

CGFNS certifies foreign-educated nurses under new alternative, streamlined process

For the last few months, the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) has been issuing “certified statements” to foreign-educated nurses who meet the requirements of a new streamlined certification process initiated under the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999.

The Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999 was signed into law by the President last November, creating a new temporary visa category for foreign nurses and revising the current certification process for foreign nurses from certain designated countries.

The law also created the “H-1C” visa category, for foreign nurses to work in areas designated as “health professional shortage areas.” The law limits the number

of visas issued by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) annually to 500.

The law also imposes restrictions on the hiring institutions as follows:

- The facility must be in a “health professional shortage area” as defined by the Department of Labor (DOL). As of September 2000, the DOL has designated 14 hospitals that meet the criteria.
- The facility must be over 190 beds and not less than 35% of patients must be on medicare and not less than 28% of patients must be on medicaid.
- The facility has not had layoffs.

The Act, Public Law 106-95, created an alternative, streamlined process (provided for by subsection 212(r)) which allows certain registered nurses from certain designated countries to avoid the formal certification process and instead, obtain a “certified statement” from CGFNS of their qualifications under this new law.

A certified statement may be issued to any nurse who:


- is a graduate of a nursing program (a) in which the language of

instruction was English; (b) that is located in Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, South Africa, the United Kingdom or the United States; and (c) that was in existence prior to November 12, 1999, or is subsequently designated by CGFNS; and

- holds a valid and unencumbered license by examination in Florida, Georgia, Illinois or New York.

States must verify that the license is valid and unencumbered.

The law requires that CGFNS determine whether a state nurse licensing board “verifies that the foreign licenses of alien nurses are authentic and unencumbered.” CGFNS will review the practices of any state nursing board, on a case-by-case basis, to determine whether the foreign license review procedures satisfy the requirements of the new law.

CGFNS began issuing certified statements on February 11, 2000. It issues such certified statements to qualified applicants not more than 35 days after receipt of a completed application. This 35-day period applies only to foreign nurses applying for a certified statement under this alternative, streamlined process. 

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CGFNS acquires ICD

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) has acquired the International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. (ICD), on May 10, 2000.


ICD is a charter member of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES), an association of private foreign educational credential evaluation services committed to formulating and maintaining ethical standards in the field of foreign education evaluation.

NACES member organizations demonstrate a high level of expertise in the evaluation of foreign educational documents, maintain significant professional involvement in such organizations as NAFSA: Association of International Educators and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), and have an extensive, current reference library containing

CGFNS establishes licensure verification from the issuing licensing authority for all CGFNS programs

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) announces a change in its requirements of licensure validations. The change will affect the Credentials Evaluation Service (effective for all applicants beginning January 1, 2001) and the Certification Program (effective for applicants registering for the March 2001 CGFNS Qualifying Exam and all exams thereafter).

Beginning on the respective "effective" dates, CGFNS will require that official validations of initial and current registrations/licenses must be sent to CGFNS directly from the issuing regulatory authority. This change will enable CGFNS to more effectively analyze the credentials of applicants.

CGFNS is an internationally recognized authority on education, registration and licensure of healthcare professionals worldwide. 

AACN, Hispanic groups create pact, focus on nursing education

In a new collaborative agreement, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has joined with two major national associations to provide Hispanic students with expanded access to nursing education opportunities.

Under the agreement of intent signed with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) and the National Association of Hispanic Nurses (NAHN), AACN will establish a partnership relationship with the two groups to increase participation of Hispanics in nursing, the nation's largest healthcare profession.


Although representing 28% of the population, racial and ethnic minorities comprise only about 10% of the nation's 2.5 million registered nurses. Hispanics, whose numbers in the United States have grown by more than 40% since 1990, account for an estimated 11.7% of all Americans, but less than 2% of registered nurses, according to both Census Bureau and other federal data. By 2025, Hispanic Americans are projected to comprise more than 18% of the U.S. population.

Despite such growth, Hispanics accounted for only 4.5% of students enrolled in baccalaureate nursing pro-

grams in fall 1999 and slightly more than 5% of students in master's and doctoral-degree nursing programs, AACN's latest annual survey found.

