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PAN-CANADIAN QUALITY STANDARDS IN
INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT

Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor VOLUME 2



Canadian Information Centre
for International Credentials

Centre d'information canadien
sur les diplômes internationaux



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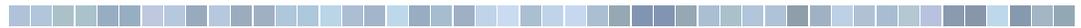
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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada or the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials.

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The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada, was formed in 1967 by the provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education to provide a forum in which they could discuss matters of mutual interest, undertake educational initiatives cooperatively, and represent the interests of the provinces and territories with national educational organizations, the federal government, foreign governments, and international organizations. CMEC is the national voice for education in Canada, and, through CMEC, the provinces and territories work collectively on common objectives in a broad range of activities at the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels.

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) was established in 1990 after Canada ratified the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region, to assist Canada in carrying out its obligations under the terms of this convention. In 1997, Canada signed the subsequent Lisbon Recognition Convention, promoted its Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications, and adopted a set of General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Academic Credentials. Both of these conventions promote international mobility by advocating wider recognition of higher education and professional qualifications.

CICIC collects, organizes, and distributes information and acts as a national clearing house and referral service to support the recognition and portability of Canadian and international educational and occupational qualifications.

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Appendices are in a separate volume (Volume 3).

Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor is in a separate volume (Volume 1).



■ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This competency profile is intended to increase the visibility of the profession of academic credential assessors.



This project has developed a competency profile for academic credential assessment in order to improve the quality and portability of academic credential assessment across Canada.

The project conducted four focus groups and issued e-questionnaires in Canada and internationally, backed up by consultation interviews and extensive desk research. After a further period of public consultation, the resulting competency profile is being published alongside this final report and its accompanying appendices.

Out of the focus groups, a list of tasks performed by academic credential assessors was created, and these were tentatively grouped into functional areas. Potential formats for the final profile were reviewed, leading to the development of the competency profile as a system of 26 individual competencies, supported by common sets of underpinning knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. Competencies have been assigned a series of reference levels based on a Canadian framework of qualification levels, together with other reference data.

Key findings from the overall research are as follows:

- The Canadian economy and labour market have recovered from the economic recession.
- Immigration continues at a high level, with immigrants possessing higher educational levels, thereby generating growing demand for assessment services.
- Unlike most other countries, assessment in Canada is fragmented, with many organizations of different types offering assessment services.
- There is some reported dissatisfaction with the quality of services provided, but this is coupled with a strong resolve among stakeholders to remedy these matters.

Key trends identified are as follows:

- globalization of economies, education, and labour markets;
- the move from broad equivalence to absence of substantial differences;
- assessment of learning outcomes (emphasis on output rather than input);
- development and use of international and pan-Canadian qualification frameworks;
- movement toward lifelong learning instead of specific periods of formal learning;
- increasing availability of information on the Internet, with rapid updates;
- increased flexibility of assessments, using the assessor's judgment to a greater extent;
- increased complexity due to non-traditional degrees, exchange years, private universities;
- increased variety, with credentials coming from a wider range of countries;
- introduction of new processes and agreements (e.g., the Bologna Process), which increase the scope of work required by credential assessors;
- increasing regulatory demands.

A substantial number of documents has been assembled setting out the competencies and activities of the academic credential assessor, provided by members of the Competency Profile Working Group (CPWG), those contacted through the questionnaire, and others (see Appendix A).

We propose a series of publicity and promotion measures to encourage widespread dissemination and uptake of the new competency profile, including internationally. We enumerate many potential uses and further developments in order to build up and sustain its ongoing application.



■ A. INTRODUCTION

The competency profile drives curriculum development and training, including e-learning.



A.1 Background

This project is one of a suite of projects launched by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) in order to improve the quality and portability of academic credential assessment across Canada.

The principal objective was to develop a competency profile for academic credential assessment based on full consultation with all stakeholders both in Canada and internationally. A draft profile was widely disseminated in order to build a broad consensus for its adoption. The project included a range of related contextual research. In due course, it is expected that the competency profile will drive curriculum development and training, including e-learning.

The Canadian economy continues to attract immigrants from all over the world. Individuals who come to Canada to enter the workforce or a Canadian university or college need to know the value of their foreign education. Such credential assessment is conducted by universities, colleges, and a host of other bodies in each province and territory in order to match candidates' academic credentials to specific Canadian educational levels.

Essentially, the task of academic credential assessment is the evaluation of foreign academic qualifications for the purposes of entry into academic programs or the labour market in Canada. Assessments are also prepared for immigration purposes, for further studies in general (formal, vocational, professional, and apprenticeship), or for licensing/certification/registration.

Within Canada, academic credential assessment is also used to evaluate credentials from pan-Canadian sources. Canada has a large number of different elementary and secondary school systems, as well as different approaches to postsecondary education, combined with a high level of internal mobility. This means a relatively large number of internal assessments are performed, especially by educational institutions.

The project has been conducted by Cambridge Professional Development Limited (CamProf), an international consultancy specializing in public policy for skills development, with previous experience working in Canada.

A.2 The International scene

By its very nature, the work of academic credential assessment is global in scope, with applicants and qualifications from all over the world. The work is governed by a key international treaty known informally as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, which has recently undergone a revision. Canada is expected to formally ratify this treaty shortly.

In order to operate this treaty, a network of national assessment centres in 55 countries was developed, known as ENIC (European Network of Information Centres). Although education is the responsibility of provinces and territories, CICIC, under the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), operates as the pan-Canadian point of reference for Canada.

A.3 Scope

The project is concerned with assessment rather than recognition. Recognition is the more formal and subsequent process of actually deciding on admission into an educational program or an occupation, which is usually the prerogative of the education institution or occupational/regulatory body concerned, sometimes with legal considerations.

Nor is the project concerned with assessment of non-academic, prior, experiential, informal or non-formal learning. Although academic credential assessors should know about the concept of such prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR, as it is known in Canada), we are concerned here only with formal academic credentials.

A.4 Language

This project has defined the competency profile for a Canadian academic credential assessor. The term academic credentials (in French, *diplôme d'études*) refers to credentials gained after a period of formal study (or after a period of non-formal or informal learning that has already been recognized through PLAR). By contrast, credentials (*titres de compétences*) are outside the scope of this project and provide a professional or occupational title (including a licence/certificate/registration or permission to use a protected/registered title), and imply competency-based, know-how qualifications that are usually awarded outside the academic environment (and are often time limited, requiring periodic renewal, and usually cover a full occupation).





This highlights the importance in this project of the careful and precise use of terms in both English and French, and particularly the consideration of false friends or *faux amis* – not only terms that appear similar but have different nuances in English and French, but also those words that have different nuances between Canadian English, American English, United Kingdom English, and/or European Union English.



■ B. METHODOLOGY

An individual wishing to pursue a career as an academic credential assessor will require at least a bachelor's or master's degree depending on the organization.



The project commenced with a launch meeting of the project working group in Toronto on the morning of October 29, 2010, attended by 13 members of the academic credential assessment community. This meeting confirmed the objectives, methodology, and timescale of the project and provided essential contacts, background, and input.

The first of four focus groups was held on the afternoon of the same day, with mainly the same attendees. Two further focus groups were held in the subsequent days: in Halifax on November 2 and at the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) conference in Ottawa on November 8. A total of around 66 people attended the three groups, the majority from the CAPLA conference. A major output of these groups was a first-draft list of the tasks performed by academic credential assessors. (See Section C.4 and Appendix B.)

A fourth focus group was held at Centre d'expertise sur les formations acquises hors du Québec (CEFAHQ) in Montreal on January 13, 2011, that reviewed the competency list developed through the previous three focus groups. This focus group was held in French and included 12 participants, 10 of whom were professionals in the field of academic credential assessment.

A questionnaire was prepared in two variants, for distribution by e-mail. The international version was sent to 55 ENIC contacts, plus several others. The Canadian version was translated professionally and distributed within Canada in both French and English. Progress and results from this e-questionnaire are discussed in Section C.

This e-questionnaire was complemented by nine telephone interviews and a small number of face-to-face interviews.

