

# NCLEX for Foreign Nurses – 2007 Updates.

Written by Meladee M. Stankus, RN MS, President of NIUSA

**Note:** *As of June or July of 2007 the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN), will provide for NCLEX® testing in Manila, Philippines. This will have a significant impact upon the distance, financial and visa barriers experienced by the largest national group of foreign educated nurses, to sit for the US RN license exam.*

The National Council License Exam (NCLEX) is a test that each nurse must pass in order to obtain a license to practice nursing in the state where they will work. In the United States, licensing is under the authority of each individual state, not the federal government. Nurses cannot apply directly to the NCLEX, but must apply through one of the states. NCSBN does list the web site and contact information for all state boards of nursing. [www.ncsbn.org](http://www.ncsbn.org)

## **State requirements for foreign educated nurses.**

Each state has unique laws and regulations for Registered Nurses. For example, California and Nevada and Arizona have very different requirements. California does not require that a foreign educated nurse have passed the CGFNS exam in order to apply for licensure. California does require that the nurse undergo a credential review by specialists within their agency. This means that foreign nurses must have their transcripts and a course summary statement, from their nursing school sent directly to the California Board of Nursing as well as documents verifying their license from the licensing authority in their country. Unfortunately, California will not accept the Visa Screen by the CGFNS or any other credential evaluation. They will review a copy of a credential certificate from another source, but California still must complete their own review of the transcript. Since the immigration law specifically requires the Visa Screen, foreign nurses applying for licensure in California, must be **credentialed twice**, and have the forms and transcripts sent to both California and the CGFNS. CGFNS will not accept the California Board of Nursing Credential Review.

Neither California nor the CGFNS will recognize their respective credential review, leaving the foreign nurse with two sets of fees, the potential for delays when documents are not received, etc. The most common cause for delays in the completion of the credentialing by both agencies is not receiving the required documents from the licensing agency and also from the nursing school in a timely manner. **Note: As of this July 2002, California is now requiring the foreign educated nurse applicant to provide a valid social security number. California will only issue a temporary license without the social security number. California BRN will send the nurse a NCLEX® pass letter, upon pass of NCLEX®. The NCLEX® pass letter is acceptable to file the immigration petition. The CA Temp RN license is not.**

Application forms from various agencies can be difficult to complete. Some of the applications forms are written in language that “native speakers” find confusing, let alone someone who has English as a second language. In addition, when the foreign educated nurse, who is residing abroad tries to phone these licensing agencies, they often get busy signals as well as long waits. This can be expensive and frustrating. **When offered, the applicant should always use the on-line application, such as with the CGFNS and with the Pearson Vue.**

## **Taking the NCLEX in worldwide locations.**

Pearson Vue is the company that has the contract to administer NCLEX® worldwide. The NCLEX® is a product of the NCSBN. The expansion of test sites has occurred over the last several years of international

testing. Sites include Hong Kong, London, several cities in India, Australia, etc. The latest list of countries and cities can be reviewed at the Pearson Vue web site. Pearson Vue NCLEX® application fee is \$200.00. Supplemental fees for international test sites will apply. See below.

**NCS Pearson VUE web site- <http://www.vue.com/nclex/>**

**US employers prefer nurses who have passed the NCLEX®.**

In some states, the nurse will need to have the CGFNS certificate or Visa Screen in order to qualify for licensure by examination or endorsement. **Endorsement** is when a nurse is licensed in one state and needs to apply for another license in another state. Requirements will differ and will be highly specific for foreign nurse graduates. Many nurses will initially apply and pass the NCLEX® in one of the states, with more favorable criteria for the foreign nurse graduate. After they have a US employer, they will endorse into the state of worksite of the employer.

For example, CA BRN does provide for one year to test after the issuance of the ATT. In Arizona and several other states, the ATT is only for 90 days and then all fees and payments are forfeit, if the nurse does not test. For the foreign nurse living abroad, the 90 days can be a problem, and CA remains a very attractive state for initial applicants of graduates for foreign nursing schools. Also, the fee structure for the CA BRN is quite low. For example, it may cost the nurse applicant about \$107.00 for the RN application by examination. That includes the fingerprint cards and the Credential Evaluation Service (CES). Compared to Arizona Board of Nursing, the fee is \$263.00. However, the foreign nurse graduate applying to Arizona must also pay for and submit the CES (\$278.00) and the English testing (approx \$165.00 or more). After the state board of nursing approves the application, the nurse then pays the fee to Pearson Vue, for the NCLEX® application fee of \$200.00. For those who will schedule the test at one of the international Pearson Vue Test sites, the supplemental test fee must be paid at the time of making the appointment. This fee has been \$150 for Hong Kong and about \$365.00 for London.

Although, the CGFNS exam certificate will allow for the filing of the I-140, with an US employer sponsor, many US employers will require that the nurse pass the NCLEX prior to departing and arriving in the US to start employment. The NCLEX is a Computer Adaptive Test. The NCLEX is a unique test experience that uses advanced computer programming. This allows the test to increase levels of difficulty for the individual test, depending upon correct and incorrect responses to various questions. For example, if an exam question on cardiac pharmacology is missed, the test can select other questions in that subject for that individual test taker. With this approach, each set of questions will vary amongst different test takers.

In addition, the test program is scoring and evaluating after each question. A test taker who gives incorrect responses to a certain number of questions, will find the computer shuts down with a message that the Test is over. Conversely, the test taker who has answered sufficient number of questions correctly. . . . will have the same experience. In both cases, the test taker is not told of the reason the test is "complete" and only finds out when official test results are available. This can result in a few sleepless nights for all individuals. Some will get the good news that they passed, others will get bad news. Each state board may have a different approach and timetable for reporting to nurses on Pass/Fail. Some states provide that the nurse can pay a small fee (\$7.00 approx) to access the Pass/Fail at the Pearson Vue Web site. Other states, do not participate. For the CA BRN, the results are mailed and usually take about 3 weeks. CA does not participate in the on-line test results reporting and Arizona does participate.

. Once the nurse has not passed the NCLEX, the nurse must wait 90 or 45 days before retaking and additional fees must be paid. The nurse must check each state board web site on the length of time required prior to retesting and the fees. US hospital employers are quickly learning to require a thorough and specialized NCLEX review course prior to the NCLEX examination. . There is an increasing trend for US employers to pay the fees for all test and requirements for

foreign nurse hires. This is due to the competition for qualified nurses. If the employer has to choose between or the NCLEX, employers will choose NCLEX.

**Expense comparison between two state boards, for the graduate of a foreign nursing school to obtain US RN license:**

**Apply to CA BRN.**

Application fee, with fingerprints and CES.	\$107.00
Pearson Vue fee for NCLEX® application.	200.00
International Supplemental Test fee	150.00 (Hong Kong)
Total	\$ 457.00
(Does not include travel or review courses)	

**Apply to AZ Board**

Application fee, with fingerprints	\$263.00
CES (CGFNS CES example)	278.00
English testing ( IELTS example)	165.00
Pearson Vue fee for NCLEX® application	200.00
International Supplemental Test fee	150.00 (Hong Kong)
Total	\$1056.00
(Does not include travel or review courses)	

Another reason the trend is for employer paid RN testing expense is the high cost to nurses who are employed abroad in lower income countries. For example, if the nurse is making the equivalent of \$150 to \$200 US dollar each month, then the expense of \$457 or \$1056.00 is not possible. It may be that the nurse will borrow money from family or mortgage family property to obtain the needed funds. The US employer will often have benefits that will reimburse nurse hires or pay the agency to fund these expenses.