Under the agreement, AACN, HACU and NAHN will work to increase the number of Hispanics enrolled in and completing baccalaureate and graduate-degree nursing programs. In particular, the three organizations will assist each other to encourage member schools to allocate resources and create activities to increase recruitment and retention of Hispanic students in nursing education.

Among their efforts, the three groups will work to expand Hispanic students' awareness of the wide range of career options available in nursing, with a particular emphasis on scientific and academic roles in the profession.

The three groups will promote nursing as a career of choice for Hispanics attending AACN and HACU-member institutions; and recruit nursing students for participation in the HACU National Internship Program, which places undergraduate and graduate Hispanic students in federal and corporate internships across the nation. 

[Contributing Source: American Association of Colleges of Nursing]

Hernandez elected NSNA president

Aurora Hernandez, a nursing student at George Mason University, Fairfax, Virginia, was elected president of the National Student Nurses Association at its 48th Annual Convention, April 12-16, in Salt Lake City, Utah.

A natural leader, Hernandez has been praised by her faculty for her enthusiasm, vision and awareness of the importance of cultural diversity in nursing care.


"There is a great need in the Latino and migrant community for leadership to improve the health of these communities, and I would like to be involved in this area," she states.

"Although one-to-one patient care is very satisfying, in order to really make a difference, national policies and practices must change. I would like to help facilitate these changes," she adds.

Hernandez has been extremely active in NSNA on the state, local and national levels. She served as the school chapter

founder and president of the Minnesota Student Nurses Association, and was a state representative at the national Council of State Presidents.

Hernandez recently worked as a nursing assistant at the Organ Transplant Unit, Fairview University Medical Center, Minneapolis, and is starting a BSN completion program this fall. After completing her BSN, she plans to obtain a masters as a family nurse practitioner with a minor in public policy.

A firm believer in advocacy, one of Hernandez' main goals as NSNA president is to place at the forefront issues such as future trends in nursing, education funding and nursing practice. 

[Contributing Source: National Student Nurses Association]



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MELAB Speaking Test discontinued overseas

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) is issuing an alert on the following directive from the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The directive regards a change in the oral English language certification requirement for foreign healthcare workers with the primary effect under the Interim Rules on the nursing occupation.


The English Language Institute of the University of Michigan announced that it would no longer administer the Speaking Test (Oral Interview) portion of the Michigan English Language Assessment Battery (MELAB) overseas, and will now only administer it in the United States and Canada, which went into effect June 30, 2000. This affects foreign healthcare workers interested in practicing in the United States with regard to the certification requirements under the Interim Rules for section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Responsibility Act (IIRIRA).

Currently, a foreign-educated nurse coming to the United States to perform as a registered nurse may take either: (1) the

tests administered by the Educational Testing Service (ETS): the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), the Test of Written English (TWE) and the Test of Spoken English (TSE) or (2) MELAB Parts 1, 2 and 3, plus the MELAB Speaking Test (Oral Interview).

The other two occupations covered by the Interim Rules, physical therapists and occupational therapists, must take only the tests administered by the Educational Testing Service, and so are not affected by the change.

With this change in availability of the MELAB Speaking Test, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has directed that nursing applicants will basically have two alternatives open to them: (1) take the tests administered by the Educational Testing Service or (2) take MELAB Parts 1, 2 and 3, plus the Test of Spoken English (TSE) administered by ETS.

For nurses entering under Section 4 of the Nursing Relief for Disadvantaged Areas Act of 1999, these conditions may not apply. 

ICN develops universal nursing classification standards


The International Council of Nurses (ICN) has taken another step toward creating a universal language to describe what nurses do and the contribution they make to health worldwide. ICN established the International Classification for Nursing Practice (ICNP) as an official program this year.

Amy Coenen, RN, PhD, has been appointed director of the ICNP. For the past two years, Coenen has acted as project coordinator for the ICNP project. Coenen is an assistant professor at Marquette University College of Nursing in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She will manage ICN's continuing and standard-setting efforts to develop international standards in healthcare terminology.

