



# Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation

Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)  
Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)  
Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

Funded by – Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC)



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Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in  
International Credential Evaluation

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Project Manager - Keith Johnson

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## Executive Summary

Labour market shortages, especially in skilled professions, are becoming increasingly prevalent in Canada's economy. Demographic trends are likely to accentuate these shortages in the coming years. The confluence of low domestic birth rates and widespread retirements will put significant pressure on both the private and public sector to seek out innovative strategies to meet their future labour market needs. An immigration strategy focused on attracting and integrating skilled individuals into the workforce is an important way to make up this anticipated shortfall and help ensure the continued vitality of Canada's economy for years to come.

However, successful integration is a complex and multi-faceted process involving a number of different stakeholders. One of its key components involves the assessment and recognition of international credentials. Unless those individuals or groups ultimately responsible for recognizing diplomas earned abroad (i.e. employers, regulators, universities) are suitably informed on the Canadian value of a credential, it is unlikely that they will be sufficiently confident in admitting someone with education acquired outside of Canada into their company, profession, or school. Assessment agencies, which verify documents from international credential-granting institutions and conduct research to offer an educated opinion on the Canadian comparability of international credentials, can help to bridge this informational gap.

Funding provided through Human Resources and Social Development Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition program in partnership with The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (under the responsibility of the Council of Ministers of Education,

Canada) and the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada has allowed for a comprehensive diagnostic study to investigate the consistency and portability of assessments conducted in Canada. To this end, consultations with stakeholders (some of whom are both assessors and end users), quantitative and qualitative surveys as well as a series of focus groups with the immigrant clients and end users of credential assessments, were performed between November 2007 and May 2008.

Research suggests that while the majority of evaluations conducted by ACESC members and the other assessment agencies (CES, ICAS) are relatively consistent, there are instances when the opinions offered on an international credential are different. These cases are especially problematic in a regulatory environment where the interpretation of that international credential and associated competencies may either admit or deny an immigrant access to their intended profession. It has also been found, via a detailed policy comparison, that the processes and methodologies employed differ among surveyed agencies. While it would be unreasonable to assume that all assessments conducted by agencies in Canada would be exactly the same, it appears that there are opportunities to better harmonize these practices in an effort to promote improved consistency.

Other groups not directly affiliated with this project that also provide evaluations (e.g. regulatory bodies, professional associations, sector councils, universities, colleges, employers), were consulted regarding their internal assessment practices. Due to staff and resource limitations, many of these organizations have fairly ad hoc credentialing operations and are unable to carry out primary research on a regular basis. The vast majority of those questioned indicated a willingness to subscribe to a set of pan-Canadian quality assurance standards that would help guide and direct their activities.

*Moreover, these groups felt that increased opportunities to work with other groups performing assessments would go a long way to improving the consistency of assessments and fostering a more closely knit community of assessors in Canada.*





In sum, diagnostic research indicates that there is both a need and opportunity to harmonize credential assessment in this country and improve the access of these services to the immigrant client. Consultations with key stakeholders and the project's Evaluation Working Group determined that future initiatives aimed at the creation of pan-Canadian standards, greater networking opportunities, improved information sharing and joint research projects can help to effect positive change in this area. Changes directed at promoting consistency, and therefore portability, of assessments can help to simplify and expedite the integration process, a boon for both the individual immigrant and Canada's economy alike. Based on the research conducted, a total of 11 recommendations have been proffered. These fall into three larger categories of action: policy modifications, professional development and information systems.

### Policy Modifications

- **Recommendation 1:** Update the glossary of terms hosted on the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) website.
- **Recommendation 2:** Improve harmonization of document requirements and verification procedures.
- **Recommendation 3:** Create a pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to help guide the assessment practices and policies of all groups that perform credential evaluations.

### Professional Development

- **Recommendation 4:** Provide regular workshop and networking opportunities for credential assessors from across Canada.
- **Recommendation 5:** Produce a set of jointly researched country profiles.
- **Recommendation 6:** Hold annual meetings with key stakeholders in the credential assessment community.
- **Recommendation 7:** Develop a "competency profile" specific to credential assessors.
- **Recommendation 8:** Develop a college/university certificate/degree program for credential assessors.
- **Recommendation 9:** Improve public awareness, especially among employers, regarding the role of assessment agencies.

### Information Systems

- **Recommendation 10:** Develop a shared resource database for groups performing credential assessments.
- **Recommendation 11:** Conduct a feasibility study on developing a national internet portal for free overseas pre-assessments.

# Introduction

**Despite the prospect of a recession faced by our biggest trading partner and weakness in our own manufacturing sector, at the time this report is written, Canada's unemployment stands at its lowest level in 33 years<sup>1</sup>.**

From a macro-economic perspective, very high levels of employment can be a mixed blessing. When full employment is coupled with a skilled and fluid labour force, the economy is able to expand, resulting in an improved national standard of living. In contrast, an insufficient supply of labour, especially in an economy as regionalized as Canada's, can have destabilizing effects as it ultimately puts upward pressure on wages and prices. Higher interest rates, while curbing inflation, can exacerbate fiscal weakness in other parts of the country, leading to a regionally lopsided economy. In short, labour force availability and fluidity is essential in ensuring stability and prosperity for all of Canada.

It is doubtful that labour shortages in Canada will abate any time soon. The combination of historically low domestic birth rates and the imminent retirements of workers in the "baby boom" generation will serve to heighten the problems we are experiencing now. A steady and reliable influx of skilled immigrants is one way we will be able to meet our current and future labour needs. In fact, Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) estimates that "by 2012, 100% of all net, new labour market growth will be the result of immigration"<sup>2</sup>. With that said, Canada's economy will undoubtedly go through periods of flux over the long term. As a result, labour market conditions will vary over time but these trends should not mitigate the importance of ensuring the effective and expeditious integration of newcomers into the workforce. Harmonization of credential assessment policies and practices will help to foster labour market fluidity over the long run, resulting in a more resilient and flexible Canadian economy.

While immigration to Canada has increased over the past decade, many skilled workers are having difficulty becoming fully integrated into their chosen fields of expertise. According to Statistics Canada's "Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada", 6 in 10 newcomers worked in a different occupational group after their arrival<sup>3</sup>. Research conducted by Leslyanne Hawthorn revealed that a lack of Canadian experience and credential recognition are perceived to be the most serious labour market barriers by new immigrants<sup>4</sup>. Although immigrants are selected by Canada and Quebec based on a point system where they are rewarded for their academic qualifications (in addition to other factors as per the "human capital" model), the selection process used by CIC or the Quebec Ministère de l'Immigration et des Communautés culturelles does not guarantee them a job in their chosen profession. Hence, it is often a confusing prospect for newcomers to navigate the various career and regulatory pathways that lead to full employment. This is in part due to the fact 1) that education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories of Canada and that educational systems vary from one jurisdiction to another; and 2) that assessments issued by credential assessment services are advisory and respect the autonomy and specific assessment and recognition objectives of post-secondary institutions, professional regulatory bodies and employers with regards to hiring, admission, membership, and certification decisions. In other words, in Canada the assessment and recognition of credentials are under the direct jurisdiction of a variety of bodies, at both the provincial/territorial and the pan-Canadian levels: it has been estimated that there are "more than 50 regulated occupations, 400 regulatory bodies,"<sup>5</sup> eight assessment agencies (adhering to the General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, inspired by the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention) and 427 recognized and authorized postsecondary education institutions involved in the evaluation and recognition of credentials. This complexity contributes to the difficulties some skilled immigrants may encounter, resulting in cases of under and unemployment.



Systemic inefficiencies in the field of credential assessment and recognition have detrimental consequences for all Canadians. Studies suggest that unnecessary barriers in our system of credential recognition can affect the economy in a variety of ways, including increased cost to the welfare system, loss of employers who cannot find skilled labour, expenditures associated with unnecessary retraining and loss of revenue due to unemployment<sup>6</sup>. The cost of non-recognition of skills and credentials to our economy has been estimated to be between \$2.4 and \$15 billion annually<sup>7,8</sup>. As such, efforts need to be made now to better integrate newcomers into the workforce in order to safeguard the continued labour market and financial viability of Canada's economy. It should also be noted however, that demand pressure should not be the sole motivator for harmonizing the practice of credential evaluation in this country. The economic and social well-being of the immigrant is vital and must be kept in mind when formulating remedial action. The ability to work fully in one's profession contributes directly to enhanced personal development, access to employment and, ultimately, quality of life<sup>9</sup>.

At present, pan-Canadian standards governing the practice of international credential assessments do not exist. While there are internationally recognized general guiding principles for good practice in the assessment of international credentials, which are widely used in the practice of credential evaluation, for the most part each organization employs its own methodology when verifying the authenticity of documents and determining the academic comparability of education received outside of Canada. While there may be no assurance that an immigrant will receive a consistent evaluation of

their credentials from one evaluation service to another, evaluations offered in most cases are far more similar than they are different. Moreover, some variability is to be expected as each agency offers an assessment based on their provincial/territorial jurisdiction. However, there is a higher probability that a myriad of approaches will yield a myriad of outcomes. This potential lack of consistency leads to a convoluted and confusing system for the immigrant client. The inconvenience of having numerous assessments done during the integration process can place undue cost on the immigrant and cause unnecessary delays in the integration process. Moreover, it can encourage newcomers to "shop around" for the most favourable assessment of their educational background, a practice that undermines the very integrity of the credential assessment system.

Hence, it is the critical and necessary goal of the work conducted herein to begin to better harmonize the practice of credential evaluation at a Canadian level. Specifically, the research undertaken as part of this work aims to lay the groundwork for a set of pan-Canadian policy and practice standards to guide the work of all credential assessing bodies. Much positive change and goodwill has been realized over the past decade in related sectors. Many regulatory bodies, colleges and universities have signed mutual recognition agreements and undertaken other joint projects which have helped improve the fluidity of Canada's labour market. It is hoped that similar work can be accomplished within the credential assessment community. Cooperative initiatives in this field will expedite the integration process, reduce cases of under- and unemployment among newcomers and contribute to a simplification and greater transparency of the credential evaluation system.

## Project Background

To expedite the integration of internationally trained workers into the labour market, Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) has allocated a total of \$73 million to its Foreign Credential recognition (FCR) program to be spent over a period of six years<sup>10</sup>.

In January 2007, the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) in cooperation with the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) and its parent organization, the Council of Ministers of Education Canada (CMEC), received funds from FCR to research the development of pan-Canadian quality standards in international credential assessment that would ultimately help to harmonize the practice of credential recognition in Canada.

**Table 1: ACESC Membership**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Jurisdiction</b>
Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS)	Manitoba
Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec (CEFAHQ)	Québec
International Credential and Evaluation Service (ICES)	British Columbia
International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)	Alberta, Saskatchewan, Northwest Territories
World Education Services (WES)	Ontario

A multidisciplinary steering body was assembled to provide guidance and direction to this initiative. This “Evaluation Working Group” consists of representatives from: Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS), Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC), Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec (CEFAHQ), Comparative Education Service (CES), Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET), Engineers Canada, International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS), International Credential and Evaluation Service (ICES), International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS), Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC) and World Education Services (WES).

The work undertaken in this project is both diagnostic and prescriptive. The research plan aims to better describe the assessment landscape in Canada and highlight opportunities for potential harmonization and cooperation. Under the direction of the Evaluation Working Group, diagnostic findings are translated into a series of specific recommendations on how the consistency and portability of assessments in Canada can be improved. This project is intended as the first phase of what may become a multi-phase initiative. Should the necessary resources be secured, future phases will be programmatic in nature and will be aimed at bringing the assessment community closer together for the well-being of the immigrant client and at better addressing current labour market imperatives, while at the same time maintaining high standards for quality service and public safety.



# Canada's International Obligations

When reviewing the information set out below and contemplating future action, it is instructive to consider Canada's role within the greater context of international credential evaluation and recognition. Specifically the Lisbon Convention (1997), which is on the verge of Canadian ratification, places certain obligations on those that perform credential assessments. It provides for the fact that all individuals with qualifications,<sup>11</sup> obtained in any of the participant countries, "shall have adequate access, upon request to the appropriate body, to an assessment of these qualifications".<sup>12</sup>

Moreover, these assessments are to be born from a fair, transparent, methodology and processed in a reasonable time. Educational institutions and other competent authorities are mentioned specifically as having the responsibility of providing accurate and timely information to international partners.

*As well, the Lisbon Convention states that a centralized agency exists (i.e. CICIC) to give advice and information on recognition matters and assessment of qualifications, to both individuals and institutions, including students, academic institutions, ministries of education and other national information centres around the world.*

It is the mandate of this body to coordinate activities among those groups in the country that perform credential assessments, specifically in the areas of setting and promoting best practices, sharing information on educational systems and assessment techniques and implementing "common information strategies for production, selection, quality assurance, presentation and provision of information on recognition-related issues".<sup>13</sup> Hence, future efforts made towards pan-Canadian standardization in the area of credential assessment will benefit from the coordination and expertise of CICIC.



# “Assessment” Compared to “Recognition”

It is important that a clear understanding regarding the parameters of this project be made at the outset of this investigation. The research conducted herein and any recommendations and future actions that flow from this report relate directly to the field of international credential “assessment” (also referred to as “evaluation”).

Specifically, this practice consists of an expert third party offering a professional opinion on the value, in a specific provincial/territorial context in Canada, of a paper, educational credential or qualification obtained outside that context. While there is a host of other activities associated with the successful integration of a new immigrant into the Canadian workforce, our work is focused solely on harmonizing the practice of credential evaluation in this sense.