Concurrently with the focus groups, e-questionnaires, and interviews, the project team conducted extensive desk research. A list of the major documents consulted appears in Appendix A.

The CICIC Web site has been used throughout to generate interest in the project. In particular, several project documents have been loaded onto the Web site in order to stimulate discussion.

From all this information, the competency list was developed into a set of draft individual competency units and other supporting data. This was discussed internally with the working group, leading to the issue of a public consultation version. This, too, led to extensive comments and improvements, resulting in the final published version.

The development and consultation process is described in more detail in Section D.



■ C. DATA COLLECTION

CICIC should develop a seal of approval program to publicly recognize organizations that fully comply with the competency profile and quality assurance framework.



C.1 Introduction

An on-line questionnaire was designed for use via the professional survey tool SurveyMonkey and publicized through the project Web site and by e-mail. No significant problems were reported.

The Canadian version was translated professionally and distributed widely in both languages within Canada. The international version was sent to 55 ENIC contacts, plus several others. Text versions of the Canadian French version and the international version are included in Appendices C1 and C2.

This e-questionnaire was complemented by a number of telephone interviews with selected contacts, both internationally and within Canada.

C.2 Canadian questionnaire

In addition to an international questionnaire, a questionnaire was sent out to Canadian institutions. The questionnaire was made available in both English and French (Appendix C1). A total of 40 people began the English questionnaire (of which 28 were completed), and 24 people began the French version (of which 18 were completed). Because the questionnaire was sent via several mailing lists, and subsequently distributed within organizations, it is impossible to tell exactly how many people received it. This method of delivery could also account for the large number of incomplete

questionnaires, since many recipients may have felt they did not fit the category of assessor we were looking for after beginning the questionnaire. For instance, members of CAPLA received requests to complete the questionnaire, although that organization does not deal specifically with the assessment of academic credentials.

When analyzing the data, the anglophone and francophone questionnaire responses were combined (but not weighted), so the data represent Canadian respondents as a whole.

1 - Type of Canadian organization

The majority of respondents (see Chart 1) to the Canadian survey were from regulatory bodies (37 per cent). The second-highest response came from credential assessment services (30 per cent). University respondents accounted for 16 per cent of respondents, while college respondents accounted for 5 per cent.

Provincial or territorial government bodies accounted for 12 per cent of responses, but there were no respondents from national agencies.

Trade associations accounted for 14 per cent of responses, while sector councils and apprenticeship bodies accounted for 4 per cent each. Training providers and trade unions accounted for 2 per cent each. There were no responses from employers.

Chart 1 - Type of organization
What type of organization are you? (Check all that apply)

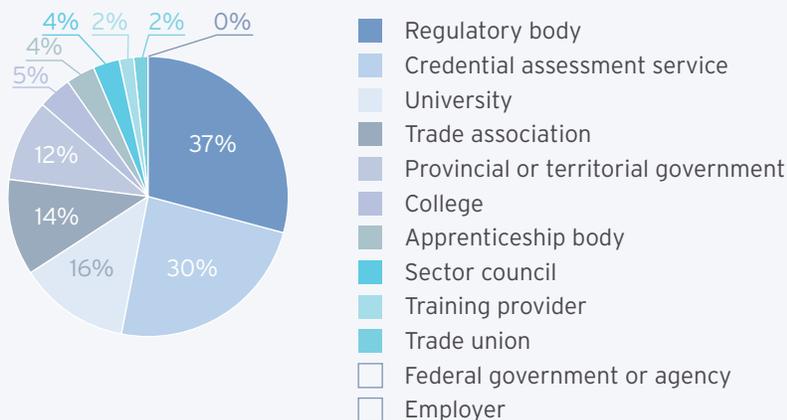
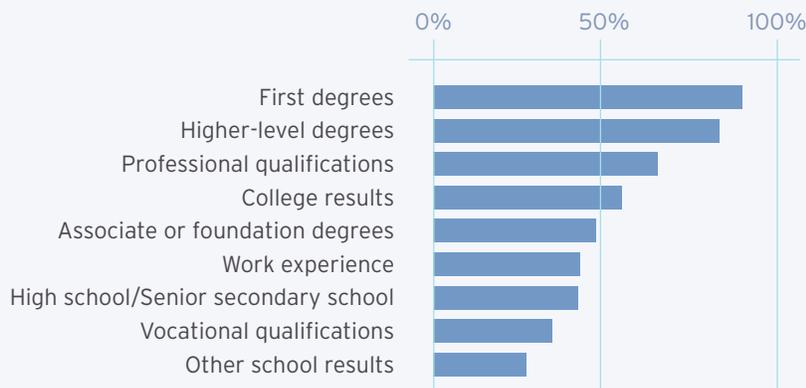




Chart 2 - Types of qualification
Which types of qualifications does your organization assess?



2 - Scope

The vast majority of respondents assessed first degrees (88 per cent), and only slightly fewer indicated they assessed higher level degrees (82 per cent). Professional qualifications were assessed by 65 per cent, which is unsurprising considering the high rate of response from regulatory bodies. (See Chart 2.)

College results and foundation degrees were assessed by 55 per cent and 48 per cent of respondents respectively, while only 42 per cent of respondent agencies indicated they assessed high-school or other secondary-school qualifications.

Work experience and vocational qualifications are assessed by relatively few respondents, at 43 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. These rates are, again, unsurprising as most of the agencies responding to the survey emphasized the assessment of academic qualifications.

Other assessed qualifications included one organization that had a classification of “other” for any assessments it believed did not fit into another category; for example, aptitude tests, qualifications from schools where mandatory education ends before secondary school as defined in most Canadian provinces/territories (e.g., in England, where students receive qualifications at age 16), cégep qualifications, specialty programs that are not country specific, such as the International Baccalaureate, and internships.

Just over 50 per cent of respondents indicated they had a subject specialization. A greater percentage of the francophone respondents had specializations than the anglophone respondents, which may be a result of whom the survey was sent to. Specializations included optometry, medicine, agriculture, geology, nutrition, postsecondary education, teacher education, and tourism.

3 - Volume

As with the international survey, there was a large variety in the number of academic credential assessors at various organizations. The average for francophone respondents was around seven and ranged from one to 30. The average for anglophone respondents was not much different – around six and also ranging from one to 30. Some respondents indicated their agency did not explicitly perform academic credential assessments, while others said their assessments were performed entirely by volunteers. Some employees were full-time, but many were part-time.

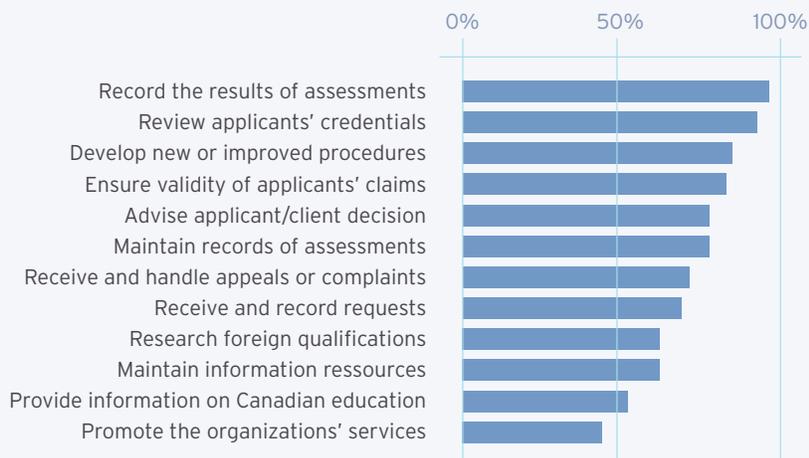
In terms of the number of credentials assessed, foreign academic assessment counts ranged from about 10 to nearly 18,000 per year, but most organizations performed between 30 and 100 foreign assessments per year.

Internal (within Canada) academic credential assessments ranged from none to more than 30,000. The need for large numbers of internal academic assessment is clear within the scope of a country such as Canada, where there





Chart 3 - Functions performed by academic credential assessors
What functions do your credential assessors perform?



are around 13 distinct systems of education combined with a high degree of internal mobility of citizens. The highest levels of internal assessments were reported from postsecondary education institutions, mainly universities, showing the extent to which all Canadian students have their credentials assessed.

