



Institute for Credentialing Excellence

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Interviewee:

Heather Case, DVM, MPH, DACVPM, CAE
Chief Executive Officer at International Council for Veterinary Assessment

Interviewers:

Robin Jenkins, ICE-CCP, Chief Engagement Officer, CGFNS International, Inc.
Mike Reid, M.Sc, Sr. Client Service Executive, Meazure Learning

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([01:42](#)):

Good afternoon. I am Robin Jenkins and I am a member of the ICE International Credentialing Task Force. And today we are going to talk about some of the things to consider when you want to have a global presence. I have here today with me, my esteemed colleague and committee member Mike Reid from Scantron. And we're going to be talking with Heather Case, who is the chief executive officer for the International Council for Veterinary Assessment. And we're going to talk about the topic area of eligibility when you were considering that global presence. And thank you, Heather, for agreeing to talk with us and be a part of this project that we know is going, be very helpful to a lot of folks in many, many ways. And, but before we begin, can you talk to us a little bit about your organization? Sure. So

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([03:10](#)):

As noted my name is Heather Case. I am actually a veterinarian and the CEO, with the International Council for Veterinary Assessment. We are a not-for-profit independent organization, a 501 C3 that creates among other assessments for veterinary medicine, what is known as the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination (NAVLE)[®]. And so this is the exam that any veterinarian who wishes to practice clinical veterinary medicine in the United States or Canada is required to complete. And so it's a tool that we create for the regulatory community in veterinary medicine, in the U. S. and Canada.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([03:50](#)):

So how many how many exams do you all offer annually?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([03:57](#)):

That's a great question. So veterinary medicine is a relatively small profession. If you looked at us compared to say physicians or nursing typically we say there are about 150,000 veterinarians in the United States and Canada. We have two testing windows each year. Our primary testing window, if you will, just based on the academic veterinary education system is in the fall. And we typically have around 5,500 candidates that take the test in the fall. And then we also have an April testing window a two week April testing window to typically about 1200 to 1500 candidates that take the test then. So just under about 7,000 candidates a year, take our test.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([04:43](#)):

Large. That's a large number of people. And I think the profession is probably growing because I know that in my neighborhood, a lot of people have pets now that didn't use to. So they're going to need some care for those pets.

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([04:56](#)):

It is absolutely a growing profession. And I'm actually, as I mentioned earlier, I'm a veterinarian with a public health degree. So my area of expertise is preventive medicine. Of course we're all familiar with global pandemics and the interaction and interface between human and animal health. So in addition to clinical practice, which of course is the focus of our North American Licensing Exam, veterinarians also work on food safety and security and things like that, preventative medicine.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([05:26](#)):

Okay. Well, thank you for telling us about your organization. So let's just get into the questions again, the area is eligibility. So how do you best communicate eligibility requirements to candidates internationally?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([05:44](#)):

Yeah, so the primary way that we try to ensure that any candidate across the globe is able to access information about our exam, again, recognizing it's a North American Veterinary Licensing Exam, we do actually have the opportunity for a candidate to take that test in 68 different countries, meaning that they can schedule their exam in any one of those 68 countries. And so from a communication standpoint, we have a lot of information on the ICVA website and we really use that as the primary tool to communicate, again, because there are many different time zones and locations, right? It's an accessible place at any time of any day for a candidate to access that information. Having said that, we all often get requests for additional information via email. And so the team at ICVA, the staff team, works hard to respond in a prompt manner, certainly to those specific questions.

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([06:46](#)):

And then in addition, we are also sending out specific scheduling emails to our school contacts and any candidate. We have the ability to collect information for a candidate who was interested in getting on that mailing list as well. So again, primarily through our website, just given that you're dealing with lots of time zones, people are going to be accessing information or needing to access information at different times. And then once we have someone we know is interested in taking that exam at any one of those 68 testing centers globally, then we'll be sending out information directly via email.

Speaker 1 ([07:25](#)):

Okay, thank you.