It is also necessary to make a distinction between the practice of credential “assessment” and “recognition”. Credential assessment is defined as “the identification and measurement of learning, credentials, and other forms of qualifications required for entry into programs of study or occupations. Assessment may include testing, examinations, or other prescribed activities.” On the other hand, recognition is defined as the “acknowledgement and/or acceptance of prior academic,

professional, or vocational training, work experience, or credentials, and the granting of full or partial credit for it or them with respect to entry into an academic institution...or a trade or profession.”<sup>14</sup>

A number of organizations, namely regulators and academic institutions, perform both assessment and recognition functions. These groups evaluate the educational credentials of an applicant and, using this information, determine whether they meet prescribed admission or entry to practice requirements. In Canada, approximately 15% of all occupations are regulated<sup>15</sup>; in these cases it is advisable for new arrivals to contact the appropriate regulatory body first to determine the standards necessary to practice. The remaining 85% of occupations in this country are unregulated. In these professions, the employers do not have a regulator to rely on for an outside opinion of an immigrant’s qualifications. As a result, employers greatly benefit from the credentialing services offered by a third party. Based on their in-house expertise and international references, Canadian assessment agencies will offer an evaluation of the comparability, in a specific provincial/territorial context in Canada, of formal education/training acquired from an institution situated abroad, or in some cases, in another Canadian jurisdiction. However, this is simply a professional opinion; where the proverbial rubber hits the road is when the university/college, regulatory body or employer applies this assessment for the purposes of academic admission, entry to practice or employment. Both the assessment and the recognition of credentials are central to the integration process; however, the focus of this work is confined to the former.

## What Do Assessment Agencies Do?

An account of the similarities and differences in the policies and practices assessment agencies employ when offering an evaluation of an international credential is set out later in this report. However, for those not directly immersed in the day-to-day mechanics of credential evaluation, a brief account of the basic methodology applied by all services when producing an assessment of an academic credential is instructive at this point.



# Typical Steps Taken in the Credential Assessment Process



In order to initiate the process, the assessment agency will request that an applicant submit documentation supporting their academic experience (i.e. diplomas, degrees, transcripts, etc.). Some agencies will require only original versions, while others may accept certified copies of these documents; if these are not in English or French, a certified translation is typically requested. In cases where appropriate documentation is impossible to obtain, some agencies will allow the applicant to swear an affidavit as to their education and will conduct research to confirm the validity of that claim. Once all documents have been suitably received, agency staff will attempt to confirm their legitimacy. In this process, credential assessors seek to verify the authenticity of the documents themselves, as well as the existence and status of the issuing institution and program. While fraud is rare (typically less than 2% of all applications), verification is critical in ensuring the integrity of the assessment process. Once verification is completed, assessors will

reference their internal databases to determine whether an opinion has been offered in the past for that specific school/program/year of study. These precedent files guide the work of the assessors and help to ensure the ongoing internal consistency of assessments. Where no precedent exists, the credential assessor makes use of in-house resources, Canadian resources, as well as international references, to research the facts surrounding an international credential and formulate an assessment as to its Canadian/provincial comparability. They will take into account criteria which include admission requirements, duration of the program, relative standing of the program/institution within the educational system in making this determination. This evaluation is communicated by mail to the immigrant client or the end user who requested the evaluation. Should the client disagree with the findings of the agency, most agencies offer an appeal process to discuss and review their findings.



# Future Demand for Assessment Services

At present, ACESC members and the two other assessment agencies operating in Canada, (CES, ICAS) produce assessments for approximately 48,000 individuals annually. While the research conducted provides only a snapshot of the volume of assessments done in the past year, anecdotally, these groups suggest that the number of assessments they perform increases on an annual basis by approximately 2–5%. This growth is likely to persist, and even accelerate, in the coming years due to a number of reinforcing factors set out below.

The first relates to general immigration trends in Canada. According to recently released Statistics Canada data, the pace of immigration in this country has been gradually increasing, and markedly so, in the in the past five years. Between 1991 and 1995 a total of 823,925 immigrants arrived in Canada. During the next census period (1996–2000) that figure increased marginally to 844,625. However, in the most recent interval (2001–2006), 1,109,980 individuals immigrated to Canada, equivalent to an increase of 31.4% over the previous period<sup>16</sup>. Policy statements made in 2006 by CIC suggest that we can expect this accelerated trend to continue. The target for immigration in 2007 was raised by 15,000 to a total of 265,000 individuals<sup>17</sup>; an increase of 6% over the previous year.

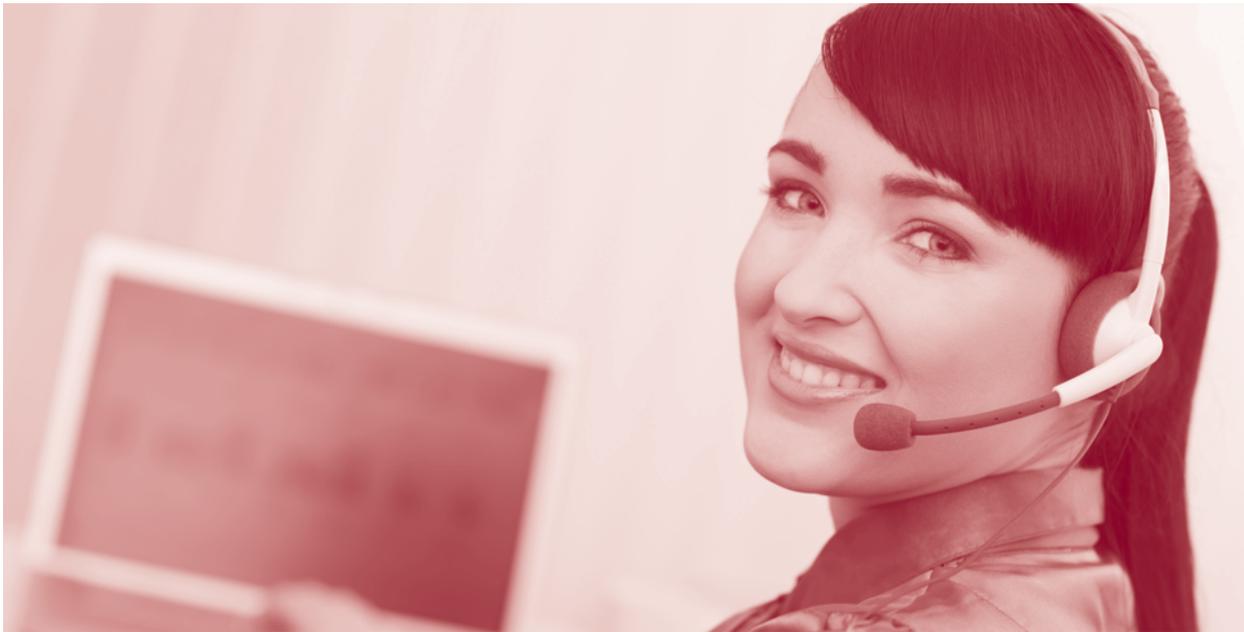
The academic background of newcomers arriving in Canada is also likely to put upward pressure on the future demand for credential assessments. Those arriving in Canada today are more educated than those who arrived a decade ago.

**Table 2: New Workers – 15 Years of Age and Older (Education)**

Level of Schooling Attained	1997	2006
0–9 years of schooling	17.2%	15.1%
10–12 years of schooling	32.1%	22.3%
13 or more years of schooling	11.6%	9.6%
Trade Certificate	11.1%	6.8%
Non-University Diploma	8.0%	13.3%
Bachelor's Degree	16.3%	23.9%
Master's Degree	3.0%	7.0%
Doctorate	0.7%	1.9%

CIC data, 2006





As per the most recently available data from CIC, 32.8% of immigrants admitted to Canada in 2006 held either a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree as compared with 20.0% in 1997<sup>18</sup>. An additional 13.3% of the 2006 cohort held a diploma, significantly more than the 8.0% reported in 1997. While agencies do evaluate credentials from high school, the majority of assessments performed are at the university and college level. Hence, an increasingly educated pool of immigrants is likely to result in greater demand for the services of assessment agencies. Quebec's immigration has moved in a similar fashion, because of the adjustment made to their point system in October, 2007, favouring those applicants with technical and vocational backgrounds; this decision will increase the number of newcomers in that province seeking evaluation for vocational and technical credentials.

Improved public awareness of the services provided by assessment agencies will also augment demand for credential assessments. Nearly 106,000 immigrants were admitted into Canada under the skilled worker class (including dependents) in 2006; this does not include the thousands of other educated/skilled individuals who arrive in Canada under the family class of immigration or persons admitted on humanitarian grounds. As mentioned above, assessment agencies in Canada (ACESC members, CES, ICAS) evaluate the credentials of approximately 48,000 of these individuals each year. While some immigrants will not have their credentials evaluated at all, and others may have assessments done by regulators and academic institutions directly, it is

likely that there remains additional room for growth in this field. Studies have demonstrated that employers, the largest potential user group of credential assessments, are one of the least knowledgeable in this area. A comprehensive survey conducted by Sandra Lopes in 2004, showed that of 2,091 employers, only 46% had ever verified international credentials and 80% could not name a credential assessment agency<sup>19</sup>. A portion of these respondents represented small and medium size enterprises (SMEs), the groups that have relatively limited human resource departments and therefore would benefit the most from third-party expertise in this area.

*In short, increasing public awareness, especially among employers, is likely to augment demand for credential assessments in Canada.*

Finally, new arrivals admitted under the skilled worker class are expected to increase over the coming years as our domestic labour shortage persists, and through the expansion of the Provincial Nominee Program. Moreover, with the introduction of Bill C-50 new powers allow the Federal Government to fast track the entry of those immigrants with desirable skills. It is these individuals (i.e. skilled workers with degrees/diplomas/trade certificates earned in their home country) who are expected to seek the services of credential assessment agencies.

# Research Structure and Methodology

As mentioned above, the work conducted herein is primarily of a fact-finding nature. In an effort to make better-informed and practical decisions on how to harmonize the practice of credential assessment in Canada, a number of secondary objectives have been developed; specifically, the research conducted aims to address the following:

1. To perform an analysis of assessment agency practices, methods, and policies;
2. To achieve a better understanding of credential assessment processes and practices;
3. To develop a set of recommendations to achieve increased use of a common set of standards and practices by ACESC member organizations and other groups performing credential assessments, ultimately improving their portability within Canada;
4. To strengthen partnerships with other credential evaluation organizations and related key stakeholder groups.

Plainly stated, these objectives aim to describe the current processes involved in credential evaluation, suggest how the consistency/portability of credential assessments among ACESC members and other key groups performing credential assessments be improved and to indicate what mechanisms can be employed to disseminate those practices and policies to the wider assessment community in Canada. Central to this investigation are the dual concepts of “portability” and “consistency”. These concepts have an important causal relationship. That is to say, portability becomes unworkable without systemic consistency as end users (employers, regulators, educational institutions, etc.) are unlikely to accept assessments from different sources if the methodologies and associated outcomes are

known to be different. Hence, ensuring the consistency of evaluation practices and policies is a necessary first step. However, this step alone will not immediately translate into pan-Canadian portability. While the consistency of assessments is an essential condition of portability, it is not the only one. True pan-Canadian portability will require the efforts of a multiplicity of stakeholders, including those who are directly involved in determining professional, educational, and skill requirements in the recognition of credentials. It is only when documentation standards and evaluation outcomes have been harmonized and communicated adequately to the end users of assessments that meaningful portability will become possible.

Portability in the context of this project refers to the overall ease with which information regarding an individual’s international credentials can be transferred and recognized by a variety of groups across Canada. Portability in this sense can therefore include an assessment agency accepting and using another agency’s evaluation. It can also refer to acceptance of evaluations conducted by other groups that perform credential assessments (regulatory bodies, educational institutions, sector councils, etc.). It is also important to note that the notion of portability in this investigation is not limited to the final assessment itself. Elements of the evaluation process, such as verified and authenticated documents, can also be made more portable by introducing pan-Canadian standards which aim to improve the consistency of assessments conducted in this country. In short, any gains made regarding the portability of any of the components of evaluations among the organizations that perform them will ultimately help to expedite the integration of newcomers into the workforce.

The research plan ultimately employed was developed with these issues in mind. A three-pronged approach was taken to answer the following questions: i) is there an issue related to the portability and consistency of credential assessment in Canada? ii) if so, what are the roots of these discrepancies? iii) what is the quantitative scope of the problem? A series of interrelated research tools was developed to explore these three questions.



- i) The initial question related to the potential of a consistency/portability problem was originally going to be examined via a comprehensive survey of all those applicants who had had an assessment done over the past five years. However, in view of logistical considerations as well as privacy laws and regulations, a qualitative approach was preferred. Firstly, credential assessors attending the National Workshop of Credential Evaluators were asked to prepare their opinions on a series of cases. These results were compared to help determine whether separate assessment agencies having received the same documentation would arrive at a similar conclusion regarding the value of an internationally-obtained credential. As well, two types of focus groups were commissioned. The first involved the “end users” of credential assessments (i.e. regulatory bodies, academic institutions and employers). They were asked to comment on the assessment services/products they make use of and whether they had received different findings from assessment agencies. The second set of focus groups consisted of the immigrant clients who had requested an evaluation from an assessment agency. These individuals were asked to discuss the purpose of their evaluation and any portability issues they faced while using it to gain employment, meet entry-to-practice standards, or seek admission to a Canadian educational institution.
- ii) To investigate the root causes of evaluation discrepancies, a policy comparison was performed by an individual who was formerly a senior policy advisor with an assessment agency. Participating organizations (i.e. ACESC members, ICAS, CES) were asked to describe in detail the policies and processes they use when offering an assessment of an internationally obtained credential. A sample of survey questions included: Who determines policy for the agency? Are policies reviewed by

an individual or a committee? What references are used when making an evaluation? What methods are used to verify documents? What is your appeals process? How does your organization define a master’s/bachelor degree or a technical/technological program? Similar questions were posed at the National Workshop of Credential Evaluators, a meeting of 60 credential assessors from across Canada. Their feedback on the issues concerning document requirements, verification and evaluation allowed for a perspective on the procedural similarities and differences in assessment practices resident in the Canadian evaluation community at large. Collectively, this information provided an educative contrast on the range of evaluation practices and policies in operation across the country.

- iii) Finally, to better gauge the scope of any portability/consistency issues, two quantitative surveys were administered. The first, dubbed the “Assessment Agency Survey” was completed by the groups directly involved in the project and provided data on topics related to the type and quantity of assessments performed annually. The second survey or “General Assessment Survey” was disseminated to a variety of other groups that perform credential assessments in Canada (e.g. regulators, educational institutions, sector councils) and sought similar quantitative data as well as information concerning their current use of assessment agencies.