4 - Functions¹

The most common tasks performed by credential assessors were recording the results of assessments (94 per cent), reviewing applicants' credentials against existing databases (90 per cent), developing new or improved procedures (83 per cent), and ensuring the validity of applicants' claims (81 per cent).

Advising the applicant or client of the decision of the assessment and maintaining records of these assessments received surprisingly low response rates at 75 per cent each. Additionally, receiving requests for appeals, as well as requests for assessment, received low response rates at 69 per cent and 67 per cent respectively. As these four tasks could be considered more administrative in comparison to evaluative, it is possible that the lower response rates are due to some respondents working for organizations that employ secretarial staff as well as assessors.

¹ The responses for this question have been shortened to fit into the graphic. For the full-length responses used in the questionnaire, please refer to Appendix C1.

The tasks least performed were providing information on Canadian postsecondary studies (52.2 per cent, suggesting that many respondents were unidirectional in terms of academic assessments) and promotion of services (41.4 per cent).

Respondents indicated the main outcomes produced as:

- admissions decisions (for postsecondary institutions);
- letter with results of assessment;
- certification rating;
- the opinion by assessors of ability of applicant, based on qualifications.

5 - Minimum qualifications to become an academic credential assessor

For those organizations specifying a minimum educational qualification, it was generally a bachelor's degree for anglophone respondents and a master's degree or higher for francophone respondents. For professional bodies, education in the specific subject was most important.

Experience was not usually required, except in professional or subject-specific bodies (where experience within the field of practice was deemed to be extremely important). One respondent specified that seven years of experience were required to become a senior assessor. Some universities specified that their applicants for positions of



credential assessment should be professors.

Unlike many of the international assessment agencies we contacted, Canadian agencies did not specify any language proficiencies, the exception being a few anglophone respondents who emphasized familiarity with French. Instead, good research and information technology (IT) skills, analytical and communication ability, and some knowledge of international schooling systems were noted as most important.

Organizations looked for applicants with no conflict of interest and a belief in transparency and the importance of attention to detail. Teamwork skills as well as an ability to work independently were also emphasized.

For governmental (mainly provincial/territorial) assessment positions, further restrictions may be imposed. One respondent mentioned they were required to hire from a predetermined pool of provincial/territorial government employee applicants who had successfully passed certain examinations. This severely restricted their choices in terms of whom they could hire, but this was seen as only a minor inconvenience.

6 - Training

Training was mainly in-house. Exceptions included seminars provided by some academic credential assessment services. Most of the training seemed to be provided on the job. It is unclear if this was due to the feeling that there was no need to participate in external training programs or a lack of such courses being available.

While much of the training was on the job, through experience, some of it was Internet-based. Some organizations indicated they used past applications as case studies for new assessors to practise with. Other agencies emphasized a mentorship-based training, whereby junior assessors were paired with senior assessors. Additionally, one small organization indicated it used a cross-training system, where it joined with other postsecondary institutions to help train new assessors.

7 - Customers

The primary customer base depended strongly on the organization. Some organizations, such as universities, focused mainly on international students, while others had their largest client base within Canada. Other customers were universities, apprenticeship clients, and trained practitioners.

Immigrants represented a large percentage of the customer base of assessment services. These clients more often needed their credentials assessed for employment rather than for access to specific educational courses.

The two main customer groups were organizational clients (educational bodies, regulatory bodies, employers) and individuals (international students, immigrants, refugees, foreign-trained Canadians). In some cases, organizational clients were also employers of academic credential assessors.

8 - Trends and changes

The greatest trends and changes for the future, according to the respondents, were identified as follows:

- increased mobility of students;
- privatization of higher education;
- necessity for easy transferability of qualifications;
- improvement of accreditation standards for specific professions;
- skill shortages and immigration (especially important within Canada);
- process automation;
- increased involvement of regulatory bodies;
- language fluency assessment (as part of accreditation, separate from citizenship requirements);
- greater emphasis on competency and skill assessment rather than the current emphasis on academic assessment;
- adoption of practices similar to those in the UNESCO Europe Region, Lisbon Recognition Convention, etc.;
- increased demand for assessments and subsequent increased need for assessors.

Similar to the international survey, most of these trends indicated greater globalization and recognition that more and more people are migrating. In the case of Canada, because of the relative increase in employment due to

retirement, low birth rates, and demographic changes, a greater number of immigrants will be required to fill the gaps not filled by Canadian-educated employees. Greater speed and ease of academic credential assessment were, therefore, deemed especially necessary.

C.3 International questionnaire

The main recipients of this questionnaire were the ENIC members as well as individuals who were recommended to us during the course of our research. Of the 55 ENIC countries we contacted, 26 responded with completed surveys (Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Holy See, Hungary, Ireland, Kazakhstan, Malta, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Kingdom). The 27 member states of EFPA (European Federation of Psychologists' Associations) were also contacted as an example of European professional regulatory bodies, two of whom responded. Additionally, two individual contacts and one United Kingdom regulatory body returned completed questionnaires. In all, we contacted 98 different organizations or individuals and received 31 completed responses, which meant we had a response rate of 31.6 per cent.

1 - Type of organization

The majority of respondents were from national government agencies (46 per cent), followed by credential assessment services (33 per cent). There was a large amount of overlap between these two groups, suggesting that in many countries, credential assessment is in large part directly funded or provided by the national government.

Other respondents indicated they were regulatory bodies (11 per cent) or training providers (6 per cent). One respondent was from a university (2 per cent), and another was from a trade organization (2 per cent). No respondents indicated they were colleges, regional or local bodies, sector councils, employers, or trade unions. One respondent did not reply to this question.

2 - Scope

Nearly all respondents indicated they assessed higher-level degrees (97 per cent), and 90 per cent of respondents assessed first degrees. Twenty-six respondents (84 per cent) indicated they assessed associate or foundation degrees. Slightly more than half of respondents (52 per cent) said they assessed high-school or secondary-school credentials. Professional and vocational qualifications were assessed by 20 and 16 respondents respectively (65 per cent and 52 per cent). College results were assessed by 45 per cent of respondents. Work experience was recognized by just over one-quarter of responding institutes (26 per cent).

Chart 4 - Type of organization
What type of organization are you? (Check all that apply)

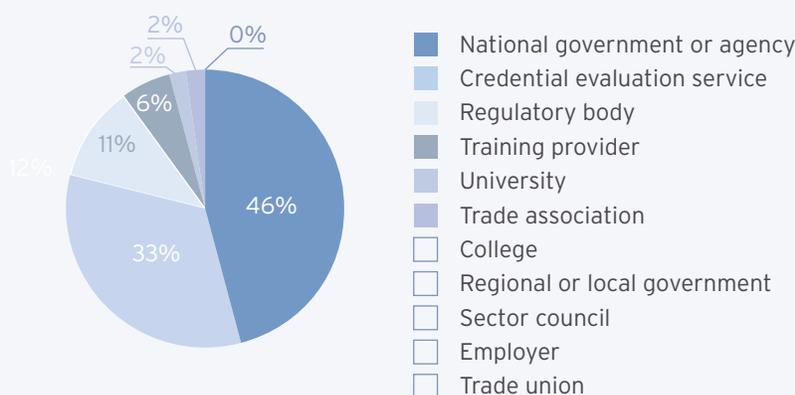
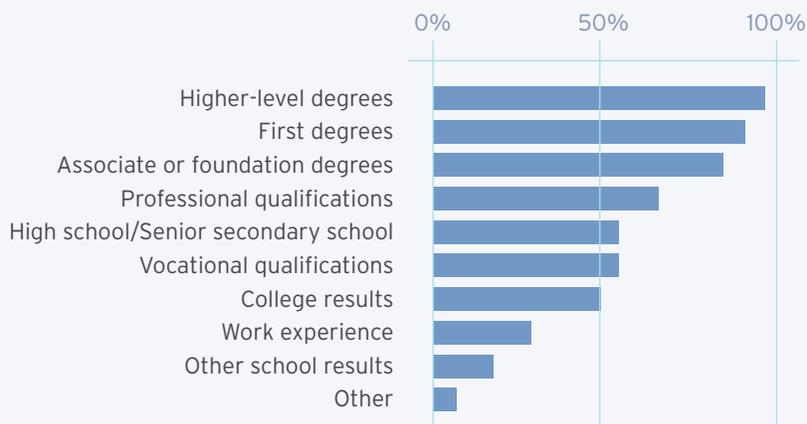




Chart 5 - Types of qualifications
Which types of qualifications does your organization access?



