

## English Language Requirements For Foreign RNs

*by John R. Wilson, Esq. Goff and Wilson, P.A.*

**Question:** What are the English language requirements for foreign RNs who want to work in the US?

**Answer:** Historically, the Immigration Service has required all RNs to pass an examination referred to as TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). However, the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) now accepts two alternative scoring tests: those being the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC), and the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) for both the Certification Program and the VisaScreen.

The CGFNS believes that expanding the English testing options will increase access and availability to English proficiency tests for foreign health care professionals, and in turn, will expedite the certification and screening processes for applicants. This is particularly important, as mentioned in a previous column; in that the VisaScreen Certificate will be an absolute necessity for not only RNs, but for all other allied health care fields (notable exception being physicians) by July 2004. As these English language exams are offered sporadically, it is most useful for RNs to have options to take different English language exams at different times.

For those RNs who have taken TOEIC or IELTS in the past two years, their scores will be eligible for the VisaScreen and Certification programs, as long as they passed TOEIC or IELTS within two years of the time that they passed the CGFNS qualifying exam and met all other program requirements.

Please be aware that each state has different requirements, which may be in addition to the requirements of the Immigration Service. For example, some states still only accept the TOEFL exam, while others will accept both the TOEFL and the IELTS, but not the TOEIC. Many times, a health care facility will file an application for an RN based on certain scores, and then while the application is pending, the RN will complete the different examinations.

It is noteworthy that the examination referred to as MELAB is no longer accepted.

It is important for health care facilities that are recruiting foreign RNs, as well as other allied health care professionals, to be aware of the different options available for English language testing. ■

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