

INTRODUCTION

The NCLEX is designed for one purpose: namely, to determine whether it's appropriate for you to receive a license to practice as a nurse. By passing the NCLEX, you demonstrate that you possess the minimum level of knowledge necessary to practice nursing safely.

The NCLEX draws questions from four categories of client needs that were developed by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), the organization that sponsors and manages the NCLEX. Client needs categories ensure that a wide variety of topics appear on every NCLEX examination.

The NCSBN developed client needs categories after conducting a practice analysis of new nurses. All aspects of nursing care observed in the study were broken down into four main categories, some of which were broken down further into subcategories.

The categories and subcategories are used to develop the NCLEX test plan, the content guidelines for the distribution of test questions. Question-writers and the people who put the NCLEX together use the test plan and client needs categories to make sure that a full spectrum of nursing activities is covered in the examination.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERNATIONAL NURSES

First and foremost to become eligible to work as a registered nurse in the United States, you'll need to complete several steps. In addition to passing the NCLEX® examination, you may need to obtain a certificate and credentials evaluation from the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) and acquire a visa. Requirements vary from state to state, so it's important that you first contact the Board of Nursing in the state where you want to practice nursing.

CGFNS CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

Most states require that you obtain CGFNS certification. This certification requires:

- review and authentication of your credentials, including your nursing education, registration, and licensure
- passing score on the CGFNS Qualifying Examination of nursing knowledge
- passing score on an English language proficiency test.

To be eligible to take the CGFNS Qualifying Examination, you must complete a minimum number of classroom and clinical practice hours in medical-surgical nursing, maternal-infant nursing, pediatric nursing, and psychiatric and mental health nursing from a government- approved nursing school. You must also be registered as a first-level nurse in your country of education and currently hold a license as a registered nurse in some jurisdiction.

The CGFNS Qualifying Examination is a paper and pencil test that includes 260 multiple-choice questions and is administered under controlled testing conditions.

Because the test is designed to predict your likelihood of successfully passing the NCLEX-RN examination, it's based on the NCLEX-RN test plan (See NCSBN.org).

You may select from three English proficiency examinations—Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL®), Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC®), or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). Each test has different passing scores, and the scores are valid for up to 2 years.

CGFNS CREDENTIALS EVALUATION SERVICE

This evaluation is a comprehensive report that analyzes and compares your education and licensure with U.S. standards. It's prepared by CGFNS for a state board of nursing, an immigration office, employer, or university. To use this service you must complete an application, submit appropriate documentation, and pay a fee.

More information about the CGFNS certification program and credentials evaluation service is available at www.cgfns.org.

VISA REQUIRED

You can't legally immigrate to work in the United States without an occupational visa (temporary or permanent) from the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). The visa process is separate from the CGFNS certification process, although some of the same steps are involved. Some visas require prior CGFNS certification and a VisaScreen™ Certificate from the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP). The VisaScreen program involves:

- credentials review of your nursing education and current registration or licensure
- successful completion of either the CGFNS certification program or the NCLEX-RN to provide proof of nursing knowledge
- passing score on an approved English language proficiency examination.

After you successfully complete all parts of the VisaScreen program, you'll receive a certificate to present to the USCIS. The visa granting process can take up to one year.

You can obtain more detailed information about visa applications at www.uscis.go