Additionally, some countries had specific assessment procedures for certain disciplines such as teaching or ecclesiastical competencies. One respondent indicated he or she would assess any educational experience from primary school upward, although most seemed to start assessments at the secondary-school level.

For vocational fields, one organization indicated it would recognize qualifications obtained as the result of recognition of prior learning (for example, National Vocational Qualifications achieved by portfolio preparation in England), while another mentioned that although he or she did not assess work experience explicitly, it would be taken into positive account during the assessment process.

Only one-third of respondents indicated they had a specialization, which ranged from geographic specializations (either country-specific or region-specific) to subject specializations such as teaching.

3 - Volume

The number of academic credential assessors employed by the respondents varied dramatically, from none² to more than 50, with the average lying around 12 academic credential assessors per organization. One organization relied on a group of 100 volunteers to do the work, but did not specifically employ anyone for the task.

All respondents assessed international qualifications, while about 40 per cent indicated they also assessed internal qualifications. Again, the numbers of assessments per year varied, from one or two to 33,000 for foreign academic credentials (average of more than 10,000), and from 12 to 500 for internal qualifications; that is, within the country concerned (average of about 220). The variation was partly due to the size of the country, but also the type of recognition being requested (e.g., respondents from universities or specific trade organizations tended to perform fewer assessments than private services or government agencies).

² One respondent indicated that the opinion of external experts was relied on rather than internal evaluation, while another relied on an army of around 100 volunteers, not paid employees.



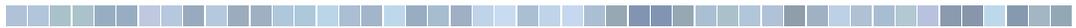
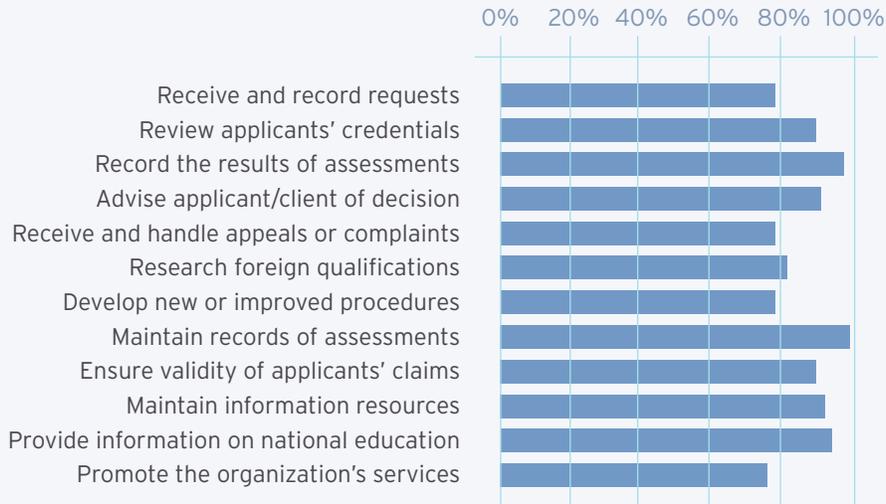


Chart 6 - Functions performed by academic credential assessors
What functions do your credential assessors perform?



4 - Functions

All answers on the question of functions performed (see Appendix C2 for a full description of functions performed) received high response rates, suggesting that many academic credential assessors perform the majority of tasks necessary for credential assessment themselves.

Receiving and recording of assessment requests (79 per cent), developing or improving procedures for assessment (79 per cent), and promoting the organization's services (75 per cent) were the roles least performed. In a subsequent interview, one respondent clarified that larger organizations had employees who performed secretarial duties, such as recording assessment requests, but were not the actual assessors. Additionally, some organizations were too small to actively develop new procedures, and promotion of services was not the responsibility of some organizations (e.g., government-funded ones).

Other roles indicated by respondents included training (both in person and by correspondence), writing books, participating in national and international workshops or conferences with the aim of improving academic credential assessments, checking the authenticity of documents (e.g., ensuring they did not originate from diploma mills), providing information on-line for use by other organizations or individuals,

managing and answering inquiries (through an inquiry hotline, in the case of one respondent), assessing refugee qualifications, and assessing international courses suitable for students of that country to take before they apply.

The main outcome produced by these organizations was an assessment report stating the result of each applicant's request. Many of these reports are legally binding. Some organizations also recommended workshops or seminars for applicants to take part in, depending on the result of their request. One respondent worked for an assessment agency that produced a comprehensive database of information pertaining to academic credential assessment that is accessible to a number of subscribers.

5 - Minimum qualifications to become an academic credential assessor

All organizations specified a minimum of a bachelor's degree to be hired as an academic credential assessor, although some organizations mentioned that their employees all held at least a master's degree. (One organization required master's degrees from its applicants.) Certain organizations required a specific area of study, such as the humanities. Registration with the appropriate regulatory bodies was necessary for subject-specific assessment services (such as psychological and engineering bodies).



Required experience varied from none to mandatory attendance of a specialized course provided by the government to a minimum of three years' work experience in a relevant field. A few respondents mentioned they provided a large amount of training on-site but that previous experience of international education was beneficial.

The most common skill requirement was knowledge of, or willingness to learn, a foreign language. Other skill requirements included computer literacy; legal or research experience; or specific sector, language, or geographic knowledge. The ideal academic credential assessor was indicated as having high levels of professionalism, multi-tasking ability, and an interest in conducting detailed and explorative research.

In a subsequent telephone interview, one respondent emphasized that he or she looked for new graduates from university who were "bright, young, and hungry." This respondent believed that experience was less important than a desire to learn, and emphasized exposure to foreign languages and cultures rather than fluency.

6 - Training

Training of academic credential assessors also varied widely, from no training provided to multi-module courses spanning a few weeks. Most of the training was performed in-house through apprenticeship-style, on-the-job work experience. This process took between six and 12 months, depending on the organization and the individual. Some organizations provided language courses, while others provided extensive training to new assessors before pairing them with a more experienced mentor.

Government-funded assessment programs had access to the same training as all other government employees, but often these were very general and in areas such as computer literacy. Government courses did not usually emphasize task-specific training for the field of academic credential assessment. Instead, there was a reliance on learning on the job and working as part of a team. Private organizations were more likely to provide specific assessment training to their employees, partly because they were larger and had a lower turnover rate of employees and, therefore, could afford to invest a large amount of time and money into the training.

7 - Customers

There were two main categories of customers: organizational clients (educational institutions, regulatory bodies, employers) and individuals (international students, immigrants, refugees, internationally trained nationals, etc.). The largest group of organizational clients were employers looking to assess the academic credentials of potential employees; the largest group of individual clients were refugees.

8 - Related organizations

Not surprisingly, since most of the people we contacted were associated with ENIC countries, their international contacts were heavily based in this organization as well. Other associated bodies included ministries of education and other national ministries, trade bodies, and education authorities.

While some of these bonds were formal and contractual, many were not and relied on consistency and trust between members of the community. Many of these contacts were made at international meetings, conferences, or conventions of academic credential assessors. Despite the fact that these ties may not have been formal and in writing, they were heavily relied on for the exchange of information, especially in the cases of diploma mills and fraudulent or unrecognized institutions.

9 - Trends

Organizations indicated several different trends they felt would impact the field of academic credential assessment. These included the following:

- globalization (increasing Internet availability of information, increased speed of updates);
- moving from equivalency to a lack of substantial differences;
- assessment of learning outcomes (emphasis on output rather than input);
- development and use of international and national qualification frameworks;
- movement toward lifelong learning instead of specific periods of formal learning;
- increased use of academic credential assessment due to the globalization of education (joint degrees, exchange years, etc.) and employment;
- introduction of new processes and agreements (e.g., Bologna process), which increase the scope of work required by academic credential assessors.



