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Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials

Canadian Information Centre
for International Credentials | Centre d'information canadien
sur les diplômes internationaux

cmec

Council of
Ministers
of Education,
Canada | Conseil des
ministres
de l'Éducation
(Canada)

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.

Note of Appreciation

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BACKGROUND

As a signatory of the Lisbon Recognition Convention, Canada

has adopted documents that have direct impact on international

academic credential assessments and recognition activities

including the 2010 *Revised Recommendation on Criteria and*

Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications.

This *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials* (QAF) is part of an overall process through which Canada is meeting its international obligations in this area.

Canada's international obligations go back to 1990, the year in which Canada ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region. This convention aimed to encourage broader recognition of academic credentials and occupational qualifications in order to foster international mobility.

It was at this time that Canada set up the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) to help it meet its obligations under this convention. CICIC was placed under the authority of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), an intergovernmental agency founded by Canada's ministers of education in 1967 to provide leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and to help the provinces and territories assume the responsibility for education conferred on them by the Constitution.

Canada's international obligations regarding assessment and recognition of international academic credentials were further refined when Canada signed the 1997 UNESCO/Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, commonly referred to as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997).[1]

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, of which Canada is an active member, has adopted documents to provide a framework for applying the provisions of the convention in signatory countries. One of these important documents has a direct impact on international academic credential assessments and recognition activities in Canada: the 2010 *Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications*.

Since CICIC was founded, Canada has thus been involved in many international, intergovernmental, and interinstitutional activities at the pan-Canadian level to fulfill its international obligations regarding international academic credential assessment and recognition.

In 2007, CICIC launched the project Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation in partnership with the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) and with funding provided by Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) under its Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program.

The aim of this project was to facilitate the integration of persons educated outside Canada and new immigrants by improving the consistency and portability of academic credential assessments throughout the country for admission into Canada's colleges and universities, as well as for access to professions and trades and the labour market in general.

Recommendations were developed to benefit the assessors working in organizations that conduct assessments of international academic credentials in Canada. One of the central recommendations was to develop a pan-Canadian quality assurance framework for the assessment of international academic credentials.

In 2010, CICIC undertook the second phase of this project, one part of which was the development of the present QAF. This QAF provides all the organizations involved in assessing international academic credentials in Canada (assessment services and agencies, universities, colleges, professional associations, regulatory bodies, employers, etc.) with a reference tool designed to facilitate the mutual recognition of international academic credential assessment practices in Canada and, thereby, enhance the consistency and portability of these assessments throughout the country.

The QAF is divided into three sections. The first sets out the fundamental principles of the QAF, its operational definition of quality assurance, and its scope, objectives, and principles of application. The second describes the process by which an organization can adhere to the QAF, which is offered to all organizations involved in assessing international academic credentials in Canada. Finally, the third section explains how the QAF is managed – in particular its governance and the mechanisms to be put in place to ensure its continuing improvement.

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1 This convention is in the process of being ratified by Canada.

FOUNDATIONS OF THE QUALITY ASSURANCE FRAMEWORK

"The QAF respects the autonomy of the various

organizations involved in academic credential

assessment."[2]

2 All introductory quotes taken from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials under the Council of Ministers of Education Canada. (2012). *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials*; Retrieved January 11, 2012, from http://cicic.ca/docs/ 2012/Quality_Assurance_Framework_EN.pdf

Operational definition of quality assurance

In this document, the operational definition of quality assurance refers to the continual improvement of work and production processes so as to give added value to the assessments of international academic credentials. This added value is expressed in the form of greater consistency and portability of these assessments throughout the country.

This approach to quality assurance is based on a structured commitment to a vision and, at the same time, allows an assessment to be made of the added value it produces. Quality assurance ultimately becomes a reality when it can be attested to.

More specifically, quality assurance is expressed in an integrated plan (the QAF) that comprises a general vision or approach and the continuing application of a code of good practice, which together contribute added value to the assessments of international academic credentials. From the viewpoint of clients and end users, quality assurance is known and provides a guarantee of added value.

Scope of the quality assurance framework

The QAF respects the autonomy of the various organizations involved in academic credential assessment. Within the QAF, these organizations are accountable to their own supervisory authority. At the same time, the QAF recognizes that those who apply for an assessment of their international academic credentials need guarantees regarding the quality of the services rendered. In addition, educational institutions, corporations, agencies, professional associations, and regulatory bodies, as well as governments, all need to be able to rely on the quality of the work of academic credential assessors and on the transparency of assessment activities.

The QAF comprises **two separate but complementary levels** of quality assurance:
- a concerted pan-Canadian approach to quality assurance in the assessment of international academic credentials based on principles of collaboration, competency, integrity, feedback, and transparency;
- internal quality assurance practices in every organization involved in the assessment of international academic credentials that adheres to the pan-Canadian framework.

