

Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada

General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials

Prepared by: Provincial Assessment Committee - Canada
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See also: Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications under the Lisbon Convention
(<http://www.cepes.ro/hed/recogn/groups/criteria.htm>)

Preamble

The "General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials" is the result of the collaborative work of representatives from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, the International Credential Evaluation Service (British Columbia), the International Qualifications Assessment Service (Alberta), and the *Service des Équivalences* (Quebec). In addition, a representative from the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship, Culture, and Recreation participated in the discussions as an observer. Representatives from these organizations formed the Provincial Assessment Committee (PAC) for the purpose of sharing information on assessment methodologies used in each province, as well as to establish codes of good practice and identify common assessment principles. More recently, a representative from the Manitoba Ministry of Culture, Heritage and Citizenship joined the group as an observer.

In Canada, education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories, and educational systems vary from one jurisdiction to another. Given the inherent diversity of educational systems in Canada, the Provincial Assessment Committee recognizes:

- the need to promote fair, credible, and standardized methods in the assessment of foreign credentials
- the need to promote consistency among the jurisdictions in the assessment of foreign credentials
- the importance of the portability of educational evaluations from one jurisdiction to another
- the importance of articulating a conceptual framework for the assessment of foreign credentials to promote consistency
- the advantages of working collaboratively to address issues related to the assessment of foreign credentials

These basic tenets provided the impetus and rationale for the formation of the committee and the development of general assessment principles. Given the growing global economy, PAC members also recognize the importance of linking principles developed in Canada to models of good practice currently under

development in other parts of the world. Most notably, the authors gratefully acknowledge their use of the "Draft Recommendations on the General Procedures and Criteria for the Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications" produced by the Council of Europe and UNESCO. These draft recommendations were reviewed in detail and, where possible, were incorporated into this document.

It must be emphasized that this document represents a work in progress and will be revised periodically.

A. Overarching Principles

1. Assessment should be performed without any form of racial, religious, political, or sexual discrimination.
 2. Holders of foreign qualifications should have adequate access, upon request, to an assessment of their foreign qualifications.
 3. The procedures and criteria used in the assessment of foreign credentials should be clear, rational, and reliable. The methodology recommended aims to make assessment procedures consistent and clear and to ensure all applicants receive a fair consideration of their application.
 4. Procedures for the evaluation of foreign credentials should be periodically reviewed with a view to increasing clarity and eliminating, when possible, requirements leading to undue complications in the procedure.
 5. The general approach to foreign credentials and how they are compared to a particular system should take into account the diversity of educational traditions in the world.
 6. The same basic methodology should apply whether the statement is for:
 - a. general employment purposes
 - b. entry into secondary and postsecondary institutions
 - c. entry into a regulated occupation
 7. Assessment criteria for the evaluation of foreign credentials have been elaborated with a view to increasing consistency and with the objective of treating similar cases in a reasonably similar manner across Canada. It is recognized nevertheless that a margin of flexibility in making decisions is essential and that decisions may vary according to the provincial/territorial system of education.
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B. Guidelines for Assessment Procedures and Criteria

General procedure

8. The evaluation of a foreign credential should:
 - a. situate the credential within the framework of the education system to which it belongs, taking into account its relative place and function compared to other credentials in the same system;
 - b. identify the level and type of credential in the system of the country in which recognition is sought that is most comparable to

- the foreign credential, taking into account the purpose for which recognition is sought;
 - c. determine whether similarities between foreign and domestic credentials are sufficient for recognition.
- 9. The evaluation should take into account past practices in similar cases in order to ensure consistency in recognition practice. Past practice should be recorded in an inventory and used as a guideline for making consistent decisions. Substantial changes of practice should be justified and recorded.
- 10. Assessment decisions are based on the information available to the assessment service at the time the assessment is performed. Further information may result in the modification of the assessment decision.

Processing time and delay

- 11. The time normally required to process evaluations should be specified. The time is counted once all relevant information has been provided by applicants and/or educational institutions. In cases of substantial delay, the assessment service should inform applicants of the reasons for the delay and, if possible, the time required to review the credential.

Information requirements

- 12. The assessment process should provide standardized information on the procedures and criteria for the evaluation of foreign credentials. This information should automatically be given to all applicants as well as to persons making preliminary inquiries about the evaluation of credentials, including the following:
 - a. the documentation required and requirements related to the authentication and translation of documents
 - b. the role of professional associations and educational institutions in the recognition process
 - c. the status of the assessment statement
 - d. the approximate time needed to process an application
 - e. the fees charged
 - f. the process for appealing decisions
- 13. The responsibility for providing information is shared by the assessment service, the applicant, and the educational institutions where the qualifications in question were earned.
 - a. The assessment service is responsible for providing the applicant with complete information regarding its requirements for credential assessment.
 - b. The assessment service is responsible for maintaining a system of information on educational systems.
 - c. The applicant is responsible for providing documents and information required for the assessment.
 - d. Educational institutions are responsible for providing information about credentials earned at the institutions and other relevant information, such as course content, program structure, etc.