All these trends point toward a greater need for the role of academic credential assessors in the educational and vocational fields, as well as a need for increased interconnectivity, consistency, and ease of communication and exchange of information between these individuals and the organizations.

C.4 Focus groups

The project team held four meetings of practising academic credential assessors in order to obtain information for the competency profile and related matters:

- OCTOBER 29, 2010** The afternoon of the CPWG “kick-off” meeting (in the CMEC office, Toronto) was dedicated to a focus group. There were 14 people present, including at least eight practitioners.
- NOVEMBER 2, 2010** A special meeting was held in the Council of Atlantic Ministers of Education and Training (CAMET) offices, Halifax. In spite of the very short prior notice, two practitioners were able to attend from New Brunswick.
- NOVEMBER 8, 2010** A one-hour session was held at the CAPLA conference, Ottawa. There were perhaps 50 people present. CICIC explained the context (Phase II of the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Assessment project – of which this project is one strand). The rest of the session was used to present this project, to hand out an initial list of functions, invite feedback and questions, and gather contacts and key informants.

- JANUARY 13, 2011** A two-hour-long focus group at CEFAHQ was held to review the competency list developed through the previous three focus groups and to see what may have been missed in the process. This focus group was held in French and included 12 participants, 10 of whom were professionals in the field of academic credential assessment.

C.5 Consultation interviews

Following the initial batch of e-questionnaire responses, a number of Canadian and international respondents were approached and asked if they would be willing to participate in a telephone interview. Those who agreed were also asked some questions by e-mail about the size of their workforce and their labour market.

The total number of interviews was nine, of which four represented international contacts and five represented various groups within Canada.

Further details are given in Appendix D.



D. DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMPETENCY PROFILE

A Professional Association of Canadian Academic
Credential Assessors should be created to regulate
the profession.

D.1 Format for the competency profile

At the Toronto kick-off meeting, CamProf presented the following format for the competency profile:

- functional group of competencies;
- core, optional, or additional competencies;
- performance criteria;
- knowledge requirements (overall, group, competency specific);
- range of circumstances;
- values and attitudes;
- examples;
- assessment criteria;
- European Qualifications Framework (EQF) level, Bloom levels, relative importance, frequency, level of difficulty.

It was agreed that, where possible, we should use existing Canadian competency standards and their format in order to facilitate the emergence of shared formats and standards. In the absence of suitable Canadian standards, we should use others from outside Canada for the same reason, where they are found to be of sufficient quality.

D.2 Functional groups

The focus groups produced a list of tasks performed by academic credential assessors. From this, a first grouping into four main functional groups was produced. This was further refined into three functional groups:

1. assessment
2. communication
3. information management

These are supported by two further groups:

4. professional competencies
5. specialist competencies

D.3 Individual competencies: core, optional, and additional

Each group of competencies contains a set of individual competencies. These are further classified into core competencies, optional competencies, and additional competencies.

Core competencies are those that should be held by any competent Canadian academic credential assessor.

In addition, there is a set of optional competencies that reflect the diversity of the profession; for example, there may be some competencies that are essential for a professional regulator but not required for a university entrance academic credential assessor nor for one working for an industrial employer. Core competencies plus selected optional competencies are the essential competencies for each subtype of academic credential assessor.

Additional competencies are those that are not part of the essential competencies (core plus an appropriate selection of the optional competencies). They are additional specialist areas of knowledge or skill that are not essential but are widely found [e.g., many of the competencies in Functional Group 5 (Specialist competencies)].

D.4 Content of competency statement

For each competency, we describe separately the performance criteria and the underpinning knowledge required. The performance criteria are specified as simple sentences using the infinitive form of the verb, following the phrase, "He or she is able to," for example, "draft a letter to the client, recording the assessment decision." Knowledge will be specified at the level of individual competency, but also at the level of functional group for any knowledge that is common to all competencies within the functional group. The competency also specifies the range of situations over which an academic credential assessor should be competent. Where possible, examples of potential situations are given to illustrate the real intention of the competency. Examples can be very helpful in clarifying the intention because the wording of a competency has to be very generic.

The assessment criteria are provided to give guidance on what evidence is required (what types of evidence and how much) to prove competency and, in due course, achieve accreditation. It should be noted that the assessment criteria and the modified Bloom level will determine the standard for a qualification. However, it will be possible to use the competencies to define a range of standards by either writing them up or writing them down. For example, a higher level standard might say, "Check and sign letters recording the assessment decision."



D.5 Levels

Levels provide a numerical value for the scale of difficulty or challenge involved in a particular qualification or profile, or components thereof. There are a number of schemes around the world, usually called frameworks, with between five and 15 levels. Good examples are the EQF and the English Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

It was decided to use a Canadian system of levels to define the level of each competency. We have, therefore, taken the level descriptors of the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework (www.cicic.ca/docs/cmec/QA-Statement-2007.en.pdf), which covers bachelor's, master's, and doctoral level degrees. We have extended this framework downward using the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF). This is the only Canadian framework below degree level recorded on the CICIC Web site, although we are aware that another one has been developed by the Canadian Tourism Human Resources Council (CTHRC). The level descriptors of this combined Canadian framework are shown in Volume I, Appendix I of the competency profile.

The other parameters (Bloom levels, relative importance, frequency, and level of difficulty) were estimated by the consultant team for the consultation draft, and their values were confirmed or improved by the CPWG and the wider community during the consultation. The modified Bloom level descriptors for three domains (knowledge, skills, and attitudes and values) are given in Appendix II, with further coding specified in Appendix III (in Volume I of the competency profile).

D.6 The consultation process

Using the process described above, a draft competency profile was submitted to the working group on January 24, 2011, and discussed in a lengthy teleconference one week later.

The working group then made further written comments over the following week, resulting in the production of the public consultation draft on February 11, 2011. This was translated into French, and both language versions were published on the CICIC Web site about one week later.

Requests for feedback were issued by notice on the Web site, by e-mail, and by both CICIC and CamProf to all contacts established over the course of the project, with various reminders.

In total, some 69 comments were received, without exception referring to specific points of detail within the competencies. There were no issues concerning the structure of the competency profile or the format of the individual competency units.

These were considered carefully, and various adjustments or clarifications were made to the competency profile.



■ E. CONTEXT RESEARCH

“Consideration should be given to creating an on-line developers’ forum for those interested and enthusiastic enough to share applications and ideas.”³

³ Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials under the Council of Ministers of Education Canada. (2012). *Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor Volume 2*; Retrieved January 11, 2012, from http://cicic.ca/docs/2012/Competency_Profile_Volume_2_EN.pdf

E.1 Emergence of a new profession of academic credential assessors

The assessment of an academic credential becomes important when someone from another country wishes to study or work here, without repeating the full course of study. Canada's high rate of immigration means that this has been an issue for a long time, and considerable expertise has been developed. This is also true of other countries with high immigration rates (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, United States) and in the European Union, with its internal labour market of 27 countries. Globalization of the education market (particularly at higher education levels) and of the professional labour market is making the issue increasingly important, as the international flows of qualified professionals grow each year. We are witnessing the emergence of a new profession and the accompanying knowledge, terminology, practices, and values.

Canada

Canada has 13 jurisdictions (10 provinces and three territories), each one having responsibility for education. There is, therefore, a variety of systems for secondary and postsecondary education. However, although universities in Canada are autonomous and reflect the diversity of the country, there are consistent higher-education qualification systems across Canada.

A chart of the Canadian education system (obtained from the CICIC Web site) is included in Appendix E.

The UNESCO Europe and North America Region

The Europe and North America Region of UNESCO has encountered issues arising from recognition of foreign academic credentials and responded with the joint Council of Europe and UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention, [UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (1997)], followed by the Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (2001), and the recent Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications (2010).