Michael Reid - Scantron ([07:29](#)):

Yeah. Okay. So I guess this is getting into a fairly you know, potentially challenging subject. Do you feel that English proficiency is necessary for international testing and you know, what's the most effective way of doing that? Or what alternatives have you tried or used?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([07:51](#)):

That's an excellent question. And I think that is a question that each exam program needs to evaluate for their specific needs. In the case of the North American Veterinary Licensing Examination, it is given in English to all U.S. candidates and actually offered in English and French for all of our Canadian colleagues. And so candidates taking the test in English certainly have taken their schooling in English and in an AVMA, Council on Education accredited veterinary program. Again, with the recognition that the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam is for licensure in the United States and Canada, there are equivalency programs. In fact, in veterinary medicine, there are two equivalency programs for graduates of non-accredited veterinary programs or programs outside of accreditation. And one of the requirements of both of those equivalency programs is English to ensure proficiency in English. So for our specific program, it is fairly clearly laid out for us. Right. given the requirements within North America, again, as I mentioned in the U.S. we have the English requirement and in the Canadian provinces English and/or French but it would be up to certainly a program to look at their own test to see if that is relevant. It might be that there would be different requirements, but for us it's fairly straightforward.

Speaker 1 ([09:35](#)):

Hmm. Okay, good.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([09:41](#)):

Can you talk a little bit about some of the cost considerations when taking an exam international and how do you recommend keeping the process affordable and efficient at the same time?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([09:57](#)):

Yeah. Right. So we came to offer the exam in an international presence about 15 years ago, and we started as a bit of a pilot. And essentially for us, it was the ability to work with our vendor on the exam and on the testing center site. And that's where the additional expense came in. So for us, the actual fee to take the exam-- to take the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam-- is the same fee if you take it in Canada or in the U. S. or in India, for example, but what is different in terms of the costs is the access to the testing center. I mentioned earlier that there are 68 countries where a candidate can sit for the NAVLE. That's the fee difference, just looking at the exam. So there's not a different exam fee per se. It is what we call an international fee and we do our best to keep that fee really at cost as much as possible because we're trying to make it as accessible as possible to candidates taking it worldwide.

Speaker 1 ([11:19](#)):

Okay. Thank you.

Michael Reid - Scantron ([11:27](#)):



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Getting the documentation, which is I'm sure is always an issue. How do you recommend that staff be trained to recognize legitimate versus fraudulent documentation? And, you know, is there any recommendations you can make to other programs that are, you know, going down the same path?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([11:45](#)):

Absolutely. so again, recognizing that each exam program is going to have, you know, potentially some variations, I think that what I'm about to say is probably really relevant for any of them. We got to a point where we recognized that we could only accept documentation from the institution or the organization that has provided that document. Am I making sense? And so, and so, absolutely. And so in fact I know for us, we've gone to notifying or notification rather on a score report that would state that this is for informational purposes only, if we're sending it out to a candidate versus if it comes directly from us and goes to a licensing board, there's a way, you know, that we would designate to that licensing board, certainly they're getting it securely from us. Similarly, when we're going to validate eligibility requirements for an individual who is, for example taking our exam outside of an AVMA Council, on Education accredited veterinary institution in in, you know, taking the NAVLE then we're ensuring that the documentation is similarly marked or somehow otherwise validated that it's coming directly from the institution that has conferred that documentation

Michael Reid - Scantron ([13:23](#)):

That avoids having to get into the whole document for being fraudulent to

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([13:29](#)):

Absolutely. That's exactly right. We've really found that that's the best way for us to ensure that the documentation is accurate.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([13:43](#)):

So , your exam has been offered internationally somewhere around about 15 years, right? And so when you all decided to do this, and even now talking to some folks who may be looking at this, what key stakeholder groups should organizations be aware of when they are considering doing this and some of your lessons learned from the secrets?

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([14:13](#)):

Right. Well, I think you know, all of us are in a mode and mindset of collaboration or at least we should be. And really when we developed the North American Veterinary licensing exam, which was created in the late 1990s, it started, certainly as a development of a tool for the stakeholders, for the licensing boards. We're really working for them. And so those were really the key stakeholders that we felt we needed to be in alignment with from the very beginning of creating the exam. And so in terms of making sure that we were all on the same page, we really started out there, to ensure that we were providing them with the tool that they needed, and that they continue to need. In terms of allowing candidates to physically take the test in locations outside of the U S and Canada, as I mentioned earlier we did that as a pilot when there was an opportunity because of the test centers expansion for us to get a sense for, Hey, how would that work?