The combination of these research tools allows for a holistic view of the current credential assessment landscape in Canada. Moreover, the confluence of qualitative and quantitative data serves to highlight both the nature and the scope of areas that may warrant future attention. A detailed description and associated findings of each research tool is provided below.

# Immigrant Client Focus Groups

## Description

During the months of March and April 2008 participating agencies (ACESC members, CES, ICAS) included an information sheet with all evaluations that were issued to immigrant clients. These sheets alerted applicants to a series of focus groups to be conducted on credential evaluation in Canada. Interested parties were directed to a website site administered by a third-party moderator who provided additional details on the research process. As no incentives were offered to participants, the total number of immigrant clients who ultimately participated was fairly limited. It is therefore advisable that, from a research perspective, significant generalizations not be made from the findings set out below. Due to the geographic distribution of respondents, a combination of one-on-one telephone interviews, as well as a focus group was carried out. All sessions were conducted by an experienced moderator; clients were assured that no personally identifying information would be published or shared with the organization that performed their assessment.

In both the focus groups and the interviews, clients were asked to comment on their experiences in commissioning and receiving an evaluation and for what use they commissioned the evaluation (e.g. for scholastic, employment or entry-to-practice purposes) and to describe any problems they had regarding the portability of their assessment.

## Findings

For the most part, participants are pleased with the services they received from assessment agencies. Cost, timeliness, accuracy, and responsiveness all rated well by the immigrant clients in attendance. Those who felt they did not have their credentials assessed “favourably” assert that the process would benefit from greater transparency. Clients appeared to believe that the only official communication received from the agency is a letter which basically says “equivalent”, “close to equivalent” or “not equivalent.” Improved disclosure of the evaluation process to the immigrant client was felt to be beneficial. Participants also indicated that they would appreciate an on-line resource that would give them an indication of the “Canadian” comparability of their education prior to commissioning a full evaluation.

Some respondents noted that they had faced conflicting evaluations from one or more assessment agencies. One such case described was particularly sensitive as the outcome effectively determined whether the client gained admission into a regulated profession or was required to take significant additional course work to make up the difference between their education and the acceptable Canadian standard to practice their profession or trade. As one participant noted, “those inconsistencies are not fair, and it’s hard for us... we end up getting stuck between two assessments, we’re put in a hard spot”. On a broader scale, this type of discrepancy can cost both the immigrant and the Canadian economy a loss in revenue and significantly delay the integration process. Moreover, it reinforces the importance of encouraging immigrants trained in a regulated profession to contact their regulator first in order to determine the most efficient route to employment that is commensurate with the person’s education and skills.



# End User Focus Groups

## Description

To better estimate the utility and consistency of evaluations performed by Canadian agencies, focus groups were also conducted with the end-users of credential assessments. During the months of April and May, 2008, a total of three sessions were held in Calgary, AB Toronto, ON and Montreal, QC with individuals representing academic institutions, employers and regulatory bodies. Discussions were guided by an experienced moderator who questioned participants on their use of evaluations, experience with assessment agencies and the perceived benefit of introducing pan-Canadian standards.

## Findings

Employers that participated in these sessions generally viewed credential evaluation as an important, but not necessarily essential, step in determining the suitability of a potential hire. While those in attendance saw value in a comparison of paper credentials earned abroad against a credential delivered in Canada, most indicated they were more interested in skill transferability, ability of the candidate to do upgrading programs and language proficiency.

The general sentiment among this group was that, if presented with an evaluation from an agency they were not aware of, employers would simply investigate the agency on the Web to gauge its legitimacy, but would have no formal way of judging the quality of the evaluation or how it was performed. Similarly, if faced with an evaluation that was contrary to what they would expect, or if two different evaluations from different sources were presented to them, they would rely on their own judgment and experience to resolve the issues that this would raise.

Academic institutions generally had greater awareness of the services offered by assessment agencies than did employers, with some representatives aware of the ACESC in particular. Those groups who were familiar with ACESC would normally accept evaluations performed by all members. Typically, educational institutions indicated that they use assessment agencies to verify documents, the status of the issuing institution and to solicit an evaluation of a credential in a Canadian context. The academic institution then relies on internal resources to perform an evaluation of individual course content. The volume of work commissioned from assessment agencies varied

among those consulted, however; a number of participants reported performing evaluations of approximately four international applicants per week.

Of those participating in the focus groups, regulatory bodies demonstrated the greatest experience working with assessment agencies. Many of the regulators used third-party expertise to determine the value of an academic credential in a Canadian context where no precedent file exists. While some regulators have sufficient in-house capacity to perform all aspects of the assessment themselves, a number of those in attendance had reached special agreements with certain agencies allowing them to “un-bundle” the typical service offering. For example, some regulators would commission only the verification or translation of documents and then perform the assessment internally. This type of flexibility of service offerings was appreciated by participants. As well, regulatory bodies were very supportive regarding the idea of developing pan-Canadian standards and developing new made-for-Canada references. They felt that, in addition to the use of common policies, these modifications would help to improve the overall consistency of evaluations in Canada.

End users in all focus groups reported circumstances where the same set of credentials was given different evaluations by separate assessment agencies. Participants voiced concern over these instances as it caused a great deal of time and effort to resolve the issue. Moreover, in cases where the assessments were used in a “high-stakes” environment (i.e. in a situation where the results of an evaluation would have a very high impact on an applicant’s potential access to employment), a difference in assessment results from one agency to another can be distinctly problematic. In one instance, a regulator reported that an agency changed its view of one international academic institution, deeming it a college instead of a university; the other agency consulted still contended that the school held university status. This presented a real challenge for the regulator as a university education was an essential element of their entry to practice requirements. An interdisciplinary panel had to be convened to determine which assessment was considered to be the most appropriate, and establish how in future such situations should be resolved. As a result, this particular regulator cited the development of shared references, as well as joint research projects, as means of better harmonizing assessment outcomes in an effort to avoid similar occurrences in the future.

# Stakeholder Forum

## Description

In August 2007, 60 stakeholders gathered in Toronto to share their experiences in using credential evaluations and to gather information on the purpose and scope of the “Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation” project. Participants represented management and evaluators from all provincially mandated credential evaluation services, as well as other key evaluation agencies, universities, regulatory bodies, sector councils, employers, and immigrant-serving agencies (see Appendix 5 for complete attendee list).

Presentations made by CICIC staff and contracted researchers provided a description of the goals associated with the project and a preliminary outline of the research plan. A panel consisting of one employer, two regulators, and a representative of an academic institution offered their views on the topic in plenary. Specifically, these organizations provided information on their own services, the type of credential assessments they commission from third parties, and any issues they faced regarding consistency of these assessments.

*A central item discussed at the Forum was the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) developed by ACESC in 1999<sup>20</sup> (see Appendix 4).*

This document sets out a series of guidelines for adhering bodies to follow to ensure a fair, equitable and transparent evaluation process. One of the objectives of this project is to determine how this document could be modified to have pan-Canadian applicability, and therefore be used to guide the operations of any groups in Canada performing credential evaluation. Attendees were asked for their input on what steps should be taken to broaden the scope of the existing QAF to make it a truly pan-Canadian document, and which groups should be consulted in the process.

## Findings

On the whole, panelists saw significant value in the services offered by assessment agencies and found that third-party evaluations aided and expedited their internal credential assessment processes. End users also noted that the majority of agencies were responsive to their changing needs and tailored their service offerings accordingly. Regulators in attendance indicated that they rely on credential evaluation agencies mainly for authentication of documents and verification of the status of the issuing programs/institutions but that they assess program content and develop prior learning and assessment recognition (PLAR) approaches themselves. An educational institution indicated they use third-party assessments of program content and will grant advanced standing depending on the number of hours and levels of topics covered. Some problems had been encountered with external credential evaluations; these ranged from an agency retaining original documents without notice to inconsistent postsecondary assessments.

Participants offered a number of suggestions regarding the modification of the existing QAF including: establishing a governance model that would ensure/encourage adherence to QAF principles, clarifying how the principles are applied (process, decisions – tools, monitoring of practice, qualifications of assessors, etc.), editing the QAF to reflect current legislation and policy regarding, for example, record retention, privacy of personal information and developing a plan to handle the expansion of new members. As well, it was suggested that the current membership criteria be adjusted to allow the participation of a number of credential assessing bodies such as regulators, academic institutions, and professional associations.



# National Workshop of Credential Evaluators

## Description

In December 2007, a total of 60 assessors from across Canada were invited to Edmonton, Alberta to share their opinions and expertise on the practice of credential evaluation in Canada. In addition to representatives from the organizations directly affiliated with this project, attendees included assessors from regulatory bodies, sector councils, professional associations, universities and colleges (see Appendix 6 for complete attendee list).

Assessors convened for two days to discuss their approaches to credential evaluation as well as issues related to document requirements and verification of document authenticity. In addition, participating agencies provided an overview of their services and an update on country profiles that certain organizations had developed independently. Participants also met in small groups to discuss the findings from cases that they were asked to prepare and to offer their opinions on how the current ACESC Quality Assurance Framework could be updated and altered such that it would have pan-Canadian applicability.

## Findings

Presentations were given by a number of participating assessment agencies on the services and research projects they are currently engaged in. While most of these organizations have fairly similar methodologies and service offerings, the capacity of each to carry out research is manifestly different. A number of the larger agencies had produced a succession of country profiles describing the educational landscape of key source countries and setting out basic comparison grids. Other organizations did not have the internal resources necessary to carry out primary research, and therefore relied on a different set of third-party references.

It was also found that while all groups performed some type of document verification, there seemed to be no generalized approach. For example, some agencies would accept affidavits and sworn statements under certain circumstances, with respect to documentation, while other agencies would only accept originals that had been obtained directly from the issuing institution. Many agencies used a document alert and added flags to files if they suspected fraud.

In terms of references, all agencies reported relying on CDs of catalogued information from a variety of sources, embassies, monographs on education systems done by American associations, university Web sites, databases of all kinds, information from the European Network of Information Centres in the European Region (ENIC) and a wealth of other material. No standard, pan-Canadian references exist that all groups can refer to. A number of agencies carry out original research on a variety of countries; however, as mentioned above, for some groups with limited resources, this type of work is impossible. Hence, participants agreed that jointly initiated country profiles from a Canadian perspective, with attention paid to the mandates of provincial and territorial educational systems, would be extremely useful, as would further conferences to share information. It was also suggested that databases should be shared and that current information on international education systems could be consolidated according to a number of different categories that could be determined in future meetings. In this way, all assessment agencies, whether provincially or territorially mandated agencies, regulatory bodies, or educational institutions, would be working from the same updated sources of information when forming an evaluation of an international credential.

Generally, it was felt that frequent networking opportunities for assessors would be of great benefit to allow for the sharing of information and best practices across the country. Participants agreed that evaluation agencies should carry out more joint case studies in order to calibrate their approaches and standardize outcomes to promote increased consistency. Common staff training protocols and a glossary of terms and definitions would also be useful next steps in this regard. Assessors were of the opinion that all would gain from a listserv of all current staff of credential agencies, noting their areas of expertise, in order to generate improved networking and information sharing. This would help to encourage the use of pan-Canadian standards, and ultimately promote the portability of evaluations.

One of the most telling outcomes from the Workshop came about while discussing the cases that all evaluators were instructed to prepare. In advance of the workshop, participating agencies were given documents related to

**Table 3: Discussion Group Findings**

	<b>Russia: Nursing Diploma</b>	<b>Germany: Forestry Diploma</b>	<b>Philippines: Bachelor of Science (BSc)</b>
<b>Group 1</b>	Secondary vocational/ post-secondary diploma	BSc/BSc plus one year grad	One-year/two-year/ three-year
<b>Group 2</b>	Grade 12 vocational, post-secondary	Four-year BSc /plus one year grad	One year university/ three-year BSc
<b>Group 3</b>	Grade 12 secondary vocational/plus college	Four-year BSc /plus some master's level	Grade 12/associate degree/ technologist
<b>Group 4</b>	Vocational secondary/college	Four-year BSc /one year grad	One year university
<b>Group 5</b>	Grade 12 vocational/ plus college	Four-year BSc /plus grad	Grade 12/associate degree/ technology

the education of three separate individuals: a Diploma in Nursing from Russia, a Diploma in Forestry from Germany and a Bachelor of Science from the Philippines. **Table 3** outlines the findings of the discussion groups.

The difference in opinions offered by each group can be attributed to a number of factors. Firstly, the cases that were analyzed were known to be difficult ones, chosen specifically to generate discussion among the assessors in attendance. It is likely that more typical cases would not yield such different results. Secondly, some variation can be expected in assessment results due to the fact there is some variation in the educational jurisdictions they represent and operate within. When an evaluation

is offered, the comparability is based on a comparison of the international credential to the provincial/territorial education system that particular agency operates within. As well, terminology and language may also give rise to different results. As such, it was suggested that the development of glossary of common terms and definitions would be a useful initiative. And finally, assessors felt that results could be better harmonized if they all used, and had access to, the same set of references. As mentioned earlier, there was a consensus within the group that the creation of jointly produced country profiles would help in this regard.



# General Assessment Survey

## Description

As one of the stated objectives of this project is to work with other bodies (i.e. those not part of the Evaluation Working Group) performing credential assessment in Canada to help standardize assessment practices and protocols, it was felt that gathering data on their current practices would be helpful in benchmarking any future initiatives in this area. To this end, a short Internet survey was constructed asking participants to comment on their experience with assessment agencies and provide certain metrics on their own credentialing operations (see Appendix 2).

A total of 93 individuals employed by regulatory bodies, educational institutions, employers and professional associations were sent an invitation to participate in the survey. The groups selected for participation were put forth solely by members of the Evaluation Working Group, and therefore do not necessarily represent a statistically valid sample of the credentialing universe. Instead, this research provides insight into the activities of other groups that perform credential assessments on a regular basis that are prime candidates for adherence to a set of pan-Canadian standards. Survey topics included: number of assessments, jurisdiction, processing times, document requirements, human resources, and use of references. Forty-one completed surveys were received, equivalent to a response rate of 44%. Of those who responded, 82% were regulators, 10% were from educational institutions, 3% were employers, and 5% described themselves as “other”.

