

International medical graduates (IMGs) are physicians who receive their basic medical education outside the United States and Canada.* These physicians are a critical part of the U.S. health care workforce, comprising about 25% of all physicians in graduate medical education (GME) and in practice in the United States.

Our nation's ability to provide accessible, high-quality health care depends upon the talents and essential contributions of IMGs.

Assuring the Qualifications of Health Care Professionals

Medical schools outside the United States and Canada vary in educational standards, curricula, and evaluation methods. ECFMG, through its program of certification, assesses whether IMGs are ready to train in U.S. GME programs, where they provide supervised patient care.

ECFMG Certification is a rigorous process, evaluating medical knowledge using the same examinations taken by U.S. medical school graduates. IMGs also must demonstrate appropriate clinical and communication skills. Additionally, ECFMG verifies the authenticity of their medical education credentials directly with their medical schools. ECFMG Certification is required for IMGs who wish to:

- Enter a U.S. program of GME accredited by the Accreditation Council for Graduate Medical Education (ACGME)
- Apply for Step 3 of the United States Medical Licensing Examination[®] (USMLE[®])
- Obtain an unrestricted license to practice medicine in the United States

IMGs — Essential to U.S. Health Care

- Comprise about 25% of all U.S. physicians
- Serve frequently in primary-care specialties such as Family Medicine, Pediatrics, and Internal Medicine
- Add diversity to the U.S. physician workforce
- Provide essential health care services in medically underserved areas, rural and urban
- Enrich clinical learning and practice environments with international perspectives

* Individuals who will graduate from Canadian medical schools on or after July 1, 2025 will be considered IMGs for the purpose of entry into GME programs in the United States, and, in order for these graduates to enter ACGME-accredited residency programs, the ACGME will require that they either obtain ECFMG Certification or hold a full and unrestricted license to practice medicine in the U.S. licensing jurisdiction in which the ACGME-accredited program is located. Please refer to the announcement on the ECFMG website for more information.



Requirements for ECFMG Certification

Medical School Requirements

- The applicant's medical school must meet requirements established by ECFMG. A school that meets all requirements is listed in the [World Directory of Medical Schools](#) (*World Directory*) with an ECFMG note stating that the school meets eligibility requirements for their students and graduates to apply to ECFMG for ECFMG Certification and examination. For more information on the ECFMG Sponsor Note, see [Information on Sponsor Notes in the World Directory of Medical Schools](#).
- The ECFMG note also will include the graduation years for which the school meets ECFMG's requirements. The applicant's graduation year must be included.

Application for ECFMG Certification

The Application for ECFMG Certification consists of two parts: an on-line application and the Certification of Identification Form (Form 186). Applicants must confirm their identity, contact information, and graduation from or enrollment in a medical school that meets ECFMG's requirements.

Examination Requirements

- **Medical Science Examination Requirement**

Applicants must pass USMLE Step 1 and Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (CK).

- **Clinical Skills Requirement and Communication Skills Requirement**

Applicants must:

- Have satisfied the requirements of an [ECFMG Pathway](#), which includes attaining a satisfactory score on the [Occupational English Test \(OET\) Medicine](#), that is valid for ECFMG Certification, OR
- Have a passing performance on the former Step 2 Clinical Skills (CS) component of USMLE that is valid for ECFMG Certification.

In 2024, ECFMG certified 13,431 physicians representing 1,628 medical schools in 146 countries.

The opportunity to train in the United States attracts some of the world's most gifted physicians to our health care system.

Medical Education Credential Requirements

- Applicants must have been awarded credit for at least four credit years (academic years for which credit has been given toward completion of the medical curriculum) by a medical school that meets ECFMG's requirements. There are restrictions on credits transferred to the medical school that awards an applicant's medical degree that can be used to meet this requirement.
- Applicants must document the completion of all requirements for, and receipt of, the final medical diploma. See the [Reference Guide for Medical Education Credentials](#) for the exact title of the final medical diploma the applicant must have earned (and must provide).
- ECFMG verifies every applicant's medical school diploma with the appropriate officials of the medical school that issued the diploma and requests that the medical school provide the final medical school transcript. Verification by ECFMG with the issuing school may also be required for transcripts that are submitted to document transferred credits.

