

# US shuts out '06 Filipino nursing graduates unless ...

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MANILA, Philippines -- Filipino nurses who passed the controversial June 2006 licensure examination can kiss their American dream goodbye unless they take new tests.

“After careful consideration, the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS International) has decided that those Philippine nurses who were sworn in as licensed nurses in the Philippines following their passing the compromised licensure exam of June 2006 are not eligible for a VisaScreen Certificate,” the CGFNS said in a statement posted on its website on Thursday.

The CGFNS decision came less than a week after American officials approved the Philippines’ application to be a testing center for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

The NCLEX exam, taken by some 9,000 Filipinos annually, is a key requirement for nurses to be able to work in the United States.

However, they would still need to have CGFNS VisaScreen Certificates, which refers to the program offered by the CGFNS’ International Commission on Healthcare Professions that helps foreign health care professionals qualify for certain occupational visas.

## **Fact-finding mission**

The Philadelphia-based CGFNS noted that it sent a fact-finding mission to the Philippines in September 2006 to investigate the reports of irregularities in last year’s nursing licensure exam.

The exam was hounded by accusations of a leakage of test questions.

“CGFNS has concluded that the licensure process for those who received their license as a result of passing the compromised June 2006 licensure examination raises significant questions about the accurate assessment of the competencies of many of those individuals,” it said.

“Therefore, CGFNS is unable to certify that the licensure is comparable to a US license,” it said.

“In this instance, applicable US immigration law will not permit CGFNS to issue the VisaScreen Certificate required of internationally educated health care workers to those nurses who obtained Philippine licensure on the basis of passing the June 2006 nursing licensure examination.”

## **Integrity of foreign licensing**

Nevertheless, the CGFNS said that the June 2006 passers can qualify for a VisaScreen Certificate “by taking the equivalent of Tests 3 and 5 on a future licensing examination administered by Philippine regulatory authorities and obtaining a passing score.”

The CGFNS urged Philippine authorities to “provide an opportunity for a retake” for the

passers “without surrender of licensure” for them to qualify for the VisaScreen Certificate.

“The integrity of foreign licensing systems ultimately affects the health and safety of patients in the United States, a primary consideration of CGFNS in its role of evaluating candidates under US immigration law. The decision announced today is made in support of this critical mission of CGFNS,” it said.

On Sept. 28, 2006, Malacañang announced that President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo had ordered a retake of the June exams to redeem the image of Filipino nurses, but Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita said two days later that this could not be done unless the Court of Appeals decided on a petition for the investigation of the Professional Regulation Commission. (Inquirer.net)