## Findings

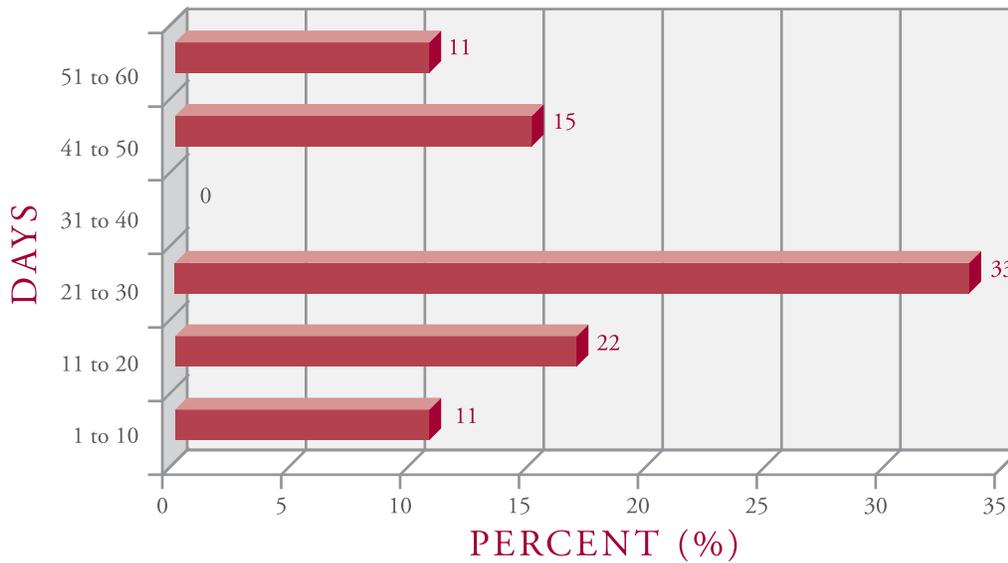
For the most part, those surveyed have very few staff specifically dedicated to the day-to-day practice of credential evaluation. Ninety-two percent of those organizations that responded report having only one or two in-house assessors. Collectively, the 41 groups that replied perform approximately 10,000 assessments annually, with one organization issuing only 1 per year and the four largest just under 2,000 each.

The average length of time for the organizations’ survey to perform a credential assessment is 74 working days, with a median of 52 days.

The primary reason reported for significant delays stems from the difficulties in receiving all necessary paperwork from the applicant. Once a complete application has been received, the average and mean processing time for a file decreases markedly to 27.4 days and 28 days respectively; this is in line with the turnaround times demonstrated by ACESC members and other assessment agencies surveyed (see Assessment Agency Survey).

Organizations were also asked what initiatives they undertook to promote excellence in credential evaluation. Responses included: monthly face-to-face information sessions with applicants, use of internal databases and precedent files to ensure consistency, attending conferences, communications and updates from educational institutions around the world, and ongoing exchanges with other credentialing experts from around the world. Knowledge of these best practices is

## Average Number of Days to Complete Assessments Once All Documents are Received (in Days)



instructive when formulating pan-Canadian standards and/or developing future cooperative initiatives with credential assessing groups.

Approximately 4 in 10 of those surveyed make use of assessment agencies on a regular basis. While this may seem like a large proportion, it must be reiterated that, based on the recruiting process employed, many of those surveyed have already had long-standing relationships with one or more of the assessment bodies involved with this project. That said, respondents listed numerous benefits in outsourcing their work, including faster turnaround times, greater expertise, and more comprehensive resources. These groups also indicated the

services they most value from assessment agencies: 52% cited validating the status of the issuing postsecondary institution, 45% document authenticity, 37% cited providing a comparative assessment of education in a Canadian context and 17% indicated they value the translation services some agencies offer.

Finally, half of those organizations surveyed abide by some type of quality assurance framework. The vast majority of these are guidelines developed in-house or in coordination with other groups in the same industry; one body indicated they voluntarily follow the ACESC framework.

## Reasons for Using External Agencies



# Policy Comparison

## Description

To better determine the root causes of evaluation discrepancies, a policy comparison was conducted with the assessment agencies directly participating in the project (i.e. ACESC members, CES, ICAS). An experienced policy advisor was retained to interview agencies on its internal operations, with the overall objective of determining the best way to begin laying the framework for a set of pan-Canadian standards. Based on the research conducted, the most noteworthy findings were observed in four areas: policy development, documentation, research methodology and establishing definitions (a summary of the researcher's findings is available in tabular format in Appendix 1 of this document).

## Findings

On the whole, each agency has a different mechanism for developing and interpreting policy within their organization. All agencies stated that most policy review is the result of new information obtained by assessors, often, but not necessarily, in response to an appeal, formal or otherwise. Major changes in educational systems within their own province or abroad could also spark a policy review. Most agencies indicated that senior assessors or managers interpret policy on a day-to-day basis, but that significant modifications are referred to a committee for final review and approval. One organization does not have such a committee at its disposal and therefore decisions are made primarily by the staff. Most of their assessments are based on precedent, and there are no formal procedures or policy manual. Another agency indicated that all assessors have access to a manual for “consultation and contribution”, but that little information was given as to who made the decisions, suggesting that each assessor interprets policy for themselves.

Currently, four of the seven agencies interviewed have similar documentation requirements. These groups appreciate the difficulties involved in obtaining official documents sent directly from the issuing institution from many countries and the length of time it may take to obtain such documentation. More than one of these agencies pointed out that even documents arriving in a sealed envelope and postmarked from the city of the relevant institution could well have been purchased

on the Internet, and thus require verification to ensure authenticity. Furthermore, it is impossible to obtain documents directly from institutions in certain countries, hence all organizations are faced with either having two standards or choosing strict verification practices over requiring official documents.

Most of the agencies that do not require original documents to be submitted insist on certified photocopies. One agency specifically requires that photocopies be certified by the authority that issued the original document. Generally speaking, organizations that certify such documents are often unfamiliar with academic records, and therefore would not necessarily be aware of possible alterations in the original to begin with. Notaries public are typically not experts in the field of credential evaluation; their function is simply to certify that a given copy is a faithful reproduction of the original.

Verification processes ranged widely. Some agencies only verify documentation that appears to contain anomalies, or look suspicious. Others always verify documents from certain countries with document alerts or suspicious-looking documents, and also perform random verifications. While one agency that requires that documents be sent directly from the issuing institution to their office claims verification of such documents is unnecessary, another agency pointed out the high incidence of fraudulent documents purchased from the Internet. These “fake” or “novelty” transcripts contain all of the security features of real transcripts, and are virtually undetectable as fraudulent.

All agencies state that translations must be from a certified translation service, but only a single agency insists upon it. One organization pointed out that there are at least as many problems with translations from translators who are members of their provincial associations as there are from those who are not. Agencies prefer to rely on the language skills of their staff or affiliated university language departments and government offices. If a translation appears problematic, they generally do not request another translation from the client. One group in particular noted their sensitivity to the financial burden on immigrants who must pay for duplicate services while awaiting an assessment so that they can commence employment, and felt they should avoid having the client pay for another translation.

Significant differences were noted between agencies with respect to research methodologies and use of references. As previously mentioned, agencies with significant resources have the capacity to carry out primary research and have developed their own set of country profiles to expedite the evaluation process. Budgetary constraints prevent many groups from carrying out their own independent research; these groups rely primarily on international references produced outside of Canada.

Due to the lack of specifically Canadian reference materials, there is an obvious need to rely on non-Canadian information. All agencies reported that they draw from the Australian National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) publications, and most indicated the Professional International Education Resources (PIER) and the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (AACRAO) are regularly used. Three groups consult the ENIC-NARIC website, two the AACRAO Edge website (a third is planning on signing up soon) and although only one organization indicated it does not use AACRAO publications, all of the others indicated they currently use them. Agencies also indicated they make use of publications from the various education authorities from the countries where the credential was originally issued.

All agencies supported the idea of a common database, although one organization noted that it would expect compensation for the contribution of its intellectual property. They also expressed a need for greater cooperation among Canada's agencies than exists at the present time and indicated that their willingness to share information has been demonstrated through their publications and workshops.

All groups stated that they have definitions for a PhD, master's degree, and bachelor's degree, either specifically outlined as such, or implied in the process for completing assessments. A Bachelor's qualification was generally regarded as being awarded by a recognized institution authorized in its own country to grant degrees; the program must be at least three years in length following the completion of a program equivalent to grade 12 or 13 in Canada, it must be a first cycle and must be able to lead to further study. At least one agency also noted that the standing of the institution in its home country is also a factor in determining the level of the award. With respect to technical and vocational programs, agencies employed considerably different definitions; limited common ground in this area was evident. If groups could come to an agreement on some of these terms, then portability would be increased to the benefit of newcomers to Canada. At a minimum, a definition for bachelor's degree should be achievable, even if some provinces may require an adjustment or "qualifying" statement in the assessment due to the fact that three-year degrees are available in Canada.



# Assessment Agency Survey

## Description

Participating agencies included the five existing ACESC members as well as the Comparative Education Service (CES) operated by the University of Toronto and the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) in Guelph, Ontario. Quantitative data was requested on topics including total applications, country of origin, level of credential, evaluation use, and processing times. Respondents were asked to collect data for the year from April 1, 2007 to March 31, 2008. All the data and figures provided have been aggregated or expressed as a percentage to protect the identity of any individual organization (see Appendix 3 to view the complete survey).

## Findings

Based on the data provided, the seven participating agencies opened a total of 45,917 new files in the period under study. During that same period, 47,952 assessment reports were mailed out to end users and immigrant clients. The number of assessments that were appealed was less than 0.4% of this total. For the fiscal year under study, 151 appeals were launched across all agencies. Three agencies indicated they had no appeals at all during this time period. The differences in the number of appeals initiated are due in part to the financial cost associated with initiating an appeal as well as the actual definition of an “official appeal” which varies among agencies.

Respondents were asked to provide a list of the top ten countries for which they performed assessments based on the most recently obtained credential. Results were fairly consistent, with most agencies outside of Quebec reporting the following source countries:

- India (17%, 13%, 21%, 32%)
- Philippines (14%, 6%, 14%, 40%, 10%)
- China (10%, 15%, 10%, 8%, 3%)
- Pakistan (9%, 7%, 5%)
- Russia (3%, 3%, 3%)

As Quebec has an agreement with the federal government in selecting its immigrants to fulfill specific manpower, demographic and linguistic requirements, the source countries most frequently reported by assessors in that province included:

- France (13%)
- Algeria (11%)
- Morocco (10%)
- Romania (7%)
- Haiti (5%)

**Table 4**

Agency	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
<b>Percent (%) of applicants who live...</b>							
in province of agency	79	72	90	100	71	96	96
within Canada but a different province	14	3	5	-	20	2	4
<b>Sub Total in Canada</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>100</b>
Outside of Canada	7	25	5	-	9	2	-

**Table 5**

Agency	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Percent (%) of credentials...							
High School	13	26	6	11	5	5	6
College/Technical School	14	10	15	-	9	19	17
Bachelors	57	33	62	19	46	51	35
Master's/PhD	16	8	18	12	23	25	8
Not a Full Degree	-	23	-	58	10	-	34
Other	-	-	-	-	6	-	-

**Table 6**

Agency	#1	#2	#3	#4
Evaluation use/ Client base % of applications				
Regulatory	17	-	5	14
Post-Secondary Education	23	18	25	28
Employment	32	4	20	44
Individual	-	79	50	-
Immigration	-	-	-	10
Other	-	-	-	4
Unknown	28	-	-	-



The vast majority of applications received from those surveyed originated from a Canadian mailing address. As seen in **Table 5**, which depicts the findings of the seven agencies surveyed, respondents report that between 0% and 25% of applications were initiated outside of Canada. The organization that processed the highest proportion of these has agreements in place to perform assessments for a number of colleges and universities, as well as immigration agencies situated abroad; hence the relatively high proportion in this category. Organizations also report a moderate level of interprovincial assessment requests; this figure averages less than 10% for the group as a whole with a range of 0% to 20% of those surveyed. This category is particularly salient as it points to the scope of assessment performed between provinces, the category where portability issues are most likely to occur.

**Table 5** indicates the applicants' most recently obtained degree in relation to a Canadian context at the time the assessment was performed. The largest proportion of these credentials was evaluated as bachelor's degrees, with agencies reporting between 16% and 62% of credentials at this level. A master's or PhD designation was the second most prevalent category with between 8% and 25% of credentials evaluated at this level followed by college/technical school diplomas at 0–19%. "Not a full degree" is a catch-all area and needs to be cautiously interpreted. Included in this figure are individuals who were not assessed as having a full degree – for example, people who are only evaluated to two years post-university education or others who were assessed to a Bachelor's level plus one year of postgraduate work.

Four of the responding agencies were able to provide data regarding the client base and/or intended use of their evaluations (see **Table 6**). Owing to different techniques in data collection, it is inadvisable that generalizations be made from this data. It is also important to note that many of the organizations have agreements with various institutions both in and out of province and these may influence results beyond the actual demand placed by individual clients. However, it is noteworthy that for agencies #1 and #4 which track this information directly via customer service surveys, the proportions of regulator use and postsecondary use are relatively equal, with the highest declared use for both being "employment".

Of the six agencies that responded, average processing times in working days for a file were: 23, 9, 30, 57, 40, and 17. Turnaround times that were significantly higher than these averages were attributed to: delays receiving documents from the issuing institution, the need for additional research into a particular credential, country or educational institution, staff turnover, and lack of funding at the issuing institution to meet additional requests for information. In contrast, comparatively fast processing times were generally the result of an application complete with all supporting documentation for a given credential from an educational institution/program/year that had already been assessed. Moreover, some agencies indicated they have agreements with certain countries where questions regarding authentication of documents can be answered by a central agency, as opposed to a particular educational institution; this type of arrangement tends to simplify and expedite the verification process.



