

Foreign Credential Recognition Program

Backgrounder

To meet the needs of the 21st century economy, Canada requires a highly skilled workforce. Our ability to compete in the global knowledge-based economy is dependent on the skills of our people. Cities and communities that can attract the best talent, including highly skilled immigrants, provide opportunities for investment and contribute to keeping Canada's economy strong.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring we have skilled workers, and has been working with partners to help Canadians acquire the skills needed for meaningful and productive jobs. It is investing on three main fronts:

- updating the skills of our existing workforce;
- addressing the needs of groups with special needs, such as youth and our Aboriginal population; and
- ensuring internationally trained workers can fully participate in the labour market and Canadian society.

One of the keys to our prosperity and competitiveness will be the degree to which internationally trained workers are able to contribute to Canada's economic and social development.

During the past decade, recent immigrants have accounted for 70% of Canada's net labour force growth. Research shows that before the middle of the next decade, virtually all net labour force growth will come from immigration.

However, many skilled immigrants cannot get a job in their chosen field despite the fact that they are coming to Canada with higher qualifications than ever before. And, it is taking much longer for them to catch up to Canadians with similar levels of education and expertise – resulting in low income levels.

Meanwhile, many employers are currently suffering a shortage of specific skills, and many more still are aware that demographic changes will create shortages in the future.

If all Canadians are to benefit fully from the skills and education newcomers bring with them, we need to put procedures in place to improve the integration of immigrants into the labour market.

With this in mind, the Government of Canada is working with provincial/territorial governments, licensing and regulatory bodies, sector councils, employers and many other groups to improve the integration of internationally trained workers into the work force and society.

The issues being addressed include:

- accelerating the assessment and recognition of foreign credentials;
- implementing Enhanced Language Training and Bridge to Work initiatives; and
- providing up-to-date and pertinent labour market information.

Improving the integration of internationally trained workers into the labour market is a key element of the government's strategy to promote a strong economy, while at the same time improving the health of Canadians and supporting the economic growth and prosperity of Canada's cities and communities. It is also crucial to maintaining our country's commitment to equality of opportunity so that prosperity can be shared by all Canadians.



FCR Program

Foreign Credential Recognition is the process of verifying that the education and job experience obtained in another country are equal to the standards established for Canadian professionals. Credential recognition for regulated occupations is mainly a provincial responsibility that has been delegated in legislation to regulatory bodies. The Government of Canada is playing a facilitative role with provinces and territories and providing strategic leadership to foster the development of consistent, national approaches to this important issue.

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) is the federal department responsible for the Government of Canada's FCR Program. The Program is designed to facilitate the recognition of international qualifications so that internationally trained workers may better contribute to Canada's economic and social development. Improving the processes for recognizing foreign credentials will help immigrants integrate more rapidly into the Canadian labour market and get the Canadian work experience they need to succeed in Canada. At the same time, Canadian employers will gain access to a broader pool of talented workers.

The Government is providing \$68 million over six years to implement the FCR program and to fund key activities from our partners aimed at improving FCR processes in Canada. The objectives of the Program are to work with its partners to ensure FCR processes across the country are:

- **fair**—individuals wishing to have their credentials assessed will be treated equitably;
- **accessible**—individuals wishing to have their credentials assessed will have access to appropriate services;
- **coherent**— there will be similar processes to assess and recognize credentials in all jurisdictions throughout Canada. This means that once an individual's credentials are recognized in one province, they will be recognized across Canada;
- **transparent**—individuals will understand how to have their credentials assessed and recognized before they arrive in Canada and, if they do not meet the requirements, they will know what to do; and
- **rigorous**— high standards for preserving quality service and public safety.

Progress in regulated and non-regulated occupations

Progress is being made with regulated occupations. For example, federal and provincial governments are working with key medical community stakeholders to improve procedures for licensing internationally trained doctors? so we can strengthen the health care system and increase the supply of doctors. And similar work is under way to speed the recognition process for internationally trained nurses and other health care professionals, including pharmacists, medical laboratory technologists, medical radiation technologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

The Government of Canada is also providing funding to the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers to implement an action plan and develop tools to more quickly and efficiently integrate international engineering graduates into the Canadian labour market.

HRSDC is also playing a leading role in facilitating foreign credential recognition in non-regulated occupations in sectors such as aviation maintenance and tourism.

Canada's Workplace Skills Strategy

The FCR program is linked to Canada's Workplace Skills Strategy aimed at helping Canadians to become the best trained, most highly skilled workers in the world, as well as ensuring that employers' needs are met. The Government of Canada recognizes that Canada's future competitiveness depends on a highly skilled work force and on high-performance workplaces that focus on skills development. It will work with business, unions, provinces and territories, sector councils and workers to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to develop their skills so that they can obtain meaningful and productive jobs.