There is also the European Network of National Information Centres (ENIC) on academic recognition and mobility, which is made up of all 47 Council of Europe countries, Canada, the United States, Australia, and New Zealand.

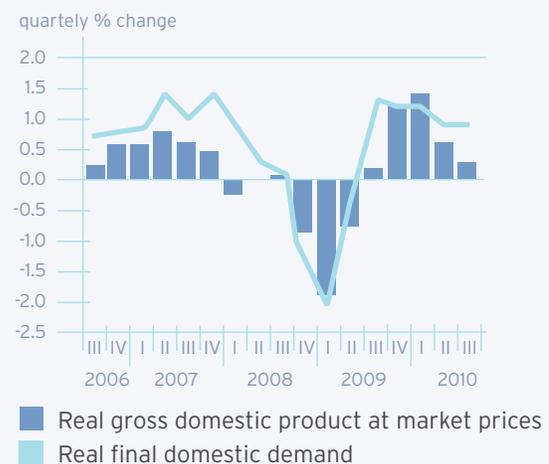
European Union (EU) member countries of ENIC also participate in the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC) network. It is run by the European Commission of the EU and includes all EU member states and the European Economic Area.

ENIC and NARIC countries collaborate closely, hold joint meetings, and maintain a common Web site.

E.2 Economic background

Canada suffered far less than most Western economies from the recent financial crisis. With strong banking regulation and an economy based more on agriculture, minerals, and other primary industries, only three successive quarters showed negative gross domestic product (GDP) growth. Consumer spending is steady and business investment is expanding, but housing investment has fallen.

Chart 7 - Final domestic demand outpaces gross domestic product



Source: Statistics Canada, *The Daily*, August 31st, 2010, p. 2.

Total employment, at around 17.2 million, has recovered from a sharp fall in the first half of 2009 to an all-time peak. Both private- and public-sector employment have increased over the last year, while self-employment has decreased. Full-time employment has increased, whereas part-time employment has decreased.



In the last two years (covering the recession period), the total working-age population grew by 2.9 per cent and the labour force by 1.9 per cent. This explains the still high unemployment rate shown in Chart 8.

Statistics Canada reported that immigration was running at 252,500 in 2010. In its medium-growth scenario projection, this would increase by one-third to roughly 333,600 immigrants per year by 2036, a growth rate of more than 1 per cent per annum.

In the same time scale, the total population of Canada will increase to more than 40 million on even its low-growth scenario.

In addition, according to the 2006 census, there were 230,000 non-permanent residents aged 15 and older. Around half were working, mostly full time – more than double the number ten years previously.

Equally relevant is that the educational profile of immigrants is improving. Immigrants are more likely to be well-educated individuals, aspiring to professional employment, rather than the unskilled, semi-skilled, or craft workers of the past.

These twin factors of volume and education will result in a steady increase in the demand for academic credential assessment over the coming years.

Chart 8 - Labour force survey

Employment

thousands



Unemployment rate

%



Source: Statistics Canada; Labour Force Survey; *The Daily*, October 2010, p. 2 and 3.

E.3 Employers of academic credential assessors in Canada

For education

In order to obtain entry into a higher education program, it is necessary to demonstrate that one fulfills the entry requirements. The work is carried out by academic credential assessors working directly for or by agreement with:

- an educational institution (or even a specific faculty or department) [e.g., the faculties or divisions of Dalhousie University or Red River College];

- a public sector academic credential assessment service [e.g., CEFAHQ, the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) of Alberta, or the Academic Credentials Assessment Service (ACAS) in Manitoba];
- a private academic credential assessment service [e.g., World Education Services (WES) Canada or the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS)];
- an academic assessment service established within



an educational institution to serve the general public [e.g., the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES) at the British Columbia Institute of Technology or the Comparative Education Service (CES) at the University of Toronto].

The Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) has an interest in academic credential assessment, and its members have provided input into this project.

The Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) represents the seven largest academic credential assessment services, which cooperate to raise standards and assure quality, and has contributed to this project from the start.

For professional regulators

Regulatory bodies in the provinces and territories have responsibility for registering a wide range of professions and issuing licences to practise. Some have academic credential assessors who assess international academic credentials prior to determining the acceptability of qualifications. Part of their work is to determine the relevance of applicants' academic credentials; for example, to identify whether there has been sufficient academic education for professional practice or what additional academic education is required. Therefore, academic credential assessment is carried out by professional regulatory bodies or by agreement with public or private academic credential assessment services.

There are several bodies that bring together Canadian professional regulators and whose members have had some input into this project:

- Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators;
- Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada;
- The Interprovincial Standards Red Seal Program;
- The Canadian Construction Association (CCA) Gold Seal Certification Program.

For others

We believe there are some large employers who employ their own academic credential assessors, who doubtless also do some academic credential assessment work as part of their recruitment activities (and possibly as

part of quality assurance, too). They are principally in the government sector, but the total number is much smaller than those working for education and professional regulators. We are not aware of any channel to reach this group.

Finally, there are groups (mostly nongovernmental, voluntary organizations) whose role it is to help immigrants, and it is likely that some of these are doing some academic credential assessment work. It is most likely that those involved in PLAR for immigrants and refugees will have particular links with academic credential assessment services, although our participation at the CAPLA conference leads us to understand that PLAR practitioners do not generally assess academic credentials. Similarly, although academic credential assessors need to be aware of what is possible through PLAR (for those who have never gained formal academic credentials that reflect their capability or those such as refugees who have lost evidence of their academic credentials) and be able to refer clients to appropriate PLAR resources, they do not themselves require PLAR competence.

We are not aware of any professional association of academic credential assessors in Canada, or indeed elsewhere.

E.4 What do we know about academic credential assessors?

The main theme coming out of our research into academic credential assessors is the lack of consistency between assessment organizations. These differences mainly stem from the fact that organizations (or countries, for that matter) often have different focuses for their assessments: regulation of industry, immigration, or assessment of specific trade qualifications, for example.

Within organizations, there can also be specializations. Individuals may specialize in specific languages or geographical areas rather than each individual employee working in all sectors, maximizing efficiency. Additionally, many organizations have developed extensive databases of already-researched data and/or previous decisions, also maximizing efficiency within the organization. Larger organizations are more likely to have detailed, extensive databases, but many smaller organizations also have some form of electronic data that can be referred to. Some of

these databases, such as that of UK NARIC, are already made available to others at a cost. To identify fraudulent institutions assessors usually rely on communication and “white lists” – lists of recognized institutions – rather than lists of unrecognized ones.

Educational requirements to become academic credential assessors can vary, but most require a first degree or higher. Geographic, linguistic, or educational specializations can be an asset. Attention to detail was mentioned by several respondents to the e-questionnaire, as well as in the interviews, as being the most important quality in any prospective candidate. Because of the difficulty and specifics of the job, many of those interviewed who are responsible for hiring new academic credential assessors mentioned they will look for candidates with the desired qualities and then train them on the job.

E.5 Training

The training available varies, but most training was described as being on the job – similar to an apprenticeship – while they learn the craft of academic credential assessment. There is a variety of external training courses available in addition to on-the-job training. For example, World Education Services (WES) provides and hosts workshops and seminars for academic credential assessors from different organizations. These workshops cover new techniques in academic credential assessment, as well as how to spot fraudulent documentation.⁴ They can also include testimonials from presenters who have undergone academic credential assessments. The ENIC network, also hosts meetings to allow academic credential assessors to network and share techniques and information with one another.

At the moment, to our knowledge, there is no postsecondary course in academic credential assessment, aside from certain assessment organizations that require the successful completion of a specific, short-duration, academic credential assessment course as a prerequisite for hire.

The training needs of academic credential assessors are usually met by their employers or by self-development. As

mentioned above, there does not appear to be any directly relevant academic course, although the new competency profile was developed to serve as the basis for a future open-learning course.

It is also clear that there has been a certain amount of work placements with other ENICs, which has helped to share information and procedures and to build mutual understanding and trust. It is intended that the competency profile from this project will be shared internationally as well as across the different employers in Canada. We have, therefore, taken international best practice into account in developing the competency profile.