## Discussion

**First and foremost, it is important to note that while discrepancies in evaluations produced do exist, the practices and policies employed by assessment agencies, as well as the evaluations proffered, are more similar than they are different.**

Consultations with immigrant clients, stakeholders and end users generally revealed a high level of satisfaction with the agencies that they use and a respect for the expertise they provide in facilitating the informed entry of immigrants into the workforce. Moreover, these groups were also pleased with the ongoing efforts made by evaluation services to adapt their services to meet changing needs. Generally, the groups consulted recognized that assessment agencies play an invaluable role in providing accurate and dependable information to those who recognize credentials and are therefore an instrumental player in the integration process.

However, there are occasions where the findings of two or more agencies are in conflict and these instances often have detrimental repercussions for the immigrant clients and end users involved. Regulators in the Stakeholder Forum and immigrant clients in the focus groups noted instances where disagreement on the value of a credential can drastically complicate an individual's access to a given profession. Additionally, there are other groups (surveyed as part of our research) that report receiving differing evaluations of a given international credential from two or more assessment agencies. It is these types of conflicts that have the potential to significantly delay the integration process and place additional unnecessary costs on the immigrant client.

When moving forward with future initiatives, policy makers need to be continually mindful of the fact that credential evaluation in Canada involves a multiplicity of stakeholders. While the focus of the research conducted herein is primarily devoted to an investigation into the practices of assessment agencies, the involvement of other groups will be critical in the development of pan-Canadian standards. Many regulatory bodies, which are responsible for protecting the public interest and

setting entry-to-practice standards in their respective professions, are directly involved and expert in the field of credential evaluation. Similarly, educational institutions assess international credentials on a regular basis as part of determining whether an applicant meets admission requirements; as such, their experience in the evaluation process is of great value in informing the development of future projects. As well, many sector councils and professional associations have piloted innovative practices in this area. In order to truly effect the development of meaningful pan-Canadian standards, the involvement of all these groups is essential.

Described more specifically further on, two types of recommendations flow from this research. The first is a set of proposed policy changes that could include the standardization of certain operational and definitional aspects of the assessment process. However, equally important are more organic, grass roots initiatives. It is suggested much positive change can be realized by allowing assessors greater opportunities to network and share information. For the most part, staff from different assessment agencies work in relative isolation. Greater communication among assessors from organizations all over Canada will invariably help to calibrate assessment results and increase the profile of this truly specialized and valuable profession.

It should also be noted that pan-Canadian standards do not necessarily have to apply to all aspects of the evaluation process to have a beneficial effect in improving the consistency and portability of assessments. As outlined earlier in this report, assessment agencies undertake a series of steps when determining the comparability of a credential earned abroad. Standardization could occur, in compliance with the laws and regulations applicable to the operations of credential assessment services in their jurisdictions, at any of these intermediary stages including for example: document requirements, verification, definitions, research and resources as well as the assessment outcome and corresponding report. An incremental approach to process/policy harmonization is beneficial for a number of reasons; firstly, it is gradual, allowing participating organizations sufficient time to make the necessary changes before proceeding to another area warranting standardization; secondly, modifications can be project-based; that is to say, external funding could be sought to





help facilitate the implementation of a given standard and help offset associated costs. Finally, changes could be piloted in a smaller group, measured and evaluated before they are disseminated to the Canadian assessment community at large.

However, prior to introducing any systemic modifications, it is advisable that present data collection techniques be revisited. Due to a multiplicity of definitions in use by the assessment community, the type of information collected, and associated nomenclature used by each agency, is different. Hence, it is currently difficult to establish a baseline of activity from which to compare the effect of any future initiatives in this area. Harmonizing common terminology and data collection methodologies where possible will be a key step in developing a meaningful evaluation matrix.

When formulating remedial action, it is crucial to remember that not all assessment agencies have the same resources available to them. That is to say, owing to their jurisdictional responsibility, some agencies draw from a larger pool of potential applicants and therefore have significantly greater capacity to take on new projects than others. Hence, there is a considerable discrepancy in the availability of resources for future project work aimed at harmonizing the practice of credential assessment in this country. It is therefore advisable, if pan-Canadian standards are developed, that a cooperative approach be taken in the creation of a set of made-in-Canada references. This action will have the dual benefits of involving all relevant parties and ensuring that interested groups, even those with limited budgets, are able to participate.

Feedback from the end user focus groups and Stakeholder Forum suggest that employers are not fully informed regarding the services offered by assessment agencies, and that even fewer are aware of ACESC and its QAF. These findings are in keeping with previous research on the subject. In 1998, a survey of Ontario employers revealed that, while educational attainment was a mandatory requirement for 60% of businesses, “approximately 40% of employers indicated they would screen out internationally educated applicants because they did not know how to assess their education”<sup>21</sup>. Hence one of the biggest and most vital challenges ahead is increasing overall awareness of the function and services provided by assessment agencies. In this way, efforts at standardizing processes and fostering improved consistency can be adequately communicated to those employers responsible for recognizing international credentials, which, in turn, will ultimately result in the greater portability of assessments across the country.

Finally, because of their experience with a multiplicity of stakeholders and their knowledge of numerous international educational systems, initiatives aimed at developing pan-Canadian standards could begin with a select group of assessment agencies, regulators and educational institutions, and then be spread outward to the rest of the evaluation community. This view is in keeping with previous research done on this matter by Naomi Alboim of the Maytree Foundation who asserts that the expertise of provincially-mandated assessment agencies should be transferred to other groups, with government support to help orient the credentialing efforts of educational institutions and regulatory bodies<sup>22</sup>. Other credentialing bodies consulted during the research phase of this project have shown a willingness to learn from, and share information with, their colleagues from across Canada. Moreover, interest has been expressed by a number of regulatory bodies, professional associations and academic institutions in adhering to a set of pan-Canadian quality assurance standards, should these be developed. The creation of a true Canadian community of assessors will go a long way in the promotion of assessment consistency and portability in this country.

# Recommendations

Consultations with individuals attending the Stakeholder Forum and National Workshop of Credential Evaluators yielded a number of suggestions aimed at addressing the issues that surfaced in the diagnostic phase of the project. These ideas were modified and vetted by the Evaluation Working Group, and then grouped into larger categories of action consisting of policy modifications, professional development and information systems.

While the recommendations set out below are the product of extensive deliberations involving many stakeholder groups, it should be noted that additional research is suggested before any recommendations are implemented. Due diligence prior to commencement of a new project is essential in determining appropriate resources, partners, funding, infrastructure and sustainability. Although the initiatives set out below are intended as pan-Canadian activities, many of the players involved are guided by provincial mandates. It is necessary, when considering remedial action, to be sensitive to any regional and jurisdictional differences that exist among partners and to see that appropriate resources are allocated to these groups to ensure the viability and sustainability of future initiatives. These differences must be accounted for, and accommodated, in order for any of the recommendations to be successful. Finally, it is strongly encouraged that the design of new programs or modified processes provide for a measurement and evaluation component. Only in this way can the relative utility of a new initiative be gauged and subsequent adjustments made to achieve maximum benefit.

## Policy Modifications

1. **Update the glossary of terms hosted on the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) website.** Discussions with key stakeholders in the credential assessment community revealed that there is variation in the terms and definitions used across Canada. These differences can cause confusion and misunderstanding for both immigrant and institutional clients. Moreover, inconsistent use of terminology among agencies can impede future efforts to cooperate. It is essential that a commonly understood assessment language be established for related initiatives aimed at bringing together the assessment community to succeed. It is strongly recommended that revision of this glossary solicit the input of as many groups involved in the assessment process as possible, such that the finished product is an accurate reflection of the terminology currently used across Canada.
2. **Improve harmonization of document requirements and verification procedures.** Many of the organizations consulted as part of this initiative employ different policies and techniques as part of their evaluation processes. The research conducted herein included a policy comparison of the seven assessment agencies involved in the project. Findings from this comparison provided a detailed account of the policy/practice similarities and differences among participating agencies. Further discussions among these agencies is recommended to determine what elements of the assessment process can be harmonized at a pan-Canadian level and to develop an action plan on how these changes can be implemented. Harmonization of policies and processes will help to improve the portability of assessments and provide for a less confusing and more transparent evaluation process for the immigrant client.
3. **Create a pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) to help guide the assessment practices and policies of all groups that perform credential evaluations.** At the core of this project is the goal of improving the consistency and portability



of credential assessments through the introduction of pan-Canadian standards. As revealed by the diagnostic research conducted, there are notable differences in the methods and policies employed by groups (agencies, regulatory bodies, educational institutions, etc.) performing assessments. Some organizations consult employ strict and codified assessment procedures, while others have comparatively ad hoc operations. Creating a set of pan-Canadian operational parameters will help to guide and harmonize the activities of these groups. Widespread adherence to a QAF will ultimately help to improve the consistency of evaluations conducted. It is also recommended that a forum be established to encourage organizations to adhere to these standards and monitor their progress.

## Professional Development

4. **Provide regular workshop and networking opportunities for credential assessors from across Canada.** A key theme emerging from the research conducted herein is the lack of opportunity for credential assessors to collaborate with their colleagues from across the country. At present, many of these organizations operate in virtual silos with relatively little formalized contact with other organizations performing credential assessments. Providing assessors with regular opportunities to share information, experiences and best practices will help to organically harmonize the activities of the evaluation community. As well, more frequent networking events can foster a culture of cooperation among assessors, an important precondition for future pan-Canadian initiatives.
5. **Produce a set of jointly researched country profiles.** One of the central factors associated with inconsistent evaluation outcomes among assessment agencies relates to the lack of a standard set of references. Specifically, there are limited made-in-Canada resource materials assessors can make use of when evaluating an internationally obtained credential. The majority of references used are produced outside of Canada; moreover, assessment agencies and other groups evaluating credentials rely on their own unique combination of these when conducting research. It is therefore possible that the use of different sources yields different outcomes. One way to promote more consistent evaluations on a Canada-wide basis is through the introduction of a set of references researched and produced in Canada by those organizations performing assessments on a regular basis (agencies, regulatory bodies, educational institutions, etc.). Developing profiles for major source countries of immigration would prove to be a valuable first step in the establishment of a set of Canadian references.
6. **Hold annual meetings with key stakeholders in the credential assessment community.** Feedback from those in attendance at the Stakeholder Forum and National Workshop of Credential Assessors suggest that greater opportunities to meet and collaborate would be of great benefit in improving the portability of assessments. Multidisciplinary sessions which include the end users of evaluations (i.e. regulators, educational institutions and employers) would also be invaluable in improving the profile of the profession and ensuring that the services provided are regularly updated to meet the needs of those who use them. It is also recommended that a provision for regular consultations with these groups be provided for in the development of the pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework (see Recommendation 3).
7. **Develop a “competency profile” specific to credential assessors.** A key theme emerging from the research phase of the project relates to the human resource requirements for organizations performing credential assessments. At present, there is no enumerated set of specific skills or education that all assessors in Canada are expected to possess. It is recommended that groups employing credential assessors (agencies, regulatory bodies, universities, etc.) convene to prepare a profile of education, skills and competencies that are relevant to the assessment profession. This document is an integral first step in implementing many of the recommendations described herein, particularly in the development of a college/university program (see Recommendation 8).
8. **Develop a college/university certificate/degree program for credential assessors.** Currently there is no formalized educational program specifically tailored to the credential assessment profession. For the most part, organizations will use their own staff to train new hires in-house. This is a time-consuming process requiring senior assessors to reallocate much of their time normally spent on evaluation, to teaching and mentoring new hires. Moreover, each group employs its own unique training program, emphasizing different skills associated with the evaluation process. The development of an educational program for

credential assessors would help to reduce internal resources expended on training and help to institute a set of common competencies shared by all of Canada's assessors.

9. **Improve public awareness, especially among employers, regarding the role of assessment agencies.** As evidenced in the focus groups conducted as part of this research, as well as previous research conducted in this area, the majority of employers have relatively little knowledge about the role and function performed by assessment agencies. This is especially problematic as employers are the largest potential users of evaluation services. Moreover, small and medium sized enterprises are likely to benefit the most from third-party expertise as they generally lack the human resource capacity required to carry out credential assessments internally. Encouraging a greater proportion of organizations to make use of assessment agencies fosters greater confidence among employers in hiring those with internationally obtained credentials and therefore increases the number of potential job opportunities for skilled immigrants. It is also suggested as part of this recommendation that improved information be provided to immigrants intending to work in regulated professions. Ideally, from their application to immigrate to Canada these individuals should be encouraged to contact the appropriate regulatory body to determine what steps are required to meet entry-to-practice standards. In this way, duplication of efforts and unnecessary costs can potentially be avoided.

## Information Systems

10. **Develop a shared resource database for groups performing credential assessments.** In order to effect more consistent assessment outcomes it is advisable for all groups performing assessments to be able to share information and best practices

on a regular basis. The development of a database accessible by all groups performing assessments could be used as a repository for a variety of valuable assessment-related data, such as: fraudulent documents, research sources, country profiles, document alerts, institutional updates, etc. Encouraging groups that perform credential assessments on a regular basis (agencies, regulatory bodies, universities, etc.) to use and contribute to a database would help to organically standardize the type of research performed by participating organizations and to foster a culture of cooperation within the assessment community. This would be an especially valuable resource for those organizations with limited in-house resources, and they would benefit greatly from the help and expertise of credential-assessing bodies from across the country.

11. **Conduct a feasibility study on developing a national Internet portal for free overseas pre-assessments.** The focus groups conducted as part of this project reinforce the findings of previous research which has found that immigrants to Canada experience a significant knowledge and expectation gap with respect to their credentials. Many arrive in Canada with certain expectations of the "Canadian value" of their educational background that are drastically different. This fact is often not realized by immigrants until they have arrived in Canada and begun seeking employment. A pre-assessment tool linked to relevant, participating institutions and accessible via the Internet would provide potential immigrants with some basic information on the likely comparability of their educational credentials. This would allow them to make a more educated decision when applying to come to Canada, and promote realistic expectations regarding their career options on arrival.



