

A Regulators' Guide to Improving Qualification Recognition Practices: Credential Assessment

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Organization Name:

Mailing Address

Phone Number

Completed by: (List names and titles of individuals who participated in the review)

Date Completed: (day/month/year)

Name of any third party agency which undertakes credential assessments for your organization:

Note: If you use a third party agency to assess credentials, you are strongly encouraged to work in collaboration with that agency to obtain relevant information. This Tool is available on-line at www.saskimmigrationcanada.ca. For information about this Tool and how to use it, refer to the Users' Manual.

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Section 1.0 Providing Information to Applicants

All applicants should be provided with standardized, clear and understandable written information about credential assessment.

1.1 General Procedures			
Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Publish standard information and provide this information automatically to all applicants or persons making inquiries about the assessment of credentials.			
Provide information on the steps in the credential assessment process.			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Provide information on the requirements for credential assessment, including a description of the criteria used to assess whether the requirements have been met (ie. number of years of schooling required for a degree to be considered substantially equivalent to a Saskatchewan degree).</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure written information is clear and understandable to those whose first language may not be English, e.g. use plain language (ie. Short sentences, no jargon, no colloquialisms). • Have information reviewed by plain language experts, particularly those who are familiar with the needs of English as Second Language (ESL) clients. • Test information with ESL clients and seek feedback. • Ensure that out-going telephone messages are spoken clearly and slowly. This helps everyone, but may be especially important for someone whose first language is not English. • Provide key information in multiple languages, if possible. • Include a diagram or visual representation of the steps in the process. 		

1.2 Document Requirements

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Provide information on what documents are required, including acceptable alternatives.			
Clearly state whether each document must be original, official or certified copies. ¹ or whether a photocopy is accepted.			

¹ Official Documents are those issued directly from the issuing institution to the requesting organization (i.e. they do not pass through the applicants' hands at any time). Original Documents are those submitted by the applicant, e.g. the diploma they received upon completion of their training. Certified Copies are submitted by the applicant but have been verified by the issuing institutions, ministry of education, or pertinent authority.

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Sworn statements before a legal authority may be accepted in lieu of full documentation for refugees and others unable to document their qualifications for good reasons.</p>			
<p>Examine documents for evidence of authenticity. Ensure documents are genuine (issued by the institution indicated and not altered in any way) and have been rightfully issued to the applicant.</p>			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Ensure that documents are verified with the issuing institution or authority in the country of origin if it is suspected that documents have been altered or falsified.</p>			
<p>The presence of fraudulent or altered documents should lead to refusal to assess the credential and to issue a report.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What we in Canada call transcripts² are called a syllabus in some countries or a 'mark sheet' or 'statement of marks'. • If your organization uses a credential assessment agency, consider how each organization can access and retain the required documents and how best to minimize duplication of costs for applicants. • Advise applicants at the start of the process how many official, original, or certified documents will likely be required in order to complete the full licensing process, and who will likely require these. This allows the applicant to ask for the required number all at once, saving time compared to later having to ask for additional documents. 		

²Transcripts: The official document or record of a student's enrolment, progress, and achievement within an education institution. The transcript identifies courses taken (title and course number), credits and grades achieved, and credentials earned. The term 'transcript' can mean a syllabus, mark sheet or statement of marks in other countries.

1.3 Translation

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Translation, if required, should be limited to key documents.			
Original documents, including the titles of foreign qualifications, should be provided in the original language and reviewed to verify the accuracy of the translation.			
Ideas and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Documents are frequently issued in the official language of the country of origin. Unless issued in English or French directly by the academic institutions themselves, documents translated into English or French should be submitted together with the original language documents issued by the institutions		

1.4 Fees

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Establish fees that are as low as possible and consider measures to reduce costs for those with limited income or other disadvantaged groups.			
Provide clear and understandable written information about all fees for the credential assessment to the applicant.			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Fees must be disclosed to candidates in advance.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include all fees for registration including: the credential assessment, criminal record check, national licensure exam, English language testing, etc. • A regulator can waive the payment of all or any part of the fee that an applicant is required to pay, if in its opinion, it is fair and equitable to do so. • Does your organization have a policy on fee requirements, and when and if they can be waived? 		

1.5 Support

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Provide clear and understandable written information about what supports are available to applicants during the credential assessment process, or any other available supports of which the regulator is aware.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a policy to guide staff giving support to internationally educated applicants so all applicants seeking support receive equitable support. • Provide a list of resources and a brief description of each that are available to the applicant (e.g. translators, etc.) 		