Fees

- 14. The fee for the evaluation of foreign credentials should be kept as low as possible.

15. When possible, special measures aimed at persons with limited income and other disadvantaged groups should be considered in order to ensure that no applicant is prevented from seeking assessment or recognition of his or her foreign credentials because of the cost involved.

Translation

16. Translation should be limited to key documents.
17. Original documents, including the titles of foreign qualifications, should be provided in the original language.

Document Requirements

18. Original/official documents or certified copies of documents are normally required for evaluation. If photocopies are accepted, this should be clearly indicated on the assessment certificate.
19. Documents that clearly indicate successful completion of an academic year are required for evaluation. Educational documents that indicate failed or unsuccessful completion of an academic year or program should not be considered.
20. In some exceptional cases, such as for refugees and others who are unable to document their qualifications for good reasons, sworn statements before a legal authority may be accepted in lieu of full documentation.
21. All submitted documents should be examined for evidence of tampering or misrepresentation. Original documents and certified proofs of academic achievements should be examined by evaluation officers to verify their authenticity.
22. The presence of fraudulent or altered documents should lead to refusal to issue an evaluation report. A verification by the issuing institution or authority in the country of origin should be conducted if it is suspected that documents have been altered or falsified. Further evaluation should not be carried out if it is found that documents have been falsified in any way.

Status of institutions and programs

23. In view of the wide diversity of educational institutions, the status of a credential should not be established without taking into account the status of the program and institution at which the credential was earned.
24. Credit should only be considered for education attained through recognized institutions. A recognized institution is one that has been formally recognized by competent authorities in a country and/or that is widely accepted by other institutions and agencies inside or outside the country.
25. A credential should be recognized only if the related program is also recognized by a competent authority. Recognition of an educational institution does not guarantee the recognition of all credentials issued by that institution.

Purpose/outcome of assessment

26. Every credential issued at a specific date from a specific educational institution should have a consistent evaluation outcome. Since the same data and criteria are used to establish the level of each credential, the evaluation outcome for a specific credential should be consistent.
27. Credential evaluation should take into account the purpose for which recognition is sought, and the evaluation statement should clearly indicate the purpose for which the statement is valid.
28. Depending on practice, the outcome of the evaluation of a foreign credential may take the form of a statement to the applicant that will provide:
 - a. advice for general employment purposes
 - b. advice to an educational institution for admission into its programs
 - c. advice to a regulatory body for entry into a trade or a profession

Level of study

29. The assessment of a given credential should be based entirely on the normal entry and completion requirements for that credential. The evaluation outcome should not vary because of any previous studies taken by the individual for whom the credential is being evaluated.
30. The assessment of a given credential should be based on the entry and completion requirements in place when that credential was completed.
31. Each credential presented by an individual should be assessed separately.
32. Credentials at the same level in different programs should not be added together to equate a credential at a higher level of study.
33. The evaluation should be based on the credentials presented for evaluation and should not cite the completion of prerequisite credentials if those prerequisite credentials are not presented for the evaluation.

Assessment criteria

34. A variety of criteria should be applied to determine the level and type of educational programs, including:
 - a. entrance requirements (e.g. What are the normal admission requirements for entrance to the program? What is the level of studies in the home country?)
 - b. full-time duration of study program (e.g. What is the normal full-time duration of the program?)
 - c. structure of program (e.g. How is the program structured? What type of program is it, such as vocational, academic, etc.?)
 - d. contents of the program (e.g. In what discipline of studies? What courses? How many hours of studies?)
 - e. purpose of degree (e.g. For what purpose was the program completed? Was it for a professional qualification or prerequisites to further studies?)
 - f. bridges to traditional degree (e.g. What access does the program give to other programs in the home country?)

Duration of study program

35. Each academic year of study, as recognized by the official designated authority in the country of origin, should in general be granted no more

than one academic year of recognition. However, this year-to-year comparison may be overruled by other factors, such as education outcomes, or the structure and content of the educational program.

Appeal

36. Upon request, the assessment service should inform the applicant of the basis for the decision reached, the possibilities for him or her to appeal the decision, and the time limits that should be observed.

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