- <sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada, “The Daily- Labour Force Survey”, February 8, 2008.
- <sup>2</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Immigrant Occupations: Recent Trends and Issues. August 31, 2005.
- <sup>3</sup> Statistics Canada, “Longitudinal Survey of Immigrants to Canada: Process, progress and prospects”, 2003, pg. 30.
- <sup>4</sup> Hawthorne, L., “Foreign Credential recognition and assessment: an introduction” Canadian Issues, Spring, 2007.
- <sup>5</sup> Fernandez, S, “Who does what in foreign credential recognition: An overview of credentialing programs and services in Canada” The Alliance of Sector Councils and National Visible Minority Council of Labour Force Development, August 2007.
- <sup>6</sup> Price Waterhouse. “Foreign Academic Credential Assessment Business Assessment: Final Report” Toronto, 1998. pg. iii.
- <sup>7</sup> RBC Financial Group, “The Diversity Advantage: A case for Canada’s 21st Century Economy”. Presented at the 10th International Metropolis Conference. Toronto: October 20, 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> Reitz, Jeffrey G., “Tapping Immigrants Skills” Immigration and Refugee Policy: Choices, 11.1. February, 2005.
- <sup>9</sup> Bloom, M., Grant, M. “Brain Gain: the economic benefits of recognizing learning and learning credentials in Canada” The Conference Board of Canada, 2001, pg. 5.
- <sup>10</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Canada’s new government launches first phase of Foreign Credentials Referral Office”, Toronto, May 24, 2007.
- <sup>11</sup> Lisbon Convention <http://www.cicic.ca/docs/Lisboa/lisbon1997.en.pdf>
- <sup>12</sup> “Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications Concerning Higher Education in the European Region”, Lisbon, 1997. Article III, 1.
- <sup>13</sup> Council of Europe and UNESCO , page 4 of the Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services, Strasbourg, June 9, 2004 [http://www.cicic.ca/docs/Lisboa/ENIC-NARIC\\_Charter.en.pdf](http://www.cicic.ca/docs/Lisboa/ENIC-NARIC_Charter.en.pdf)
- <sup>14</sup> Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, “Guide d’usage terminologique dans le domaine de la mobilité et de la reconnaissance des titres et diplômes en milieu francophone au Canada”.
- <sup>15</sup> Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Foreign Credential Recognition, “Frequently Asked Questions”. 2007.
- <sup>16</sup> Statistics Canada, Population by immigrant status and period of immigration, 2006 counts, for Canada, provinces and territories – 20% sample data
- <sup>17</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, Monte Solberg policy announcement, November 1, 2006.
- <sup>18</sup> Citizenship and Immigration Canada, “Facts and Figures: Immigration Overview” 2006.
- <sup>19</sup> Lopes, Sandra, “Bringing Employers into the Immigration Debate” Public Policy Forum. 2004 annex 7, pages 13,14.
- <sup>20</sup> Alliance of Credential Evaluation Service of Canada, “Quality Assurance Framework, 1999. <http://www.canalliance.org/framework.htm>
- <sup>21</sup> Owen, T., “The labour market experience of immigrants”. Presented at the Future of Lifelong Learning/ Toronto, 2005. pg. 3.
- <sup>22</sup> Alboim, N., et. Al., “The Discounting of Immigrants’ Skills in Canada: Evidence and Policy Recommendations” IRPP Choices. February, 2005.

# Appendix 1: Policy Comparison Tables

## Policy Comparison: Documentation

Issue	Agency						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
“Original” documents required (no photocopies)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, if submitted in person only	Yes, may be able to proceed with photocopies (it would bear an authentication warning)	Yes, with some exceptions	Original documents or original notarized copy of doc
Are statutory declarations accepted when documents cannot be obtained?	No	Yes	Yes	In some rare cases	Yes	Yes	Only if accepted by end-user (ex-employer or post-secondary institution)
Documents must be sent from issuing institution	Yes	Only places where this is common. Verification still required	No. Verification used	Only for the transcripts from institutions that state that the docs have no validity when obtained otherwise.	Only for the transcripts from institutions that state that the docs have no validity when obtained otherwise.	Only if required by a licensing body	No
Do assessments contain details of the documents submitted?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but not verification	Yes	Yes	Yes
Do you accept translations from outside of Canada?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, from certified translators	Yes	Yes	Yes



## Policy Comparison: Research and Consultation

Issue	Agency						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Only the provincial system of the agency is used	Usually	Yes	Mostly, yes	No	Yes	No	Yes, but others may be considered
Consultation of agencies within Canada	Yes, especially IQAS and CEFAHQ and CES	Yes, especially Alliance members	Yes. CEFAHQ for franco-phone countries, CICIC listserv	No	Yes, Alliance members and CICIC listserv	Yes, Alliance members	CICIC list service info is read
Consultation of non-Canadian agencies	ECE, IERF Amideast AACRAO UK-Naric	WES, AACRAO, NOOSR, British Council, AMIDEAST	WES, ECE & IERF, AMIDEAST, AACRAO	ECE, AMIDEAST, ECEI/ABET	AACRAO, AEI-NOOSR, WES	Specific experts from IERF, AACRAO etc.	Only WES
Consultation of licensing bodies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but not much cooperation is given	Yes, but not for level of qualification
Consultation of post secondary institutions	Yes	Yes, mostly through websites	Yes	Yes	Yes, within province only	Yes	Websites are consulted
Post secondary institutions heavily influence policy	It is considered	Yes, within the province when there are program changes	No, just one factor	Yes	No	No, just one factor	No, just one factor
Would you support creation of a common database if resources were available?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes, but would require compensation	Yes, but would require compensation

## Policy Comparison: Other

Issue	Agency						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
Definitions for bachelor's, master's, PHD	Yes	Yes	No, but is implicit in guidelines	Yes	Not written, but an understanding	Not written, but an understanding	Yes

# Appendix 2: General Assessment Survey

## Introduction

The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada and its Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) was awarded funding by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program to conduct an analysis of credential evaluation throughout Canada.

Thinklounge Market Research, a firm experienced in foreign credential assessment research, will conduct this analysis. The goal of the analysis is to increase the consistency and overall portability of assessments in Canada. We are asking you to complete a short survey on the activities in which your organization engages when you conduct credential assessments.

This survey will require you to gather some data from previous years, specifically from 2003-2006. If you do not have data that goes back that far, please provide data that is convenient for you.

Before you begin the study, you will be required to provide some information which you may need to look up before you begin answering the questionnaire. We will specifically require:

- The total number of assessments your organization has done between 2003–2006, both in terms of the number of individuals assessed and the number of credentials assessed.
- The average length of time (in number of days) for an assessment once a file is opened AND the average length of time (in number of days) for an assessment once all documents are received from the applicant.
- The number of assessments in 2006 done directly in your agency, and the number done outside your agency.

**You may wish to gather this data before you begin the survey.**

All information collected will be confidential, and reporting will be done so as to respect the privacy of the agencies involved. Measures are also in place to protect your data, including deleting the data provided once it is analyzed, only reporting results in aggregate and not naming any participants in the research within our reports.

If you have any questions, feel free to email **Brian Bauml**, [bb@thinklounge.ca](mailto:bb@thinklounge.ca), with any questions.



## Name of Organization

Please tell us the name of the organization you represent

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*Please note that this information will not be released in any way, and all information is confidential.*

## Jurisdiction

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Is your area of jurisdiction Federal or Provincial?  
[Check one only]

Federal                       Provincial

## Total Number of Assessments

Please provide the total number of assessments done by your agency in these years.

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### Based On The Number of Individuals

2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 \_\_\_\_\_

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### Based On The Number Of Credentials Assessed

2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 \_\_\_\_\_

## Length of Time – Since File Opened

Please fill in the information in the table below based on times starting from when you open a file for an applicant.

In the table below, provide the average length of time for an assessment at your agency from the time the file is opened.

2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 \_\_\_\_\_

Average length of time for an assessment in days: \_\_\_\_\_

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Averages sometimes have significant variances.

Thinking just of this year, please list:

- The longest time in days for an assessment from the time a file is opened: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some reasons why these assessments take a long time:

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- The shortest time in days for an assessment from the time a file is opened: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some reasons why these assessments take a short time:

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## Length of Time – From Time All Documents Received

Please fill in the information in the table below based on times starting from when your agency has received all of the documents required for an applicant's file

Provide the average length of time for an assessment at your agency from the time all documents required for the applicant's file have been received.

2006 \_\_\_\_\_ 2005 \_\_\_\_\_ 2004 \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 \_\_\_\_\_

Average length of time for an assessment in days: \_\_\_\_\_

Averages sometimes have significant variances. Thinking just of this year, please list:

- The longest time in days for an assessment from the time all documents are received: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some reasons why these assessments take a long time:

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- The shortest time in days for an assessment from the time a file is opened: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some of the reasons why these assessments take a short time:

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## Document Requirements

Please provide a photocopy of information (or a link to a Web site) on what documents candidates need to produce for their assessments with your agency.

## Resources

In 2006, how many of your total credentials assessments were done:

Within your own organization \_\_\_\_\_

Done by another organization \_\_\_\_\_

How many staff do you have that are actively involved in either directly assessing credentials or working with external credential evaluation agencies?

[Fill-In Number]

What are some of the reasons you use outside evaluation agencies?

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Of all the outsourcing you do, what proportion involves:

Authenticating documents \_\_\_\_\_ %

Translating documents \_\_\_\_\_ %

Determining equivalency \_\_\_\_\_ %

Recognition of post secondary education \_\_\_\_\_ %



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1. How satisfied do you think your customers are with your ability to assess documents?

- Very satisfied       Somewhat satisfied  
 Not very satisfied       Not satisfied at all

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2. What training is required for your assessors or evaluators?

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3. What autonomy does an evaluator have when making decisions or interpreting decision criteria?

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4a. Do you use references or resources to assist in your evaluations?

- Yes       No [Skip to 5]

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4b. Please describe the references you use

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5. How do you authenticate documents?

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6. Do you have any best practices that you feel demonstrate excellence in credential evaluation? If so, list them below

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Thank you!

# Appendix 3: Assessment Agency Survey

## Agency Survey Approach

### Two Parts

- Self-complete portion
- Phone interview

### Objectives

The goal is to understand the basic workings of the agencies in aggregate. For example, at this point, little is known about how many applicants the agencies serve. Knowing specifics, such as the level of education being evaluated, countries applicants arrive from, and intended occupation areas may help create more efficient ways of working with certain groups that are coming through to Canada. For example, each agency, on its own, may deal with only a small number of a certain type of assessment, but when aggregated across all agencies, there may be sufficient numbers to warrant further investigation or assistance.

Another goal is to increase the portability of assessments throughout Canada. The quantitative and qualitative information requested in these documents may assist in improving this aspect of your assessments.

Finally, this research is exploratory—and it is the first time it is being done. Therefore, our objectives are going to be broad. The results from this study may help raise further questions as we move forward.

### Self-complete Portion

- Agencies will provide data for April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008. The data will be put in the form of this questionnaire.

### Phone Interviews

- Although this was initially designed to complement the data collection and provide a qualitative context for the numbers, this aspect has now been expanded. The phone interviews are designed to gather this qualitative information and will begin shortly. Follow-up interviews may be scheduled over the six months that the data are being collected to address issues that come up during the data collection.
- The 20-minute interview will be conducted with a senior member of the assessment agency to discuss topics such as portability, consistency, pan-Canadian harmonization, best practices, and implementation of standards.
- The phone interviews will take place before the focus groups are held, as answers may contribute to developing parts of the focus group guide.



## Agency Survey

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ ,

### Re: Agency Survey

The Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada and its Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), in partnership with the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), were awarded funding by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program to conduct an analysis of credential evaluation throughout Canada. Thinklounge Market Research, a firm experienced in foreign credential assessment research, will conduct this analysis. The goal is to increase the consistency and overall portability of assessments in Canada. There are two components to the agency survey.

One aspect is gathering data from credentialing agencies such as yours to provide a current snapshot of the volume and type of credential evaluations taking place in Canada. The following questionnaire gathers this numerical information. Specifically, you will be required to report data from April 1, 2007, to March 31, 2008.

This task may present different challenges to different agencies. We understand that in some cases you may not have exactly the type or year of data requested in the attached tables. Upon receipt of this letter, please contact me directly at [bb@thinklounge.ca](mailto:bb@thinklounge.ca) or (416) 945-9557 to discuss how you will collect the required data. Thinklounge is the firm contracted by CMEC to conduct this research.

The second part of the survey is a phone interview where you will be asked some qualitative questions about credential evaluation in Canada and about some of the specific activities in which your organization is engaged. I will be conducting an initial interview, which will last approximately 20 minutes, and will conduct follow-up interviews as required.

All information collected will be confidential, and reporting will be done so as to respect the privacy of the agencies involved. Measures are also in place to protect your data, including destroying the questionnaires, upon completion and acceptance of the final report.

Thank you in advance.

**Brian Baumal**

Principal, Thinklounge Market Research

## PRIOR TO BEGINNING

While we have worked to make this form clear and consistent for all agencies, please take the time to look through the form, the data requested, and your plans for extraction. Before beginning, if you have any questions, please call Brian Baomal at (416) 945-9557 to discuss. The issues you bring up may apply to other agencies, and we may want to share your observations with other agencies to ensure that the data collected are consistent and of high quality.

### 1) Total Number of Assessments

Over the one year between April 1, 2007, and March 31, 2008, please indicate

- a) The number of files opened for assessments \_\_\_\_\_
- b) The number of assessments delivered or completed \_\_\_\_\_
- c) The number of files still open on March 31, 2008 \_\_\_\_\_
- d) The number of files ruled fraudulent \_\_\_\_\_

**Please note:** For (b) and (c), these figures may include files that were started before April 1, 2007. This is acceptable.

For (c) above, please indicate some of the reasons that the files remain open at this time. For example, some may have been started recently or all documents may not be in. Some assessments take longer for specific reasons. Please identify those here.

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**Please look through the questionnaire:** Some agencies perform assessments where they are not provided with all the information we are requesting below, **FOR EXAMPLE, SOME PERFORM ASSESSMENTS FOR UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE ADMISSION.**

For how many individuals have you conducted assessments like this? \_\_\_\_\_

How many actual assessments does this represent? \_\_\_\_\_

### 2) Countries of Education

a) In the table below, list the top 10 countries of education for which your agency performs assessments based on the applicant's most recent credential.

- 1. \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. \_\_\_\_\_
- 8. \_\_\_\_\_
- 9. \_\_\_\_\_
- 10. \_\_\_\_\_

All others \_\_\_\_\_



b) Are there any countries that you find are emerging as showing an increase in the number of assessments that you do? Please list them and the number of assessments you do below.

