

VisaScreen™: fulfilling federal screening requirements for visas with quality assessments

In a rapidly changing world of shrinking borders, expanding marketplaces, increasing globalized standards of communications and technology, and a burgeoning tolerance among diverse cultures, more and more healthcare professionals are seeking opportunities outside their country's borders.

Every year, thousands of internationally-educated healthcare professionals apply for a visa in the United States; and each year, thousands of these internationally-educated healthcare professionals fulfill vital roles in the U.S. healthcare system.

U.S. immigration law, under Section 343 of the Illegal Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, requires that healthcare professionals, other than physicians, complete a screening program in order to qualify for certain occupational visas and/or an immigrant "green card" visa.

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) was named in the legislation as an organization qualified to offer this federal screening program. In response to this legislation, CGFNS created a new division, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP). ICHP fulfills a dual mandate: to protect the public trust and to foster equitable treatment for healthcare professionals throughout the world.

ICHP administers VisaScreen™: Visa Credentials Assessment, a program which enables healthcare profession-

als to meet immigration screening requirements by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards.

The VisaScreen program is comprised of an educational analysis, licensure validation, English language proficiency assessment, and in the case of nurses, an exam of nursing knowledge. Once the applicant has successfully completed all elements of the VisaScreen program, the applicant is awarded a VisaScreen Certificate, which can be presented to a consular office or, in the case of adjustment of status, the attorney general as a part of a visa application.

Program Elements

The Educational Analysis ensures that the applicant's education meets all applicable statutory and regulatory requirements for the profession the applicant intends to practice, and is comparable to the education of a U.S. graduate seeking licensure.

The Licensure Review evaluates initial and all current and past licenses. Validations provided directly to ICHP by the issuing/validating institution affirm that the applicant has completed all practice requirements and that the registration/licensure has no encumbrances.

The English Language Proficiency Assessment confirms that the applicant has demonstrated the required competency in oral and written English by submitting passing scores on tests approved by the U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services. Currently, to fulfill this requirement, applicants must take either the

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CGFNS streamlines popular CES Reports

In an effort to increase efficiency in the formatting and processing of its popular evaluation reports, the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) has modified and streamlined the Credentials Evaluation Service (CES). These modified and streamlined elements of the program will allow for enhanced efficiency and less redundancy in the processing of the reports, while still maintaining the CES' integrity and reliability.

Previously, CGFNS offered three levels of CES Reports: General Report, Healthcare Profession and Science Course-by-Course Report and Full Education Course-by-Course Report.

In the Commission's periodic review and assessment of credentials evaluation services, it was determined that the course-by-course reports have become increasingly popular with academic institutions and state boards of nursing.

Due to the increased demand for CES, the Commission examined its reports' processes and formats to increase efficiency in terms of timeliness and relevancy; decrease redundancy; and ensure the integrity of the reports. Changes will only affect the format of the reports, not the substance.

As of March 1, 2002, CGFNS provides only two levels of reports: (1) the

Healthcare Profession and Science Course-by-Course Report and (2) the Full Education Course-by-Course Report.

In an endeavor to avoid redundant efforts, the

Increase efficiency, reduce redundancy and maintain reports' integrity and reliability

Healthcare Profession and Science Course-by-Course Report will no longer contain a typed version of the transcripts in the body of the report. However, a copy of the transcripts will be attached. The course-by-course review will continue to be done and will be reflected in the comparability statement.

Also, CGFNS will continue to report on foreign registration and licensure, but not U.S. registration and licen-



sure. Due to the NURSUS and the compact state programs available through the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), the Commission believes it is unnecessary to duplicate this effort.

These changes for a more streamlined process will allow CGFNS to produce reports more quickly, while continuing to provide quality credentials assessments that foreign-educated nurses worldwide have come to expect and depend upon.

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CGFNS administers first exam in India

This year marked an important first for the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS), the opening of an exam center in India. While CGFNS offers the Qualifying Exam in 44 countries worldwide, this was the first time in the organization's history that it administered the Qualifying Exam in India.

CEO Barbara Nichols and Test Services Manager Kurt Barkley traveled to Bangalore, Karnataka state, to observe this historic event.

There were over 1,400 applicants rostered for the Bangalore center, which

encompassed 10 sites throughout the city.

The center manager in charge of the entire Bangalore operation did an excellent job coordinating with the chief proctors, proctors and vendors. Exam day went very smoothly, and as many center managers are fond of writing on their reports, "All was quiet."

CGFNS is extremely pleased with the way the exam was managed, and offers its congratulations to the Bangalore team for successfully meeting the challenge of administering the exam to many applicants spread over an entire city.

2002 Qualifying Exam Dates

March 13, 2002
(Deadline: Dec. 12, 2001)

July 10, 2002
(Deadline: April 10, 2002)

November 13, 2002
(Deadline: August 14, 2002)

CGFNS celebrates 25 years serving the global healthcare community

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) is celebrating a milestone – 25 years of excellence serving the global healthcare community!

For 25 years the Commission has committed itself to protecting the American public by ensuring that internationally-educated nurses and other healthcare professionals, who wish to practice in the United States, are eligible and qualified to meet U.S. licensure and practice requirements. In addition to protecting the public trust, CGFNS has also been dedicated to fostering equitable treatment of healthcare professionals worldwide.

CGFNS, an immigration neutral, nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia, has earned an international reputation as the foremost authority on the education, practice standards, registration and licensure of nurses and other healthcare professionals worldwide. CGFNS' mission is to provide responsible leadership in the delivery of relevant services to the global nursing and healthcare community.