E.6 Labour market information

The first question to ask is “Is there a labour market?” With Canada’s vast geographic size, its 13 education systems, and its two official languages, it seems more realistic to regard the labour market as a series of separate, loosely connected regional markets.

We describe above the recruitment and training of assessors in general terms (Sections E.4 and E.5).

The CICIC Web site reports estimates of

- more than 50 regulated occupations,
- 400 regulatory bodies,
- Seven (major) assessment agencies, and
- 427 recognized and authorized postsecondary education institutions, all involved in the assessment and recognition of academic credentials.

In a survey of 41 qualifications assessment agencies undertaken for the Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner and published in March 2009, 29 agencies answered the question regarding number of employees as follows:

⁴ WES brochure, available on its Canadian Web site: www.wes.org/ca



NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES	NUMBER OF AGENCIES
0-10	12
11-50	11
51-100	4
100+	2

Most responding agencies had fewer than 50 employees; only two had more than 100.

Scaling up these figures and estimating the numbers for the smaller bodies, the total labour force involved might be 2,000-3,000 people, but it could be higher since some of the large agencies did not respond. These figures include administration and management staff as well as assessors.

No one complained of high labour turnover or recruitment difficulties. (On the contrary, one US respondent said, “The poor economy provides us with a large pool of people seeking to be employed by us,” but this may not apply in Canada.)

Most organizations (particularly the small ones) do not seem to have a formal grade structure or formal pay scales. One large organization has a three-tier structure with assistants, juniors, and seniors with approximate overlapping salary levels:

Assistants	\$49,000-\$64,000
Juniors	\$53,000-\$70,000
Seniors	\$61,000-\$80,000

Others have lower salaries, sometimes much lower.

Most organizations have administrative support for their professional staff (e.g., reception, correspondence, filing, data maintenance).

Other than these general remarks, we have been unable to obtain any realistic data on growth rates, salaries, or turnover.

E.7 Quality assurance

We close this context section with a few remarks on quality. The quality of assessment is clearly crucial, both to the future well-being of the individual and the credibility of the admitting organization. It is important that assessments be respected, widely accepted, and portable (meaning that an assessment by one organization is trusted by others).

It is noticeable that most of the international agencies consulted in this project have a code of practice or similar. Furthermore, it is clear that these codes bear remarkable similarities to each other, having evolved from common core notions.

However, most of the foreign agencies enjoy a domestic monopoly. This is not the case in Canada, with provincial/territorial, professional, and university autonomy generating some diversity of approaches with a multitude of operators.

In her introductory message to the Study of Qualifications Assessment Agencies (2009), the Ontario Fairness Commissioner stated the following:

“The results confirm that the process to qualify to practise in many professions can be lengthy, costly and difficult. They also reveal examples of good practices in organizations that are working to improve the fairness of their assessment practices.”

This has been addressed in a major study, Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation, published in March 2009 by CICIC. This study concluded that while the majority of assessments are relatively consistent, there were instances of differences in result, processes, and methodologies. It stated there were opportunities to better harmonize practices to improve consistency, and went on to make a series of recommendations in that regard.

We hope the current project, too, will aid the process of quality improvement in academic credential assessment.



■ F. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

Employers of academic credential assessors should integrate the competency profile into their recruitment and promotion processes. They should also use the competency profile to define their technical competencies in their performance appraisal system.⁵

⁵ The recommendations are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada or the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials.

The first phase of the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation recommended: “Improve public awareness, especially among employers, regarding the role of assessment agencies.”⁶ From the beginning, the development of this competency profile has been intended to “increase the visibility of the profession [of academic credential assessors].”⁷ This final section recommends ways in which the competency profile can be used as the basis for further technical developments (Section F.1), and also for improved public awareness within Canada (Section F.2) and beyond (Section F.3).

F.1 Future developments arising from the competency profile

The competency profile was intended both to “help organizations employing Academic Credential Assessors improve their human resource requirements”⁸ and lead to “the development of a university program suited specifically to that profession.”⁹ From our experience, we know a competency profile can be used in the following ways:

1. The profile could be used to assist CMEC and CICIC to continue their process of developing a set of credentials for academic credential assessors. We anticipate a variety of modular credentials that reflect the competencies in the profile, and which provide a progression route to full qualification, and even beyond (by acquiring specialist credentials). Each competency can, in theory, lead to two credentials: an academic credential relating to the underpinning knowledge required, and a competency-based credential that shows the full competency has been achieved (which must incorporate the academic credential). The appropriate learning processes and assessment tools will be markedly different for the two types of credential. In practice, the range of credentials on offer will depend on what is practical (reflecting the typical career paths of the profession) and economic. It is considered essential that a PLAR assessment route should be offered as well as the traditional course-based route in order to cater to all

those competent professionals who do not require a course before offering evidence for assessment.

2. CMEC and CICIC should promote the development of a university program for academic credential assessors, with modules reflecting the competency profile. It would seem more appropriate to develop the program as a blended learning or distance learning course so it is cost effective and accessible to those already in employment, and even to students outside Canada. We are unaware of any existing distance learning courses for the core competencies of an academic credential assessor.
3. Employers of academic credential assessors will find it convenient to use the competency profile to define their technical competencies in their performance appraisal system. They should identify which competencies are required for each job role in their organization as the first step to creating a tailored version for their own use. The profile can be used to specify the competencies that are discussed and rated during the performance appraisal interview. It should be possible to use the performance appraisal records to provide evidence toward an academic credential/qualification as part of a PLAR process.
4. Organizations that employ academic credential assessors will also be able to integrate the competency profile into their recruitment and promotion processes. The profile can be used to identify and define those competencies that will be advertised and the criteria to be rated by the interviewer.
5. Organizations whose members are academic credential assessors (employers and professional bodies) can integrate the competency profile into their continuing professional development systems. For example, the competency profile provides the basis for a self-diagnostic assessment of learning needs. We have used a similar competency profile as the basis for the classification system for a Web site offering developmental resources such as short courses and publications.
6. Organizations that perform academic credential assessment can integrate the competency profile into their quality assurance system; for example, ensuring that only staff who can demonstrate their competence against the profile’s requirements are

6 Recommendation 9

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8 Request for Proposals

9 Request for Proposals

permitted to perform certain critical functions such as signing off an assessment report.

7. The quality assurance framework for academic credential assessment should use the profile to specify criteria for staff competencies, a primary determinant of quality outcomes.
8. Those associations that bring together organizations that perform academic credential assessment should
 - integrate the profile into their membership requirements (e.g., by requiring an explicit commitment to achieving competent and qualified staff and using the profile as the yardstick for competency);
 - negotiate discounts in the premium for professional indemnity insurance from insurance companies to reflect the reduced risk from using staff whose competency can be demonstrated (e.g., because their performance is regularly appraised against the competency profile or because they hold a qualification based on the competency profile);
 - develop a standard contract of engagement for academic credential assessment services that assures the client that competent staff will be used (with competency defined using the competency profile, as in the previous example).
9. CICIC could develop a manual for employers showing how to use the competency profile for applications such as those above (see, for example, <http://www.cic.org.uk/activities/STEP.pdf>, pages 76-102). This manual could be jointly undertaken with other bodies that have developed competency profiles, such as Engineers Canada and the Sector Skills Councils.
10. Academic credential assessors and the organizations that employ them should form a Professional Association of Canadian Academic Credential Assessors. The professional association would need to establish the following:
 - grades of professional membership (e.g., student, associate member, member, fellow), while defining the standards required for each grade and the assessment processes to determine whether the grade may be awarded;

- systems for initial training (e.g., specifying minimum requirements for an employer's graduate and technician training schemes);
- systems to support (and require) the continuing professional development (CPD) of the members in order to maintain their competency in a rapidly evolving environment;
- a code of ethics that members are required to uphold and a public register of members who are recognized as competent academic credential assessors.

All of these systems/requirements should be based on the competency profile.