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b) Are there any countries that you find are emerging as ones where people are applying from? Please list them and the number of applications you have received below.

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### 3) Country of Application

a) In the table below, list the top 10 countries of application (i.e., the country from which the applicant is applying). Include Canada, if it is in your top 10. Include a number in the “All others” row.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

All others (Please list a few countries here.):

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c) Please indicate where your applicants resided at the time of application.

Inside your province or territory \_\_\_\_\_

Outside your province or territory, but within Canada \_\_\_\_\_

Outside Canada \_\_\_\_\_

### 4) Subject Area — Education

In the table below, list the top 10 subject areas of postsecondary education of the clients for whom you conducted assessments—please use the most recent credential. We are trying to keep the categories very broad. The following table outlines some of the categories that we are considering. Please feel free to discuss further or call for clarification.

#### *Sample Subject Areas – Education*

1. Arts – focusing on humanities like psychology, sociology, philosophy, anthropology, literature
2. Arts – focusing on business, such as economics or accounting
3. Arts – others
4. Science – focusing on chemistry, physics, biology, ecology, environmental studies, or applied science
5. Science – focusing on technology
6. Science – others

Subject Area – Education

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All others (Please list a few examples.)  
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**5) Degrees/Qualifications**

Please list the level at which you assessed an applicant's most recent credential.

Degrees/Qualifications \_\_\_\_\_  
High School Diploma \_\_\_\_\_  
Technical School/Trades  
Diploma/Certificate \_\_\_\_\_  
College Diploma/Associate Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Bachelor's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
Master's Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
PhD Degree \_\_\_\_\_  
All others (Please list.) \_\_\_\_\_  
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**6) Client Base**

How many assessments did you conduct for each of the following? You may list this as a number or as a percentage.

**Client is...**

Individual \_\_\_\_\_  
Employer \_\_\_\_\_  
Regulator \_\_\_\_\_  
Training Institution \_\_\_\_\_  
College \_\_\_\_\_  
University \_\_\_\_\_



## 7) Appeals

Please list the number of formal appeals that your organization has from clients between April 1, 2007, and March 31, 2008.

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- Are there any common characteristics (e.g., country of origin, type of education, profession) that contribute to this length of time? If so, please list:

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## 8) Length of Time Since File Opened

Please provide this information based on the date the file is opened at your agency.

Between April 1, 2007, and March 31, 2008, what was the average length of time (in days) required to process an assessment at your agency from the time **the file is opened** until it is completed? \_\_\_\_\_

**Averages sometimes have significant variances. Thinking of the above time period, please provide**

- The longest time in days for an assessment from the time all documents are received: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some reasons why these assessments take a long time:

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- The shortest time in days for an assessment from the time a file is opened: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some of the reasons why these assessments take a short time:

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- Are there any common characteristics (e.g., country of origin, type of education, profession) that contribute to this length of time? If so, please list:

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## 9) Length of Time From Time All Documents Received

Please provide the information below based on times starting from when your agency has received all of the documents required for an applicant's file.

What is the average length of time (in days) for an assessment at your agency from the time all documents required for the applicant's file have been received between April 1, 2007, and March 31, 2008? \_\_\_\_\_

Averages sometimes have significant variances. Thinking of the above time period, please provide

- The longest time in days for an assessment from the time all documents are received: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some reasons why these assessments take a long time:

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- Are there any common characteristics (e.g., country of origin, type of education, profession) that contribute to this length of time? If so, please list:

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- The shortest time in days for an assessment from the time a file is opened: \_\_\_\_\_
- The proportion of assessments that take this time: \_\_\_\_\_
- Some of the reasons why these assessments take a short time:

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- Are there any common characteristics (e.g., country of origin, type of education, profession) that contribute to this length of time? If so, please list:

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## Document Requirements

Please provide a photocopy of information (or a link to a Web site) on what documents candidates need to produce for their assessments with your agency.

- Which of these are difficult for you?

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- How many are complete, how many incomplete, and why?

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## Phone Interview

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I've got a number of short items to discuss with you today.

1. Let's discuss what it is you offer to clients. First, can you describe the actual "products"/services you provide? [Record] Second, what sorts of benefits do you think these have for your clients — speaking both about applicants and end users such as regulatory bodies, educational institutions, and employers?
2. As we discuss the intangible services you provide to clients, can you tell me about some of the processes that you implement or factors that you think positively impact customer satisfaction with your organization? Talk about it from the point of view of both individual clients and institutional clients.
3. How satisfied do you think your customers are with your service? Again, talk about it from both an individual and an institutional point of view.
4. What do you think can be done to improve customer satisfaction?

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I want to talk about the evaluators within your organization and the evaluation process that you use.

5. What training is required for your assessors or evaluators? How experienced are they? Is finding and keeping experienced evaluators an issue?
6. What autonomy does an evaluator have when making decisions or interpreting decision criteria?
7. Can you tell me a bit about your appeals process, how it works, and the number of appeals that are resolved satisfactorily?
8. I assume that you have references or resources that you use to assist in evaluations. Can you tell me what your references are?
9. How did you decide on these references?
10. How often are your references reviewed?
11. Are your references consistent with others in Canada? Are there inconsistencies that you have found with references throughout Canada?
12. What criteria do you use in determining a recommendation for a particular credential? That is, how do you go about determining equivalency of a foreign credential with a Canadian one (e.g.,

do you use admission requirements, level of education, duration of education/courses, access to a higher credential)?

13. How do you authenticate documents?
14. What data do you collect during your evaluation process? On the candidates themselves? How are they stored? Can they be shared?

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I want to talk a bit about financial aspects of the organization.

15. How much do you charge for evaluations? Please clarify if you charge per person or per credential.
16. I want to talk about funding. First, what are the sources of funding for your agency? Second, are any of these sources of funding for specific purposes, or do they have certain restrictions?

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The next set of questions deals with portability and best practices.

17. What issues do you see with portability of credential assessments throughout Canada? What can be done to resolve those issues?
18. Tell me about any differences in how you evaluate or report depending on whether a client is an individual, regulatory body, educational institution, or employer.
19. While we may have touched on this indirectly, can you tell me about any quality assurance standards that you have?
20. How are you implementing your QA standards so that they are effective?
21. Do you have best practices that you feel demonstrate excellence in credential evaluation?
22. I want to switch topics for one last time. What causes you concern as you assess credentials? For example, some people may be concerned about education from a certain country, some may be concerned about resources within their organization, and others may be concerned about how other agencies evaluate credentials. What issues of concern do you have?
23. Finally, do you have any major internal or external changes or initiatives that are on the horizon in the next year?

Thank you!



# Appendix 4: ACESC Quality Assurance Framework

*Sept. 1999 (revised Dec. 15, 1999)*

## Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance)

### I. Quality Assurance Framework

#### A. Preamble

The formation of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance) arose out of the recognition of the importance of developing a quality assurance framework for credential assessment services that would promote high quality and portable assessments across Canada.

Membership in the Alliance is voluntary and open to any private or public credential assessment service that meets the quality assurance standards specified in this document. Credential assessment services become members of the Alliance when they sign the declaration to abide by and follow this quality assurance framework. Membership is based on self-assessment and mutual trust.

The Alliance recognizes that education is the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories of Canada and that educational systems vary from one jurisdiction to another. In all cases, assessments provided by members of the Alliance are advisory and respect the autonomy of post-secondary institutions and professional regulatory bodies with regards to hiring, admission, membership, and certification decisions. The Alliance also acknowledges the importance of the portability of educational credentials from one jurisdiction to another, and has built within its own framework, mechanisms for inter-provincial recognition of credential assessments among member services.

On a global level, the formation of the Alliance in Canada is consistent with and serves to reinforce the international norms for good practice in the assessment of foreign credentials established in the Council of Europe/UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region.

The founders of the Alliance are the International Credential Evaluation Service (British Columbia), the International Qualifications Assessment Service (Alberta), the Service des équivalences d'études

(Québec) and Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC). Together these services with CICIC collaborated to define the quality assurance framework for the Alliance. CICIC provides a coordinating role within the Alliance and serves as an ex-officio member of the Alliance.

To ensure a wide forum of consultation, the Alliance links with representatives from the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Professions and Trades who are involved or interested in credential assessment. The main objectives of this forum are to provide suggestions and advice to the Alliance, to assist in promoting portability of assessments, and to facilitate information dissemination and exchange (see Section G for more details).

#### B. Objectives of the Quality Assurance Framework

The quality assurance framework offers effective mechanisms to establish quality criteria and standards among Alliance members. These mechanisms also prescribe consistent standards of good practice to the assessment of educational credentials. Consistent standards ensure similar assessments for similar cases. However, decisions may vary according to the territorial or provincial system of education. The quality assurance framework is not intended as a monitoring process. Alliance members will not play an active monitoring role for other member services. Membership is voluntary and relies on a process based on self-reporting and mutual trust.

The primary beneficiaries of this quality assurance framework are individuals who require an assessment of their foreign educational credentials, and organizations that use credential assessments. The major objectives of the quality assurance framework are:

- Assuring clients and organizations that use credential assessments (e.g., employers, professional regulatory bodies, immigration officers, and post-secondary institutions) that Alliance members follow quality criteria and standards.

- Ensuring fair and equitable treatment of all clients of Alliance member services.
- Improving the portability of credential assessments and facilitating the recognition of quality services across Canada.
- Promoting the consistent application of fair and credible assessment standards across Canada.
- Providing guidance in the establishment of new services in Canada.

### C. Membership Criteria

Membership in the Alliance is open to any public or private credential evaluation service. In order for Alliance applicants to be admitted as members, all of the following requirements must be met and maintained at all times:

- The applicant's service must operate as part of a provincial or territorial authority, or be mandated by a provincial or territorial authority to provide foreign credential evaluation services.
- The applicant's service must serve a broad-based clientele, and not be limited to individuals applying for admission, membership, or certification with only one type of institution such as university, college, or membership organization.

The applicant's service must have received a clear mandate for providing credential evaluation services to the population from a provincial ministry. This mandate should:

- Originate from a competent authority in this ministry.
- Specify the nature of the deliverable services.
- Indicate the duration of the mandate.
- Mention any limitation.
- Specify any accountability or reporting mechanisms between the service and the ministry.
- The applicant's service must provide multi-purposed assessments (i.e., for general employment), and cover a full range of countries of origin, disciplines, and levels of credentials (e.g., primary/secondary through doctorate levels, and academic or vocational/career programs).
- The applicant's service must have complied with the above criteria for at least one year and have performed a significant number of assessments (at least 250 during this time period).

- The applicant's service must demonstrate compliance with all of the quality assurance criteria through the self-assessment survey process (see Appendix 1).

### D. Responsibilities of Alliance Members

**Members of the Alliance have the following responsibilities:**

- Assure the quality of their respective service and maintain standards of good practice.
- Inform all members of the Alliance of any changes in circumstances that might prevent a service from complying with any membership criteria, and indicate how to remedy the situation.
- Recommend, review, and implement policies, standards, and criteria related to the development and maintenance of a quality assurance process for the Alliance.
- Develop, maintain, and disseminate the Alliance's policies and procedures.
- Promote and raise awareness of the Alliance with stakeholders and organizations within the member's jurisdiction.
- Participate in the activities and the annual general meeting of the Alliance.
- Review Alliance membership applications from new services and provide guidance based on the requirements set out in the Alliance's membership application process.

### E. Rights of Alliance Members

Members of the Alliance are committed to developing effective communication strategies. This ensures that all potential users of credential assessments benefit from the quality assurance framework.

Membership in the Alliance will signal to all prospective clients and organizations who use assessments that these member services conform to quality assurance criteria, and that their assessments will be accepted by other member services across Canada.

**Members of the Alliance have the following exclusive rights:**

- Use of the Alliance name: Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance)/Alliance canadienne des services d'évaluation de diplômes (l'Alliance).



- Inclusion in the Alliance Web site and Alliance promotional documents and brochures.
- Use of the following Alliance Member Statement. This can be added to evaluation reports and promotional material of member services:

*“XXX is a member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (the Alliance). The Alliance ensures that individuals have access to fair and credible credential assessment services. Members of the Alliance follow principles of good practice that are consistent with international standards. Further information on the Alliance can be obtained from the Web site (<http://www.canalliance.org>) or by contacting individual members of the Alliance.”*

A member may withdraw its membership with the Alliance by submitting to the Alliance a notice of intent to withdraw. Their decision to withdraw becomes effective immediately, and the service must cease to use any reference to the Alliance.

## F. Limitations and Liabilities of Membership

A service cannot transfer its Alliance membership to another or different service. Members may not use any language that implies that this membership gives them any authorization, certification, licensure or other forms of legal recognition. Neither the Alliance nor individual members are liable for other members of the Alliance. Each member is responsible for assuring the quality of its own assessment services and for applying standards of good practice as defined in this document.

Nothing in this Framework shall be construed as creating a partnership or as imposing upon any member any partnership duty, obligation, or liability to the other parties. Each member shall indemnify and hold harmless the other members, their employees, and their agents from any and all claims, demands, actions, and costs whatsoever that may arise out of, directly or indirectly, the indemnifying member’s performance of participation in this Alliance or that of the indemnifying member’s employees or agents. Such indemnification shall survive the dissolution of this Alliance.

Each member shall, at its own expense and without limiting its liabilities herein, be responsible for insuring its operations under a contract of Comprehensive General Liability, in an amount not less than \$1,000,000 per occurrence (annual general aggregate, if any, not less than \$2,000,000) insuring against bodily injury, personal injury, and property damage including loss of use thereof.

Coverage shall include blanket contractual liability, and shall include employees as additional insured. An appropriate self-insurance or self-assumption program is considered compliance with the insurance requirement. Written evidence of an appropriate self-insurance or self-assumption program at the required levels or above will be accepted in the place of a certified copy.