1.6 Processing Time and Delays

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Specify the time normally required to assess credentials. Advise candidates that the time is counted once all relevant information has been received.</p>			
<p>In cases of substantial delay, inform applicants of the reasons for the delay and, if possible, the time that will be required to assess the credential.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If your office is understaffed during holidays ensure that the out-going telephone and email messages indicate there will be a delay in response times. • Develop a policy concerning what constitutes a substantial delay and when applicants will receive a notice concerning a delay. • Establish a standard for acceptable response time once all information has been received and monitor how well your organization performs. Consider ways to shorten the response time. 		

Section 2.0 Assessment Processes

Whether completing their own credential assessments or using a third party, regulatory bodies must ensure that processes used are transparent, impartial, objective and fair.

2.1 Integrity of Process			
Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Identify activities (including the use of third parties for foreign credential assessment) that could, if not subject to appropriate controls, affect confidentiality, objectivity or impartiality.			
Establish and document processes to identify and eliminate conflict of interest and impartiality.			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Develop and implement a process to ensure the controls are effective (i.e audit trails, or review of the records).			

2.2 Impartiality and Independence

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Impartiality and independence should be established at all levels of the credential assessment process including: Structure of the Organization			
Policies and Procedures			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Assessment			
Decisions and Appeals			

2.3 Quality of Information

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>The information gathered during the credential assessment process should be sufficient for the regulator to make an informed decision on substantial equivalency of the credential.</p>			
<p>Information gathered should be traceable in the event of an appeal or a complaint.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commercially-available software could be used to track data on international applicants, the schools from which they obtained their credential and the decision that was made on equivalency. This would facilitate consistent decisions. 		

2.4 Equivalency Considerations

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>The status of a credential should not be established without considering the status of the program and institution at which the credential was earned. Credit should only be considered for education attained through recognized institutions.³ 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.</p>			
<p>A variety of criteria should be applied to determine the level and type of educational programs, including: entrance requirements, usual full time duration of study programs, structure of program, contents of program, purpose of degree, bridges to traditional degree.⁴</p>			

³Recognized Institution: An institution 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 of the country.

⁴*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?] *Full-time duration of study program [e.g. What is the normal fulltime duration of the program? What is the full time duration in the home country?] *Structure of program [e.g. How is the program structured in the home country? What type of program is it, such as vocational, academic, etc.?] *Contents of the program [e.g. In what discipline of studies would their education fall under? What courses? How many hours of studies?] *Purpose of degree [e.g. For what purpose was the program completed? Was it for a professional qualification or prerequisites to further studies?] *Bridges to traditional degree [e.g. What access does the program give to other programs in the home country?]

Ideas and Resources

- 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.
- While public institutions are generally recognized, the status and recognition of private institutions can vary depending on the country. The following are examples that illustrate the rules that apply in different parts of the world.
 - Private institutions are allowed to operate but cannot label themselves “university” (e.g. India).
 - Private universities may be allowed to offer academic programs without the authority to award recognized degrees (e.g. France).
 - Institutions are physically located in one country but they are accredited in a third country (e.g. American University of Paris which has U.S. regional accreditation).⁵
 - Specific programs and degrees are recognized, but the institutions themselves are not recognized (e.g. Mexico and Canada).
 - Newly recognized institutions may have issued credentials before they were recognized (former communist countries in Eastern & Central Europe).

⁵Accreditation: A process of quality assurance through which accredited status is granted to an educational institution or program of study by responsible authorities. It means that standards of education established by accrediting organizations have been met. In Canada, educational institutions are not accredited. The term usually applies only to specific educational programs of study. The process usually includes self-assessment by the program under review and on-site visits by qualified, external reviewers from government and/or nongovernmental agencies. Degrees, diplomas, or certificates emanating from non-accredited programs do not have the same status as those issued by accredited programs and may not be recognized at all. A program’s accreditation status is normally subject to periodic review and may be withdrawn by the accrediting organization.

2.4.1 Level of Study

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
The assessment of a credential should be based entirely on the normal entry and completion requirements for that credential.			
The assessment of a credential should be based on the entry and completion requirements in place at the time that the credential was completed.			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Documents that clearly indicate successful completion of an academic year are required for assessment.</p>			
<p>Each credential presented by an individual should be assessed separately. Credentials at the same level in different programs should not be added together to equate a credential at a higher level of study.</p>			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>The assessment should be based on the credentials presented and should not cite the completion of prerequisite credentials if those prerequisite credentials are not presented for the assessment.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the educational chronology submitted by the applicant realistic? For example, is the applicant's age compatible with the educational chronology? 		

2.4.2 Duration of Study Program

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>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.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQAS has published online several Country Education Profiles that document the primary, secondary, and post-secondary education standards in the Former USSR and Russian Federation; People’s Republic of China; Republic of India; Republic of Korea; Republic of the Philippines; United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. 		