"Nurses urgently need an information tool such as the ICNP because of the development of computerized health information systems. With the ICNP, we

can demonstrate how nursing contributes to the health of individuals and communities," Coenen said. "ICNP is a vehicle to connect nurses across the world and to describe nursing to people outside the profession. It is a unifying framework representing the full range of nursing practice across general and specialty areas, geographic regions and cultures."

Using the ICNP will promote the documentation and collection of comparable clinical data. Such data can enhance evidence-based, quality nursing care.

The program will build on existing knowledge and collaboration with ongoing national and international efforts. It will promote cooperation and partnerships among nurses in practice, education and research, as well as across healthcare disciplines. 

[Used with permission by Nursingmatters (Wisconsin Edition)]

Ask the Experts

Q What is the CGFNS Certification Program?

A The CGFNS Certification Program is a three-part program designed to predict an applicant's likelihood of passing the NCLEX-RN® examination and becoming licensed as a registered nurse in the U.S. The three parts of the program include a credentials review, a Qualifying Exam of nursing knowledge and an English language proficiency examination. Applicants must successfully complete all three parts of the Certification Program in order to earn the CGFNS Certificate.

Q How often and where is the CGFNS Qualifying Exam offered?

A The CGFNS Qualifying Exam is offered three times per year in more than 40 locations throughout the world. For a complete list of exam sites, please refer to the CGFNS Certification Program handbook or contact the CGFNS Customer Service Department.

Q Which states require the CGFNS Qualifying Exam?

A The CGFNS Qualifying Exam is required by more than 85% of U.S. State Boards of Nursing. You will need to check with the board of nursing of the state in which you intend to practice.

CGFNS changes appearance of CP Certificate

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) has announced a change in the appearance of the CGFNS Certificate that it issues to nurses who successfully complete the CGFNS Certification Program – a three-part program including a credentials review, Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the CGFNS Qualifying Exam. The newly designed certificates were issued for the first time upon release of the results of the Commission's March 15, 2000 Qualifying Exam.


The changes in the design of the CGFNS Certificate do not represent any modifications in the Certification Program itself. Nurses who hold an earlier version of the certificate should not be concerned – both old and new versions will continue to be honored as proof of successful completion of the Certification Program. Since both versions will remain valid, the newly designed certificates will not be reissued as replacements for older certificates. However, agencies which require the CGFNS Certificate



should be aware that all certificates issued after the March 2000 Qualifying Exam will be of the new design.

The new certificate design features the title, CGFNS Certificate, and the logo stamped in gold foil and teal ink at the top of the certificate. The certificate text is printed in Old English in black on a cream linen paper. The certificate will carry the embossed seal of CGFNS in the lower left-hand corner.

While the new CGFNS Certificate will be easily recognizable, in order to ensure maximum security, CGFNS continues to recommend that agencies take the further precaution of requiring Official Verification of Certificate Status.

Under this service, which is requested by the certificate holder, CGFNS provides official verification of a nurse's status as a certificate holder directly to a designated agency. 


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pertinent resources regarding foreign educational systems and credentials.

ICD, founded in 1977 by Louis Arena, PhD and Dean Lomis, PhD, provides written certification of educational equivalencies for all levels of foreign documents for individuals who have completed part or all of their education abroad. United States equivalency certification of these documents may be essential for persons seeking employment in the United States.

Annually, ICD responds to clients, representing business, engineering, computer sciences, education, pure and applied sciences and all of the healthcare professions.

ICD is the newest division to be added to CGFNS. In 1996, CGFNS introduced the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP). Building on CGFNS' years of experience, ICHP analyzes and verifies education, licensure and registration credentials, as well as other preparation for healthcare professionals other than physicians.

In addition to customized certification and screening programs, the division provides models/benchmarks for international standards, and serves as a clearinghouse on healthcare education, registration, licensure and practice standards around the globe. 

mark your Calendar



CGFNS announces 2001 exam dates

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) has announced the dates of its Qualifying Exam for 2001. The dates and deadlines are as follows:

Exam	Deadline
Mar 14, 2001	Dec 13, 2000
Jul 11, 2001	Apr 11, 2001
Nov 7, 2001	Aug 8, 2001

international
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