## G. Advisory Forum

The Alliance recognizes the need for a wider mechanism for consultation, collaboration, and information exchange on issues related to foreign credential assessment. Therefore the Alliance relies on an advisory forum composed of representatives of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Professions and Trades to discuss issues related specifically to the evaluation of foreign credentials. The objectives of this advisory forum include, but are not limited to:

- Providing input and advice to the Alliance on issues and concerns related to credential assessment practice and policy.
- Promoting fair and consistent approaches to credential evaluation.
- Promoting portability of credential evaluations from one jurisdiction to another and encouraging wide recognition of assessments performed by members of the Alliance.
- Fostering partnership and collaboration with national and international organizations and associations involved with foreign credential assessment.

In pursuing these objectives, the Advisory Forum enhances inter-provincial and international mobility, facilitates access to trades and professions, and improves communication concerning practice and policy among provincial and territorial authorities.

Participation in the Advisory Forum is open to any representatives of the Federal-Provincial-Territorial Working Group on Access to Professions and Trades who are interested in credential assessment practice or policy. The Alliance will coordinate its consultation activities through the chairs of the Working Group.

## II. Quality Criteria

### A. Principles of good practice

Members of the Alliance must comply with standards outlined in the “General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials”

### B. Additional Principles

In addition to complying with the standards outlined in the “General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials,” members of the Alliance must meet the following requirements.

#### Translation

Key educational documents issued in foreign languages must be translated by recognized organizations or certified translators.

#### Assessment Outcome

An assessment report or certificate must be provided to applicants. The assessment outcome should be an official document outlining measures taken to prevent falsification. It must include a general statement of comparability for each credential evaluated. The assessment outcome must clearly indicate the purpose for which the evaluation was performed (e.g., general employment, or advice for admission). A client should have access to the rationale and basis for the assessed outcome on demand.

### C. Operational Criteria

#### Documentation and Reference Centre

A documentation centre must give access to a broad range of information resources (published and unpublished) such as historical and up-to-date information on educational systems from a variety of countries.

Continuous research activities must be conducted in order to obtain all the information required to assess specific credentials, and/or to understand foreign educational systems. The service should have the research capacity to obtain information on educational documents through a number of different channels including mail, electronic mail, fax, electronic databases, or other electronic sources.

#### File Management

The file management system must permit easy access to information while ensuring the protection of confidential information. Services should have an articulated policy protecting the confidentiality and privacy of client files. Release of confidential client information to outside organizations must require the explicit consent of the client. File management procedures must ensure the safety and security of client files, including all original documentation contained in those files.

Record keeping of assessment decisions should be structured in such a way that it allows for organized and systematic research on precedent decisions. The service must retain information on the client application for at least five (5) years.

#### Human Resources Requirements

Sufficiently trained personnel must provide fair and consistent credential assessments. Assessors or evaluators must have a bachelor degree or the equivalent, and must have completed a documented training program in educational credential assessment.

At least one assessor or evaluator must have a minimum of one year of full-time substantive supervised experience in foreign credential assessment covering all levels of education. This experience must be recent and relevant to the services offered.

Evaluators must maintain currency by being involved in training activities, consulting with peers, and/or carrying out research. The service should provide professional development opportunities for its evaluators, such as attending conferences and/or workshops.



### **III. Application Process**

#### **A. Overview of Application Process**

This section provides an overview of the application process to interested services. Services interested in applying for membership to the Alliance can submit a completed application to the Alliance through the CICIC office. Application forms are also available through the Alliance web site (<http://www.canalliance.org>). The application process involves the following steps:

#### **Completion of Self-Assessment Survey**

Alliance applicants must demonstrate compliance with quality assurance criteria by completing the “Self-Assessment Survey” (see Appendix 1) and submitting supporting documentation for review by Alliance members.

#### **Application Time Lines**

The Alliance will confirm the receipt of the applicant’s completed “Self-Assessment Survey” within one month. Normally, the Alliance will complete the review within six months of receipt of the completed survey. In cases of substantial delay the Alliance will inform applicants of the reason for the delay, and the approximate time required to review the application.

#### **Application Review**

Application review will begin only after all the information requested has been received. Alliance members will review the completed “Self-Assessment Survey” and supporting documentation to ensure consistency with quality assurance criteria.

#### **Notice of Results**

The Alliance will notify the applicant in writing of the results of the review. Applicants will gain membership if their application and supporting documentation is consistent with quality assurance criteria. The Alliance will identify any inconsistencies to the applicant and, where possible, suggest mechanisms to address inconsistencies.

#### **Membership Duration and Renewal**

Alliance membership is for one year. An annually requested review process will determine a service’s continued membership. This process is based on a “Renewal Declaration” signed by the member service identifying changes and/or indicating continued compliance with membership terms.

#### **B. Self-Assessment Survey**

Applicants must complete the “Self-Assessment Survey” I, and submit four (4) copies of the survey and other required documents to the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada, care of CICIC.

## Appendix 5: Stakeholder Forum Attendees

**Roger Hur** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Raili McIvor** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Irena Blodgett** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Chris McInnis** – Academic Credentials Assessment Service, Manitoba / Service d'évaluation des diplômes du Manitoba

**Shannon MacKay** – Academic Credentials Assessment Service, Manitoba / Service d'évaluation des diplômes du Manitoba

**Timothy Owen** – World Education Services – Canada

**Sebastian Rojas** – World Education Services – Canada

**Sue Le-Ba** – World Education Services – Canada

**Choghik Kirakosian** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Christiane Syms** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Michel Bédard** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Phil Belanger** – Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training / Conseil Atlantique des Ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**Deniz Akmaner** – Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training / Conseil Atlantique des Ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**Charles Ayles** – Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training / Conseil Atlantique des Ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**Wendy Loat** – University of Toronto

**Sherron Hibbitt** – International Credential Assessment Service of Canada / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Sean Sweeney** – International Credential Assessment Service of Canada / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Deborah Wolfe** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Doris Yee** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Ramanjit Rudra** – Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council, Ottawa / Conseil canadien des ressources humaines en tourisme, Ottawa

**Patty Brady** – Human Resources and Skills Development Canada / Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada

**Silvano Tocchi** – Human Resources and Skills Development Canada / Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada

**Yves Beaudin** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Keith Johnson** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Noelline Ip Yam** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Gail Larose** – Facilitator / Facilitatrice

**Nadia Papaineau-Couture** – Research assistant / Adjointe à la recherche

**Brian Baumal** – Contracted researcher / Chercheur

**Aurelia Tokaci** – Settlement and Integration Services Organization, Hamilton, Ontario/Organisme pour les Services d'Intégration et d'Adaptation, Hamilton (Ontario)

**Adrian Pritchard** – Director of Professions and Occupations, Employment, Immigration and Industry Alberta



- Bill McKnight** – Joint Apprenticeship Council, Ontario
- Carmen Pallett** – University of Alberta
- Charles Mayenga** – Canadian Nurses Association, Ottawa / Association des infirmières et infirmiers du Canada, Ottawa
- Christine Neilson** – Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science, Hamilton, Ontario / Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical, Hamilton (Ontario)
- Cynthia Johansen** – British Columbia College of Nurses
- David Leyton-Brown** – York University (Calumet College), Toronto
- Eileen Kelly-Freake** – Association for New Canadians – Newfoundland and Labrador
- Elizabeth McIsaac** – Toronto Region Immigrant Employment Council
- Emilie Coyle** – Edmonton Mennonite Centre for Newcomers (EMCN), Alberta
- Eric Hueglin** – Joint Apprenticeship Council, Ontario
- Fern Hubbard** – College of Dietitians of British Columbia
- Jean-François Thuot** – Conseil interprofessionnel du Québec
- Joseph Arseneault** – Department of Education, New Brunswick / Ministère de l'Éducation, Nouveau-Brunswick
- Joy van Kleef** – Canadian Institute for Recognizing Learning / Institut canadien de reconnaissance de l'apprentissage
- Judy McKnight** – Joint Apprenticeship Council
- Karl Flecker** – Canadian Labour Congress / Congrès du travail du Canada
- Kerridwen Harvey** – Citizenship and Immigration Canada / Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada
- Lauren Waples** – Red River College, Manitoba
- Liz Hong-Farrell** – Citizenship and Immigration Canada / Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada
- Mark J. Tokarik** – Association of Professional Engineers, Geologists and Geophysicists of Alberta
- Michelle Thomason** – Skills & Learning Branch, Department of Education, Nova Scotia
- Monika Feist** – Success Skills Manitoba
- Nuzhat Jafri** – Global Experience Ontario / Expérience Globale Ontario
- Paul Clipsham** – Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters Association (Ontario)/Manufacturiers et Exportateurs du Canada (Ontario)
- Pauline Roy** – Landal Inc., New Brunswick
- Phil Schalm** – Ryerson University
- Rifky Rosensweig** – International Professionals Initiative University of Toronto
- Robin Ormsby** – Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario / Conseil Ontarien d'Évaluation des Qualifications
- Rod Adachi** – Alberta College of Social Workers
- Sandra Saric** – Information and Communications Technology Council / Conseil des technologies de l'information et des communications
- Shelley Guilfoyle** – The Alliance of Sector Councils, Ottawa / Alliance des conseils sectoriels, Ottawa
- Sylvain Croteau** – Direction de la formation et de la titularisation et du personnel scolaire, Ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport du Québec
- Tabasom Eftekari** – Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, Toronto / Alliance canadienne des organismes de réglementation de la physiothérapie, Toronto
- Terry Miosi** – Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, Toronto / Commission d'évaluation de la qualité de l'éducation postsecondaire, Toronto
- Wayne Oake** – Health Force Ontario / Professions Santé Ontario

## Appendix 6: National Workshop of Credential Evaluators Attendees

**Jacques Granadino** – Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia

**Louise Pincen Parsens** – Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Newfoundland and Labrador

**Tina C. Obrigewitsch** – Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Saskatchewan

**Claudia Shymko** – Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba

**Joan McKinley** – Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Manitoba

**Moody Farag** – Professional Engineers Ontario

**Doris Yee** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Deborah Wolfe** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Shannon MacKay** – Academic Credentials Assessment Service, Manitoba / Service d'évaluation des diplômes du Manitoba

**Leah Farrow** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Raili McIvor** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Michael Rohaly** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Tracey Torrance** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Tim Owen** – World Education Services

**Hasmik Sargsyan** – World Education Services

**Caroline Ausukuya** – World Education Services

**Phil Belanger** – Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training / Conseil Atlantique des Ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**Deniz Akmaner** – Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training / Conseil Atlantique des Ministres de l'Éducation et de la Formation

**Kathleen Morrow** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Jeff Stull** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Irena Blodgett** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Sandra Zarate** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Darlene Fisher** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Suzanne Smith** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Colette Shannon** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Qiuling Wu** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Grace Waszkiewicz** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Magdalena Stanislawska** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Audra Jefremovas** – Comparative Education Service

**Lucien Audet** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Michel Bedard** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Denis Cogger** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Amelie Drewitt** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Alain Jacques** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Gregory Jean-Louis** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec



**Claire Jeffrey** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Choghik Kirakosian** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Richard Lecours** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Lorraine Letourneau** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Luc Milette** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Claude Viau** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Phil Mondor** – Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council, Ottawa / Conseil canadien des ressources humaines en tourisme, Ottawa

**Jennifer MacDonald** – Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council, Ottawa / Conseil canadien des ressources humaines en tourisme, Ottawa

**Sherron Hibbitt** – International Credential Assessment Service of Canada / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Sarah Ledwidge** – International Credential Assessment Service of Canada / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Beverley J. Maxwell** – BC College of Teachers

**John R. Murphy** – BC College of Teachers

**Becky Chamula** – Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, Toronto / Alliance canadienne des organismes de réglementation de la physiothérapie, Toronto

**Barb Gawlik** – Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, Toronto / Alliance canadienne des organismes de réglementation de la physiothérapie, Toronto

**Robin Ormsby** – Qualifications Evaluation Council of Ontario / Conseil Ontarien d'Évaluation des Qualifications

**Conrad Malilay** – Association of British Columbia Forest Professionals

**Louise Chétrit** – Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec

**Joseph Arsenault** – Department of Education, New Brunswick / Ministère de l'Éducation, Nouveau-Brunswick

**Andrea White-Markham** – Michener Institute of Applied Health Sciences

**Sam DiGiandomenico** – Ontario Association of Certified Engineering Technicians and Technologists / Conseil canadien des techniciens et technologues

**Ron Green** – GBM Services Ltd (Provider of evaluations to CCTT and its constituent provincial members)

**Perry Nelson** – Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta

**Leslie James** – George Brown College

**Michael Salvatori** – Ontario College of Teachers / Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario

**Solomon Asantey** – Fanshawe College

**Michelle Thomason** – Skills & Learning Branch, Department of Education, Nova Scotia

**Patty Brady** – Human Resources and Skills Development Canada / Ressources humaines et Développement des compétences Canada

**Yves Beaudin** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Eric Schwartz** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Noelline Ip Yam** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Keith Johnson** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

**Gail Larose** – Facilitator / Facilitatrice

## Appendix 7: Evaluation Working Group Members

**Sherron Hibbitt** – International Credential Assessment Service / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Sean Sweeney** – International Credential Assessment Service / Service canadien d'évaluation de documents scolaires internationaux

**Deborah Wolfe** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Doris Yee** – Engineers Canada / Ingénieurs Canada

**Phil Belanger** – International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition Service / Agence d'évaluation et de reconnaissance des titres de compétences étrangers

**Deniz Akmaner** – International Credential and Competency Assessment and Recognition Service / Agence d'évaluation et de reconnaissance des titres de compétences étrangers

**Shannon MacKay** – Academic Credentials Assessment Service / Service d'évaluation des diplômes du Manitoba

**Chris MacInnis** – Academic Credentials Assessment Service / Service d'évaluation des diplômes du Manitoba

**Jeff Stull** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Irena Blodgett** – International Qualifications Assessment Service

**Phil Mondor** – Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council / Conseil canadien des ressources humaines en tourisme, Ottawa

**Audra Jefremovas** – Comparative Education Service

**Merike Rimmel** – Comparative Education Service

**Roger Hur** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Michael Rohaly** – International Credential Evaluation Service

**Tim Owen** – World Education Services, Canada

**Choghik Kirakosian** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Christiane Syms** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Michel Bédard** – Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec

**Yves E. Beaudin** – Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials / Centre d'information canadien sur les diplômes internationaux

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