) the admission requirements may be set by the regulator. It is your responsibility to know if this applies to a program you are applying for or offering, and if so to ensure you set, maintain, and apply the regulator’s minimum admission requirements.

### In-house testing, equivalents, and prior learning recognition

Admission requirements often specify standardized assessments such as IELTS, TOEFL, or CELBAN (with a minimum acceptable score for each), with the option of taking the institution’s own test instead. Or they may specify certain courses a student must have taken, usually with a minimum grade (e.g. Math 10 with a B, English 12 with a C, Biology 12 with a B), “or equivalent”.

If you are using a non-standard test to determine whether admission requirements are met, you must ensure it is equivalent to a standard test. For example, if you design an admissions test of your own for language proficiency and/or any other requirement, it must effectively assess the applicant’s knowledge of the subject(s) it covers. Be prepared to provide a copy to PTIB of any assessments developed by your school for use in admissions, if requested, and be prepared to show that the test is effective and equivalent to standardized measures of the same subject matter. This may include providing confirmation from an independent subject matter expert.

If you develop a course that a student must successfully complete in order to meet an admission requirement, the course and its evaluation must be sufficient to demonstrate the student has the same level of understanding as someone who completed the course at a high school. For example, if the admission requirement is Grade 11 biology, your course must be equivalent to a BC public course. If you develop your own courses for equivalencies, you will be asked to submit course outlines to show that these will adequately prepare students for admission to the institution. PTIB will review the outlines to ensure they accurately show the course content and what the course can be used for.

If you use a prior learning assessment process, it may accept a student's prior education or experience to be equivalent to **no more than 50% of the hours of instruction** of the program. (For more information and the exceptions to this, see Private Training Regulation s.42.)

### Subjective and/or non-quantifiable admission requirements

These include pre-existing skills, aptitude, maturity, etc. If they are included in admission requirements, these are usually assessed by means of an interview, assessment, portfolio, audition and/or essay.

Examples:

* Interview: is it meant to determine aptitude, maturity, oral language proficiency, or otherwise help establish whether candidates are prepared to succeed? *If so, it is an admission requirement*.
  + However, if an interview is just a chance to get acquainted and find out how the applicant heard about the program, it is an admission *procedure*, not an admission requirement, even if all must do it. See Section 2 above.
* Portfolio: does the portfolio’s content help you make an admission decision? *If so, it is an admission requirement*, and there must be documentation of criteria for assessing the work and what standards must be met.
  + If the portfolio is meant only to give the instructor an idea of the student’s work to date, media used, etc., it is a *procedure*. See Section 2 above.
* Student statement: A statement by which the student represents to the institution that they meet admission requirements, such as skills difficult to test or document (e.g. for backcountry guiding programs), is an admission *requirement*.
  + If a student may be admitted based on his or her own statement of background and preparedness it is very important that the questions asked and criteria for assessing responses be effective and rigorous, for protection of both the student and the institution.

**Note:** for any of these, the rationale for making admission decisions need not be explained in the admission requirements, but it must be articulated in the tools used for assessing the interview, portfolio, audition, etc., and the records you keep of having done so – this is your evidence of compliance with the regulation, and it may be required during audits, inspections and/or designation reviews.

### Other requirements to participate in work experience or employment

Some items often listed in admission requirements may not need to be met before admission into the program but are required to complete the program. These usually relate to eligibility for work experience (WE) placement and/or employment in the field, and include things like a negative TB test, current immunizations, and satisfactory criminal record check. Usually WE hosts will require these to have taken place recently (within six months of start of the placement or employment is common), so having students meet these requirements before the start of a long program may not make sense.

Requirements to attend a WE (including specifics such as type of criminal record check) must be included in the student enrollment contract and should be included in the admission requirements or elsewhere in the program outline to ensure students understand their importance, and help them make an informed choice about whether this program is right for them.

For programs leading to an occupation regulated by a regulator, the requirements of the regulator for employment in the career occupation must also be included in the student enrolment contract.

### Common problems with admission requirements

PTIB staff may ask you to clarify or revise your admission requirements if:

* Requirements do not fully address the language proficiency a student must have to achieve the learning objectives of the program, setting a realistic minimum level of proficiency and effectively covering reading, writing, listening and speaking.
* The various standardized English assessment/test scores listed as part of the language proficiency requirements are not equivalent to each other.
* Requirements are not consistent in their effect for all applicants to the program. (Different measures may be used depending on a student’s background, but all measures must ensure the same minimum level of preparation in areas essential to achieving the learning objectives. The admission requirements as a whole must cover all potential applicants to the program.)
* Requirements cannot be confirmed by the institution and documented in students’ records (other than exceptions such as talked about in s.6 above).
* Requirements are not consistent between the application form, program outline, program evaluation report, and/or other program materials.
* A requirement is too vague: for example, a requirement for “good English proficiency” or “basic computer skills” is subjective (it does not define ‘good’ or ‘basic’), and does not describe how an applicant is expected to demonstrate or document that they have the required skill.
* It is not clear whether an interview contributes to the admissions decision.
* It is not clear how the institution conducts interviews consistently for all applicants.
* When an in-house English proficiency assessment is an option:
  + The test does not appear to cover all areas of language proficiency skills – reading, writing, listening and speaking.
  + It appears that the in-house test is not an effective equivalent to standardized tests.
* Admission procedures have been included as admission requirements.

*This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of requirements relating to this subject found in the Private Training Act, Private Training Regulation, and/or Fees and Student Tuition Protection Fund Regulation.   
It is your responsibility to be aware of all regulatory requirements that apply to your business.*