Next Steps

- **Learn More About ECFMG Certification.** Before applying, applicants must read the [ECFMG Information Booklet](#) and the [USMLE Bulletin of Information](#) and review the information on [ECFMG Certification](#) on ECFMG's website. These resources include detailed information on eligibility requirements, policies, and procedures, and also provide guidance on next steps.
- **Stay Connected.** For important updates, [subscribe](#) to *The ECFMG Reporter*, our free e-mail newsletter for IMGs interested in ECFMG Certification and follow us on Instagram at [@intealthofficial](#).
- **Research U.S. GME Programs.** Basic information about all ACGME-accredited programs is available on [ACGME's website](#). [FREIDA™](#), published by the American Medical Association (AMA), provides access to information on more than 13,000 residency and fellowship programs. Application deadlines vary among programs. You should contact programs directly for information on their deadlines.



Related Programs

ECFMG provides a range of programs to support IMGs who seek GME in the United States. Applicants interested in ECFMG Certification also should learn more about:

Residency Application Support Services

The Electronic Residency Application Service® (ERAS), offered by the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC), is used to apply to first- and second-year (PGY-1 and PGY-2) residency positions in most U.S. GME programs. IMGs access ERAS through ECFMG, which supports IMGs throughout the ERAS application process. The ERAS application season typically begins in June for residency positions that begin in July of the following year. The [ERAS information](#) at ECFMG's website also provides an introduction to applying to the National Resident Matching Program® (NRMP®), or "The Match®", which matches residency applicants with available positions in the U.S. GME programs to which they have applied. ECFMG also supports individuals applying to residency programs through other residency application services, including the Residency Centralized Application Service (ResidencyCAS) and the Central Application (CentralApp).

Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program

IMGs who are neither citizens nor lawful permanent residents of the United States must obtain an appropriate visa to participate in U.S. GME programs. A common visa employed for this purpose is the J-1 visa, which is reserved for participants in the U.S. Department of State (DOS) [BridgeUSA](#) program. We are authorized by DOS to sponsor foreign national physicians for the J-1 visa. All initial applicants for our J-1 visa sponsorship are advised that sponsorship eligibility should not be presumed and cannot be determined until a complete review of an individual's U.S. visa history has been conducted. The [EVSP information](#) at ECFMG's website also provides a variety of general resources on the entry of foreign nationals to the United States.

About Us

[Intealth™](#) is a private nonprofit organization that advances quality in health care education worldwide in order to improve health care for all. Through strategic integration of its divisions, [ECFMG®](#) and [FAIMER®](#), Intealth offers a flexible and multi-layered portfolio of services. These services enhance the education and training of health care professionals around the world, verify their qualifications required to practice, support international physicians in U.S. graduate medical education, and inform the development of health workforce policies worldwide. By leveraging these combined competencies, Intealth powers innovation in areas critical to the health professions.



VISION: The trusted global authority on health care education

ECFMG		FAIMER	
MISSION		MISSION	
To serve the public by:		Through partnership and collaboration:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Assuring the qualifications of health care professionalsProviding primary-source verification of credentials of health care professionals, as they serve throughout the worldSupporting international medical graduates who seek graduate medical education in the United States		<ul style="list-style-type: none">Conduct data analyses and research to inform policies and program development in support of ECFMG missionsSupport the education of physicians and other health care professionals worldwideDevelop resources on the health care workforce used by global communities	
VALUES			
Integrity and Trust We uphold the highest ethical standards and align our words with our actions.	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion We embrace ethnic and cultural diversity, invite varied perspectives, and provide fair access and opportunity for all individuals.	Commitment We are passionate about our work and dedicated to meeting internal and external expectations.	
Respect We value the contributions of others and treat one another with dignity.	Mindful Leadership We recognize that we each have a role in fostering a culture of collaboration, creativity, and compassion in the service of others.	Accountability We take personal responsibility for our own behaviors, performance, and decisions.	