



## *Processes for Certifying, Evaluating, and Screening International Medical Graduates (IMGs) Prior to Entry into U.S. Graduate Medical Education (GME)*

Consular Officials with questions should call ECFMG at +1 (215) 386-5900, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. or 2:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., Eastern Time in the United States, Monday through Friday, or at +1 (800) 514-3817, outside of ECFMG's regular business hours.

### Processes for Evaluating & Screening IMGs for ECFMG Certification

Through its certification program, the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates (ECFMG) assesses the readiness of IMGs to enter U.S. GME. ECFMG Certification is not a license to practice medicine. However, it is one of the requirements for IMGs to participate in clinical training programs offered at U.S. teaching hospitals accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) and to obtain unrestricted medical licenses from U.S. licensing jurisdictions. Prior to issuing an ECFMG Certificate, ECFMG currently conducts the following screening processes for all IMGs, including U.S. citizens who went to medical school outside of the United States and Canada.

- **ECFMG screens all applicants against the Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) List.**  
The SDN List is maintained by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the U.S. Department of the Treasury and includes terrorists and narcotics traffickers. ECFMG screens thousands of individuals against the SDN List each day.
- **Applicants must demonstrate basic medical knowledge and communication skills prior to the issuance of an ECFMG Certificate.**  
IMGs must take and pass the United States Medical Licensing Examination® (USMLE®) Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK). These are the same exams that students from U.S. medical schools are required to pass prior to entry into U.S. GME. In addition, IMGs must either complete an ECFMG Clinical Skills Pathway, which includes taking and passing the Occupational English Test (OET) Medicine, or have a passing performance on the former Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) component of USMLE that is valid for ECFMG Certification.
- **ECFMG verifies that an applicant graduated from medical school prior to the issuance of an ECFMG Certificate.**  
ECFMG primary-source verifies the applicant's diploma and transcript with an authorized official at the medical school. ECFMG provides the medical school with the applicant's photo and date of birth to facilitate the verification process.
- **ECFMG only works with designated authorized officials at international medical schools.**  
ECFMG maintains a list of authorized officials from medical schools around the world. Upon receipt of a verification report from a school, ECFMG compares documents, signatures, and seals with official medical school documents in ECFMG's resource library.
- **The identity of the applicant is established and certified by a notary or a medical school official.**  
A notary or medical school official certifies an applicant's identity via an identification form that includes the applicant's name of record with ECFMG and his/her photograph. Throughout the certification process, ECFMG requires that the applicant use his/her name of record consistently and has procedures in place that serve to confirm an applicant's identity. For example, an applicant's name of record appears on the exam scheduling permit, which must be presented at the test center along with a valid, government-issued form of photo identification. The name on the permit and the name on the identification must match exactly. When an applicant submits his/her required medical education credentials to ECFMG, the name of record and the name on the credential must match exactly. If they do not, the applicant must provide documentation that verifies that both names refer to him/her. ECFMG also verifies the applicant's credentials directly with the issuing institution, and the verification form includes a photo of the applicant to aid in identification.
- **A quality assurance check is performed to ensure that an applicant has met all requirements for ECFMG Certification before issuance of an ECFMG Certificate.**  
This check ensures that all paperwork is in order (i.e. verifications are complete, name documentation in order) and includes another check against the SDN List.

## Processes for Evaluating & Screening IMGs for a J-1 Sponsorship

ECFMG serves as the exclusive visa sponsor for all J-1 physicians participating in clinical training programs offered at U.S. teaching hospitals accredited by the ACGME. The J-1 is a temporary, nonimmigrant visa reserved for participants in the U.S. Department of State's (DoS) "Exchange Visitor Program." ECFMG, as a non-governmental organization, has no authority to issue visas or confer visa status. Rather, in coordination with an accredited U.S. teaching hospital, ECFMG is responsible to determine a foreign national physician's eligibility to apply for J-1 visa status. ECFMG administers the J-1 program in accordance with the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (22CFR§62.27) and on-going guidance provided by DoS. Each J-1 sponsorship application requires direct coordination between the applicant, the teaching hospital, and ECFMG.

- **Foreign national IMGs applying for J-1 sponsorship must have an ECFMG Certificate.**  
Foreign national physicians applying for J-1 sponsorship must hold a valid ECFMG Certificate.
- **A Statement of Need from the Ministry of Health is required.**  
Applicants must secure a "Statement of Need" from the Ministry of Health in the country of most recent legal permanent residence (LPR) confirming (1) that the clinical training is needed in that country and (2) the physician will return to the LPR country upon completion of U.S. GME.
- **Applicants must have a confirmed contract with an approved GME program.**  
Applicants must provide ECFMG with a copy of a signed contract between the physician and the accredited U.S. host teaching hospital. Additionally, each host U.S. teaching hospital electronically verifies the contract dates, training program, and stipend in ECFMG's on-line application system.
- **ECFMG monitors the status of J-1 physicians during their sponsorship and training.**  
Physicians approved for J-1 sponsorship and associated status are tracked and monitored by ECFMG from the time of initial entry to the U.S. through the duration of their GME training in the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS), a database of the U.S. government. ECFMG collaborates directly with each teaching hospital and J-1 physician to maintain up-to-date information.