The organization was founded in 1977 through a collaborative effort by representatives from the U.S. Department of Labor; Department of State; Department of Health, Education and Welfare (now the Department of Health and Human Services); the Immigration and Naturalization Service; and from nursing organizations, including the American Nurses Association and the National League for Nursing.

Throughout its history the Commission has demonstrated its commitment to excellence and quality in the healthcare arena. CGFNS provides services that evaluate, test and verify the education, registration and licensure credentials of internationally-educated healthcare professionals. These services assist many organizations, such as state regulatory boards, universities, hospitals, immigration lawyers and government agencies.

CGFNS' very first service, established in 1977, was the CGFNS Certification Program. The three-part program, designed for first-level, general nurses, is comprised of a credentials review, which includes verification of nursing education and validation of current license or registration; a one-day qualifying exam of nursing knowledge; and an English language proficiency exam. Upon successful completion of all three elements of the program, applicants are issued a CGFNS Certificate.

In 1993, CGFNS created the Credentials Evaluation Service

(CES) to analyze an internationally-educated applicant's credentials in terms of comparability to U.S. standards and expectations. This objective, in-depth evaluation service thoroughly assesses documents received from source agencies, verifying and appraising an applicant's educational and registration/ licensure credentials.

In 1996, the VisaScreen™: Visa Credentials Assessment program was created in response to legislation passed that year requiring healthcare professionals to complete a screening program in order to qualify for certain occupational visas. CGFNS was named in the legislation, Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, as an organization qualified to offer this federal screening program. CGFNS created a new division, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP) to administer VisaScreen, which enables healthcare professionals to meet the screening requirements by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards. Applicants who successfully complete the program receive a VisaScreen Certificate.

In 2000, CGFNS created another new division, the International



CGFNS hosts 'Flavors of the World' reception

In celebration of the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools' (CGFNS) 25th anniversary, the Commission will host a special 'Flavors of the World' reception on May 22, 2002.

The reception, which will be held in the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, located in the lobby of CGFNS' headquarters in Philadelphia, will feature exotic tastes and sounds of the world as a tribute to the Commission's international clientele and colleagues. Guests will nibble international cuisine while enjoying the diverse strains of world music.

The 'Flavors of the World' reception is being held in honor of CGFNS' 25th anniversary in 2002. CGFNS is planning a number of special events to celebrate its anniversary throughout 2002 and 2003. Watch for more details on special 25th anniversary events on CGFNS' website, www.cgfns.org, and in upcoming issues of *HealthScope International*.

Consulting and Educational Service (ICE), and acquired a second, the International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. (ICD).

ICE is a team of experts who can provide consultative services to universities, hospitals, employers, healthcare industry boards and other organizations when an independent, experienced opinion is needed.

CGFNS' newest division, ICD, also established in 1977, is recognized nationally as an expert in the field of international education. ICD is a credentialing agency that evaluates foreign educational documents (for both healthcare and non-healthcare fields) and provides their U.S. equivalents in detailed, accurate reports.

Today, as CGFNS looks back and celebrates its past successes over the last 25 years, it looks forward to a future of equal promise and renewed dedication to serving the global healthcare community with integrity and excellence. We invite you to celebrate with us.

Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), Test of Written English (TWE) and Test of Spoken English (TSE), or the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) parts 1-4, which include the Oral Interview and the Speaking Test.

Certain applicants may be exempt from the English language proficiency requirement if they meet all of the following criteria:

- Country of professional education was Australia, Canada (except Quebec), Ireland, New Zealand, United Kingdom or the United States;
- Language of instruction was English; and
- Language of textbooks was English.

The Exam of Nursing

Knowledge is an additional requirement for registered nurses. Applicants who wish to obtain an occupational visa to practice as registered nurses in the United States must present a CGFNS Certificate or a passing score on the U.S. registered nurse licensure examination (NCLEX-RN® *examination*) to provide proof of their nursing knowledge.

In order to obtain a CGFNS Certificate, applicants must successfully complete CGFNS' Certification Program, a three-part program, comprised of a credentials review, a one-day qualifying exam of nursing knowledge and an English language proficiency exam. Upon successful completion of all three elements of the

program, applicants are awarded a CGFNS Certificate. Most states require the CGFNS Certificate from nurses educated abroad before they can take the NCLEX-RN® *examination*.

ICHP brings the same commitment to excellence to its work as CGFNS, its parent organization.

ICHP's parent company, CGFNS, a not-for-profit, immigration-neutral organization, has earned an international reputation as the foremost authority on the education, practice standards, registration and licensure of healthcare professionals worldwide. It maintains this status through ongoing research activities, networks of international contacts, continual enhancement of

resources and databases and a dedicated staff of professionals experienced in the fields of healthcare and international education.

Throughout its history, CGFNS has demonstrated its commitment to excellence and quality in the healthcare arena and to fostering equitable treatment of healthcare professionals. CGFNS was established to protect the public by ensuring that nurses educated in countries other than the United States are eligible and qualified to meet licensure and other practice requirements in the U.S. Its mission is to provide leadership in healthcare education, registration and licensure to the global nursing and healthcare professional community.

Mark
your calendar

CGFNS will be exhibiting at the following conferences. If you will be attending any of these conferences, please stop by the CGFNS booth. We would love to see you there.

April 6-10
AMERICAN ORGANIZATION OF NURSE EXECUTIVES 35TH ANNUAL MEETING AND EXPOSITION
Orlando, FL

April 14-17
AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGIATE REGISTRARS AND ADMISSIONS OFFICERS 2002 ANNUAL MEETING
Minneapolis, MN

May 26-31
NAFSA: ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS 54TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE
San Antonio, TX

June 12-16
AMERICAN IMMIGRATION LAWYERS ASSOCIATION 2002 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
San Francisco, CA