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Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([15:28](#)):

and that really started about 15 years ago. And that really was also aligned with some of the first AVMA Council on Education accredited programs for veterinary medicine outside of the U S and Canada. And so with the advent of the accreditors of the veterinary education system, moving outside of the U. S. and Canada, then that was a logical next step for us to say, okay, well, since many of those graduates were going to be coming back to North America, let's see how it goes if we offered the North American Veterinary Licensing Exam in conjunction with some of those locations outside of the U. S. and Canada. It worked well. And so I would say start small and don't be afraid to say something is a pilot. I'm a big fan of that. I think it's also wonderful what you're doing here in terms of no need to recreate the wheel, if there are other programs and organizations that are similar to yours. And certainly veterinary medicine is not going to be the same as every other assessment program, but maybe there are some things that are common. Testing centers are something that many of us utilize. And so I think it's helpful to take the step, pilot things, look to see where you can learn from others, and, in our case, it went from one or two sites out of the U. S. and Canada, up to the current 68 different countries.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([17:09](#)):

Wow. So when you, when you were looking for partners for, for sites, did you, did you put out an RFP or did you, how did you find those country partners

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([17:22](#)):

Sites? Sure. In our case, it was I would say perhaps a little bit more straightforward simply because of who we work on our tests with. We work very closely, as an example, with the National Board of Medical Examiners. And we're also working with a specific test center then. And so it really made sense for us to see where those test centers were and how it worked for other programs that were similar that were offering their exams internationally. And so it was a matter of saying, okay, well, it's working really well on the physician side, for example, or it's working really well for other programs that are similar to ours in the same testing center that we're using. And so it just grew from there. So we really didn't need to invent the wheel either. Right. We were able to see how it worked for other programs,

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([18:25](#)):

So that collaboration is really key. And again, having resources and access to resources for people.

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([18:34](#)):

Absolutely.

Speaker 1 ([18:37](#)):

Yep.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([18:39](#)):

I don't have any other questions, Michael, do you have any others.

Michael Reid - Scantron ([18:43](#)):



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I'd just be curious and much of impact from COVID on your on your operation, you know, especially where we're internationally, it's such a mixed bag of responses and levels and things.

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([18:55](#)):

Absolutely. and you know, I think all of us collectively, those of us here talking this afternoon, and every single person on this planet, but certainly those of us in the assessment and credentialing community, are keenly aware of the need to keep moving forward. In our case we have young veterinary graduates coming out of school and we are providing them with the validation, the tool that they can then provide to the licensing board to get their license and go into practice. We have been fortunate, veterinary medicine is deemed an essential service, and so we have been able to continue to provide our exam. But it has required us to make some flexible changes, to collaborate with all of our partners-- in our case just very quickly

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([19:54](#)):

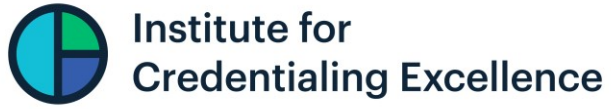
I mentioned earlier, we, in a typical non COVID world, have two distinct testing windows. We have a four week opportunity for seniors in veterinary school programs to take the exam in November/December over four weeks and two weeks in April. At the very beginning of COVID in 2020, we were just at the start of a two week April testing window that very quickly became an expanded testing window. And in fact, we'd had the unprecedented situation in 2020 where we actually had the spring testing window overlapping with the fall testing window. And so we were testing from April out until December 31st. I am thrilled to share that we were able to test all of the candidates that were wanting to be tested. And of course it required a lot of flexibility in terms of, you know, test centers having to reduce capacity and other things that they had to do to comply with local regulations and things like that.

Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([20:59](#)):

You're not going to be surprised to hear me say the number one thing we did was communicate . And it wasn't just communicating with the candidates--the test takers. It was communicating with faculty members at veterinary programs, and with employee groups, and certainly with our regulatory community on a regular basis. And just making sure that everyone knew that it was all hands on deck. Everybody was taking it very seriously in terms of how do we ensure the safety of candidates, but also ensure that the assessment is psychometrically sound and continues to be reliable. And it's all of the things that I think any of us in the credentialing arena are facing. But this year is still expanded testing windows, continued communication, and so forth. Starting to maybe see a teeny tiny light at the end of the tunnel, but we'll continue communicating and collaborating you know, indefinitely.

Robin Jenkins - CGFNS International ([22:10](#)):

That's a fantastic testimony of how committed you all are to continuing your operations and that flexibility in the ability to, to just pivot very quickly as, as you all did, I think that will, that will also be useful, I'm sure. In the future, and for folks who are going to be watching this as well I want to thank you so much, Heather, for agreeing to participate in this project. And I know that people are probably going to be calling you to, to ask some additional questions about your experience and your organization's experience, as you all continue to thrive in that global community. And as people are thinking about going there.



Heather Case - International Council for Veterinary Assessment (ICVA) ([22:57](#)):

Well, I really appreciate the opportunity to be here and thank you so much for the invitation.