11. Professional bodies for related professions should be made aware of the competency profile and invited to use it. For example, the Canadian Council of Human Resources Associations [(CCHRA) www.cchra.ca] might consider adopting some of the academic credential assessor competencies as an optional or additional module of the Certified Human Resources Professional (CHRP) Body of Knowledge and Required Professional Capabilities. An IT professional body might recognize the competencies related to IT as fulfilling certain requirements for membership or one of its credentials.
12. The competency profile should be periodically reviewed and updated. The first review should probably be initiated in 2013, as there will undoubtedly be a significant number of modifications identified when it is used, and because the profession and professional practice are developing very rapidly. A mechanism to collect comments on usage and requests for modifications could be established on the CICIC Web site.
13. There should be an independent external assessment of the impact of the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment project, including the competency profile, in 2014 (after there has been adequate opportunity for the new tools to have been adopted and implemented). The assessment should review both the process of implementation and the impact in order to
 - identify further initiatives that are required;
 - derive lessons for implementation of change programs in other professional areas;

- provide a case study of the establishment of a new professional discipline.
14. Appendix I, in Volume I of the competency profile presents a simple combination of two made-in-Canada qualifications frameworks, both of restricted scope. It is important to have reference levels for competency profiles and credentials frameworks, and it is desirable to use a pan-Canadian, pan-sectoral framework. What we have used is only acceptable as a temporary expedient. Consideration should be given to developing a pan-Canadian, pan-sectoral framework.

F.2 Dissemination within Canada

Dissemination within Canada will need to be to different groups:

- provincial/territorial/federal governments (because of their roles as policy-makers, employers of academic credential assessors, and employers of those with foreign academic credentials);
 - individuals performing academic credential assessment tasks;
 - employers of academic credential assessors;
 - organizations using the services of academic credential assessors as clients;
 - organizations relying on the recommendations of academic credential assessors (e.g., those recruiting foreigners, professional regulatory bodies, universities, and colleges);
 - individual clients wishing to have their academic credentials assessed (or a potential academic credential assessed before they invest in achieving it);
 - those providing services to academic credential assessors (e.g., those providing training, assessment, or accreditation of quality assurance);
 - professional bodies for related professions (see Section F.1, recommendation 11);
 - career-guidance professionals, to alert them to the emergence of a new professional career;
 - those promoting Canada as a place of work or study, and those helping immigrants to achieve their potential;
 - and, of course, the general public, who can be reassured that academic credential assessment in Canada is being done in a professional way, to agreed-upon standards, which is setting an example for other countries in all parts of the world.
- We, therefore, recommend the following actions:
15. The competency profile and this final report should be produced as a high-quality, graphically designed document.
 16. The competency profile should be made available on-line for download as a PDF document and for distribution on CD-ROM (e.g., at conferences). A printed hard-copy version should also be made available (for instance, to every Canadian academic credential assessor for his or her personal continuing professional development).
 17. This final report and its appendices should be made available on-line for download as a PDF document. A small number of hard copies may be desirable for distribution to key individuals and organizations. Any CD-ROMs (produced under the previous recommendation) should include the final report and its appendices bundled together with the competency profile.
 18. Consideration should be given to creating an on-line developers' forum for those interested and enthusiastic enough to share applications and ideas. (It seems probable that this can be achieved as part of the project to develop a Web-based application to share assessment results, resources, and methodologies on academic credential assessments.) Members of the forum should have access to the Microsoft Word version of the competency profile so they can edit and use it (e.g., fine-tuning for use in in-house documents such as performance appraisals). People should be encouraged to develop commercial applications such as additional modules for existing HR and training software, or even smartphone apps.
 19. CICIC should develop a voluntary register of all known Canadian academic credential assessors and their employers (including human resource departments of government bodies and other major employers). They should use the register to draw attention to the outcomes and products of the different components of the Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Assessment project: competency profile, quality assurance framework, terminology guides, developers' forum, etc.
 20. CICIC should make a sustained effort to identify all employers that do their own in-house academic credential assessment and to contact their

assessors. Channels that could be used include the following:

- Sector Skills Councils
 - CCHRA
 - provincial/territorial registration bodies for registered occupations
 - bodies supporting immigrants
 - networks of those involved in recruiting migrants and promoting immigration
21. CICIC should undertake a campaign to engage all academic credential assessment services that could be interested in complying with the competency profile and quality assurance framework. There could be a symbol or seal of approval to give public recognition to organizations that have achieved full compliance, and an associate status logo that indicates the organization is committed to compliance and actively working toward it. This symbol and logo could be used on recruitment advertisements, correspondence, and brochures, and on documents recording the results of an assessment.
 22. There should be a major public launch of the competency profile, with a press release and press conference. The CMEC Communications office will be able to advise on whether it is best to have a joint launch with other recent products, such as the terminology guides and the quality assurance framework, or whether a series of launches will be more effective. There can be a reinforcement of the publicity as part of the lead-up to the National Workshop of Academic Credential Assessors in the fall of 2011. There will be an additional opportunity to reiterate the announcement when Canada ratifies the Lisbon Recognition Convention.
 23. Those involved in the development of the competency profile (members of the working group, consultants) should be encouraged to
 - make presentations at conferences related to education, recruitment, the professions, etc.;
 - publish articles about the competency profile in academic and professional journals.

F.3 Dissemination beyond Canada

The existence of the competency profile in both French and English makes it accessible to a very large global audience. The profile has been developed with full international

consultation and is without rivals developed elsewhere. This is also true for the quality assurance framework, the terminology guides, and the other products, which are mutually consistent and mutually supporting, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. We, therefore, recommend that the competency profile together with the other products should be made as widely available as possible. This will provide additional benefits:

- It will enhance the image of Canadian academic credential assessors worldwide as a leading body of professionals.
- It will encourage continuing feedback on the competency profile, which can be upgraded accordingly, making it more robust and a continually improving product.
- It will encourage others to adopt (and adapt) the competency profile for their own use, which in turn will create a critical mass of users sharing concepts, ways of working, vocabulary, etc., and facilitate international cooperation and quality assurance.
- It will increase the likelihood of software tools being developed to use the competency profile because the potential market will be greater.
- It may even encourage immigration to Canada, by improving the image of academic credential assessment.

We, therefore, recommend the following:

24. CICIC should send an e-mail circular bulk mailing to all known foreign academic credential assessors and employers of academic credential assessors, through all UNESCO regions' network related to academic credential assessments, and especially to those who have shown interest in this project. The bulk mailing should come jointly from all the subprojects, should draw their attention to what is now available (competency profile, quality assurance framework, terminology guides, developers' forum, etc.), and should encourage them to adopt (and adapt) these tools for their own use.
25. CICIC should use a form of intellectual property rights that provides free licence to use and adapt, provided acknowledgement of the source is always given. This will encourage both uptake and further development of the materials and ensure the origins are widely known. The open source Creative Commons (<http://creativecommons.org>) would be



appropriate.

26. Canadian academic credential assessors should be encouraged to make presentations at international conferences for academic credential assessors, academics, and professions, and to publish information about the competency profile, quality assurance framework, terminology guides, developers' forum, etc., in international journals.
27. CICIC should be a partner (or contractor, where appropriate) for relevant international projects in order to maximize the international awareness and uptake of what has been produced.



PAN-CANADIAN QUALITY STANDARDS IN
INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT
RESOURCES AVAILABLE IN ENGLISH

1. Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment: Phase II
 2. *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials*
 3. *Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor – Volume 1*
 4. *Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor – Volume 2*
 5. *Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor – Volume 3*
 6. A Feasibility Study for a Distance Education Program for Canadian Academic Credential Assessors
 7. A Feasibility Study for a Web-Based Application to Share Assessment Results, Resources, and Methodologies on Academic Credential Assessments
 8. *English Terminology Guide for Academic Credential Assessment in Canada*
<http://terminology.cicic.ca>
(ON-LINE ONLY)

French Terminology Guide for Academic Credential Assessment in Canada
<http://terminologies.cicdi.ca>
(ON-LINE ONLY)
 9. Country Profiles
<http://countryprofiles.cicic.ca>
(ON-LINE ONLY)
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LES RESSOURCES SONT AUSSI DISPONIBLES EN FRANÇAIS



www.evaluation.cicic.ca