Canadian Regulators Launch New Application Process for Internationally Educated Nurses

New process introduces rigorous national standards while speeding up credential recognition

Toronto, ON – August 26, 2015 – Today, the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) announced the official launch of a new, streamlined process for internationally educated nurses (IENs) applying for licensure to practice in Canada. The NNAS, which is a partnership of Canadian nursing regulatory bodies, now offers a single, national online application process for IENs.

With a mandate to protect the public, nurse regulators had a shared vision of creating an assessment process that was open, fair and consistent, while ensuring that the standards for nursing care in Canada are met. They are the first health regulatory group in Canada to create one common application process for internationally trained professionals.

The new process offers an easy, direct and secure way for IENs to submit their documents for Canadian nursing registration. It allows greater transparency, timeliness and predictability across jurisdictions and most importantly, this service applies rigorous standards for assessing qualifications and protecting the public.

“This initiative came about because of an unprecedented partnership among Canada’s nursing regulators, working with the provincial and federal governments,” says Mary-Anne Robinson, NNAS Board Chair. “The collaboration and harmonization achieved sets a standard for others to emulate. We truly have something to be proud of.”

Whether recent immigrants or Canadians who are educated abroad, internationally trained workers often face a complex and lengthy qualification assessment and recognition system. The process for IENs was no exception and has been described as “a large and complex maze”, with a system that was fragmented and confusing. Every regulatory body had its own policies, applications and practices for licensure and registration.

“IENs now have easy access to a single entry point where they can apply for licensure,” says Siu Mee Cheng, NNAS Executive Director. “Although each regulatory body ultimately decides whether or not an individual obtains a license to practice in its jurisdiction, the initial steps are streamlined through a process that is clear, open and transparent.”

The official launch of the new, NNAS harmonized application follows a one-year pilot with countless organizations, working groups and individuals contributing to the development, testing and refinement of the service. Providing the application and assessment services to NNAS is the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) International, a company with globally recognized assessment expertise.
Canadian nursing regulators now have access to a team of highly qualified experts that use a consistent methodology to assess IEN applications and produce advisory reports, as well as access to a national IEN database. During the pilot, NNAS received more than 5,000 IEN applications from 113 countries - the top five being the Philippines, India, United States, Nigeria and the United Kingdom. A survey of IEN applicants found that 93 per cent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their overall experience with NNAS was positive.

“Everyone benefits from this new process,” says Robinson. “Greater safeguards are in place to protect patient care, the system is designed to be easier and faster for IENs and regulators will have comprehensive information to help them assess candidates.”

About NNAS

The National Nursing Assessment Service was created in 2012 by Canadian nursing regulators working with the provincial and federal governments, to create a streamlined process for IENs to submit their documents for Canadian nursing registration. Its membership consists of the 22 member boards of all licensed practical nurse, registered nurse and registered psychiatric nurse regulatory bodies in Canada, except Quebec and the territories. NNAS is governed by a 12-member board of directors representing the three regulated nursing groups. It was initially funded by the regulatory bodies and provincial governments, with subsequent funding provided by the Government of Canada’s Foreign Credential Recognition Program. For more information visit www.nnas.ca

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