

Answers to the Most Commonly Asked Questions about Practicing Dentistry in the United States for Foreign-trained Dental Graduates

- 1. After finishing the dental program in my country or in another country, what steps do I need to take to be able to practice dentistry in the United States?**

A: Practicing dentistry in the U.S. is governed by state dental boards. Therefore, each state has its own requirements for foreign-trained graduates (FTG's). The options that FTG's have include the following:

Option 1: Advanced Standing

First you must pass part 1 and part 2 of the National Board Dental Exam (NBDE), then apply to dental schools that accept FTG's in advanced standing, there are many schools in the U.S. that offer this option. For a list of schools that offer this option please log on ADA.com and look under publications then go to advanced standing programs in U.S. Dental Schools. When students are accepted, they will be admitted to the 3rd and 4th year. Upon graduation, students in advanced standing will be awarded a DDS from the school which will qualify the student's to take the dental license exams. Generally, there are regional dental boards consisting of several states, if you pass, you will be licensed in more than one state. For example, the Northeastern Regional States Board (NERB) consists of all the states in the northeastern region of the U.S. There are three other boards: Midwestern, Southern, and the Western boards.

Option 2: GPR

Upon Graduation from a foreign school, an FTG can apply for a GPR (General Practice Residency) for two years but only after passing the NBDE Part I and NBDE Part II. After completing GPR, several states will accept the 2 years GPR as equivalent to 2 years of advanced standing and the candidate can sit for that state's licensing exam. However, practicing dentistry will be limited to that state unless there is reciprocity with other states. In that case, you may receive a license in other states via reciprocity.

Option 3: Specialization

A foreign-trained graduate may specialize by doing graduate studies in one of the dental specialties. Upon graduation, this will qualify the candidate to apply to states that accept FTG who acquired specialty training in the US to receive a specialist license limited to this specialty, in addition they can teach in dental schools. Many dental schools will allow faculty to practice dentistry in the dental faculty practice within the school with a teaching license.

- 2. What are the specialties in dentistry?**

A: There are several specialties in dentistry including:

1. Pediatric Dentistry
2. Orthodontics

3. Periodontics
4. Prosthodontics
5. Maxillofacial Oral Surgery
6. Oral Pathology
7. Dental Public Health
8. Endodontics
9. Maxillofacial Radiology

There are other areas of training that faculty are in short supply such as: Restorative Dentistry, Oral Medicine, Geriatric Dentistry, and Dental Anesthesiology. In general, specialties range from 2-3 years to complete.

3. What kinds of exams are needed to be able to practice in the United States?

A: You must take the Nation Board (NBDE) Part I and Part II, in addition to the state licensing exam and regional exams which include both written and clinical exams.

4. How can I apply for a residency position?

A: The ADA publishes a booklet and maintains an online listing of all programs that accept dental graduates of domestic and foreign-trained education. You can access ADA by going to www.ada.com and look under “publications”.

5. Does the two years of additional study as advanced standing students qualify as residency or internship?

A: No, this is simply additional study to obtain a DDS from the United States in order to sit for licensing exams in the U.S.

6. Are there additional exams that I must take in the country that I graduated from?

A: You may have to obtain a license in the country that you graduated from if you plan to apply to a GPR as previously mentioned in Option 2.