2.5 Policies and Procedures

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Procedures and criteria used in the assessment of foreign credentials should be clear, rational, and reliable. Document the methods, procedures and criteria used in order to make assessment procedures consistent and clear and to ensure all applicants receive a fair consideration.</p>			
<p>Pre-requisites, eligibility and other requirements shall be documented and indicate that they are based on data and/or expert opinion to ensure they are fair, valid and equitable.</p>			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>The assessment should take into account past practices in similar cases in order to ensure consistency. 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.</p>			
<p>Any information on which a decision is based which comes from any source other than the assessment process should be made known to the candidate. The candidate should be given the opportunity to comment on it.</p>			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Assessment should be performed without any form of discrimination (including but not limited to racial, religious, political, age or sexual). Requirements irrelevant to the safe, ethical, and competent practice of the profession or to maintaining professional standards should be eliminated.</p>			
<p>Assessment decisions are based on the information available to the regulator at the time the assessment is performed. Further information may result in modification of the decision.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many professional associations share information when processing foreign credentials. Information obtained from another agency or organization should be documented, especially if it influences the assessment. • Review credential requirements to ensure there are clear links between the competencies required to practice the occupation and the learning outcomes documented by the credential. 		

2.6 Training Assessors

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>Ensure that individuals conducting assessments or making decisions (including responding to appeals) have the information and training to perform their assigned duties and responsibilities.</p>			
<p>Identify the training needs for credential assessors or decision-makers and document that the training has been provided.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals assessing credentials or making decisions (including decisions from appeals) should receive training on how to perform credential assessments, how to write decisions and provide reasons for the decisions, how to hold appeal hearings, and any other relevant training. • Ensure that staff assessors and committee members all have appropriate orientation and training. Document the training that has been provided. 		

Section 3.0 Decisions, Responses, Reasons and Appeals

Regulated professions should provide written decisions about credential assessments and results of appeals. Processes should be transparent, impartial, objective and fair.

3.1 Decisions			
Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Reports regarding the outcome of the credential assessment should be sufficiently detailed to provide guidance to the candidate regarding any shortcomings and what remedial action could lead to recognition at a later date			
Provide unsuccessful applicants with any and all information respecting available measures or programs to obtain successful recognition of their credential.			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Decisions about credential assessments and responses to appeals should be provided within a reasonable time.			

3.2 Appeals

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Inform applicants in writing of their right to appeal the assessment decision, including the process, fees and timelines.			
Specify the format for the appeal submission (oral, in writing or by electronic means).			

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>No person who acts as a decision maker in a credential assessment should act as a decision maker in any part of an appeal process.</p>			
<p>Provide an opportunity for applicants to make submissions respecting the appeal, and allow enough time for an applicant to obtain supporting evidence from outside Canada.</p>			

Section 4.0 Access to Records

The regulatory organization should establish processes to provide to the candidate access to records held by it that are related to the credential assessment or appeal.

4.1 Obtaining Record Information			
Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Provide candidates with access to records that are related to the credential assessment unless there are other mitigating factors. ⁶			
Establish a process where requests for access to records will be considered.			

⁶Is it subject to legal privilege or any other court order? *Is there a legitimate need to protect the identity of persons in the profession who made the decision? *Could granting access negatively affect public safety? *Could granting access undermine the integrity of the assessment process?

*Could granting access reasonably be expected to threaten or harm the mental or physical health or the safety of another person?

Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
<p>When the entire record cannot be provided due to legal, privacy or safety considerations, sever the sensitive information and release the rest of the record.</p>			
<p>Provide an opportunity for applicants to make submissions respecting the appeal, and allow enough time for an applicant to obtain supporting evidence from outside Canada.</p>			
<p>Ideas and Resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review any applicable privacy legislation. • Document your policies and procedures for release of information. • Ask your third party agency to provide you with a copy of their policies and procedures for release of information to applicants. 		

Section 5.0 Reviewing and Reporting Practices

Procedures for the assessment of international credentials should be periodically reviewed with a view to increasing clarity and eliminating, when possible, requirements leading to undue complication in the procedure.

5.1 Reviewing Process			
Best Practice Indicators	Current Practices	Potential Enhancements (What would improve the process?)	Action Plan and Expected Outcomes
Periodically review procedures for evaluating international credentials to increase clarity and eliminate unnecessary requirements or simplify procedures.			
Ideas and Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has your national professional association established any guidelines or recommendations around foreign credential assessment? • Document when and how you review your assessment practices. Use this Guide and attach documents that demonstrate current practices. 		

SAMPLE WORK PLAN

Action (Be specific)	Responsibility/Resource Required	Priority (1-5) where 1 is High, 5 is Low	Timeframe

REFERENCES

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (n.d.). [General guiding principles for good practice in the assessment of foreign credentials](#).

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