The QAF aims to be applicable in its foundations and usable in its practice by all organizations assessing international academic credentials in Canada (assessment services and agencies, universities, colleges, professional associations, regulatory bodies, employers, etc.).

Objectives of the quality assurance framework

The general objective of the QAF is to continually improve international academic credential assessment based on a concerted pan-Canadian approach and vision of quality. This, in turn, will make it easier for organizations assessing international academic credentials to articulate this vision internally. In this sense, the QAF facilitates a collective approach to achieving greater consistency at the pan-Canadian level, and the enhanced consistency and portability of academic credential assessments. It also helps to develop closer ties among assessors.

More specifically, the QAF encourages and assists organizations with the development of their quality assurance practices. These practices will, in turn, enable two specific results to be achieved:
- greater consistency of assessments within a particular organization;
- greater consistency at the pan-Canadian level, and improved consistency and portability of academic credential assessments.

Fundamental principles of the quality assurance framework

Competency

The main objective of the QAF is continuing improvement of academic credential assessment services. It requires standards for competencies of individual assessors, as well as standards of competency an organization should attain to sustain high-quality work in the assessment of international academic credentials.

Collaboration

Continuing improvement in quality is achieved, in particular, by the sharing of everyone's practices. The QAF thus provides for a sustained exchange among organizations assessing academic credentials so information (apart from confidential information) is shared freely but with due respect for the autonomy of each

organization. This collaboration and synergy are what drive the QAF. It takes a certain amount of time for such a collaboration to go through all the stages leading to the convergence of ideas and practices, but its benefits are incalculable in ensuring authentic adhesion to the objectives and modes of application of the QAF.

Integrity of the process

The organizations involved in assessing academic credentials, aware as they are of certain weaknesses in the current state of international academic credential assessment in Canada, have initiated a process to correct them. Their exchanges reflect a search for corrective measures to apply to current practices. This process has a direct effect on reducing faults and defects and produces an immediate improvement in the quality and consistency of outcomes. In this sense, the principle of integrity goes far beyond the methods used, for example, in detecting, controlling, or eliminating fraud.

The principle of integrity also recognizes the value of feedback and expert opinions. For its application within the QAF, the principle of integrity is expressed through processes for self-assessment.

Feedback

The QAF process requires a certain form of feedback to gather differences together in a comprehensive vision and to nourish internal practices with continuing improvement in mind. The principles of collaboration, competency, and integrity find their most powerful expression in a feedback practice. Feedback makes it possible to attain, in more concrete terms, the consistency the general objective of the QAF aims for; validation through the generous use of feedback becomes a guarantee of this consistency. Each organization conducts a periodic verification of the quality of its work in accordance with its own practices and on the basis of its desired alignment with the QAF.

Transparency

For the QAF and quality assurance practices to add value to the work of assessing international academic credentials, they must be known. Transparency of the entire quality assurance system gives full meaning to the concept of ''assurance'' in the eyes of clients, end users, and the general public. The pan-Canadian QAF and the internal quality assurance practices of organizations that adhere to the QAF are placed into a central location that is publicly accessible.

Adherence to the quality assurance framework

Adherence to the QAF involves the following process:

- commitment to the fundamental principles of the QAF and active involvement in the collaborative pan-Canadian process of continuing improvement of the QAF;
- application to the QAF, confirming the formal adoption of the *Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Academic Credentials* (Instrument A), prepared using the implementation tool designed to that effect (Instrument B – Tool 1), which is an integral part of the QAF;
- systematic implementation of the *Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice* and annual preparation of a self-evaluation by means of the form provided for this purpose (Instrument B – Tool 2), which is an integral part of the QAF;
- publication of the QAF adherence file of organizations and of their annual self-evaluation reports.

Collaboration in the pan-Canadian process of continuing improvement of the QAF entails participation in activities supported by the QAF instruments listed above.

Improvement of assessments might also involve the use of supporting tools such as the Outline of Procedure under the *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* [Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997)].

Management of the Quality Assurance Framework

Governance

Because of the autonomy of the organizations involved in assessing international academic credentials, the exclusive jurisdiction of the provinces and territories over education (and in particular, their responsibility regarding academic credentials), and organizational differences, the QAF plays purely an incentive role, and its only authority comes from the organizations that adhere to its overall vision. The principle of collaboration is also embodied in the moral authority that the member organizations confer on an organization sponsoring the QAF.

In this regard, CMEC is the organization that acts as the sponsor of the QAF. To the extent that CMEC acts as a platform for the convergence of the educational policies of the provinces and territories – and the ultimate responsibility for academic credentials lies precisely with the provinces and territories – it is clear that CMEC is at the centre of any pan-Canadian process involving quality assurance of the assessment of international academic credentials.

Through CICIC, the official organization called into being as a result of Canada's obligations regarding the assessment and recognition of international academic credentials, CMEC has already become an important custodian of information and support for quality assurance. Through CICIC, CMEC has the necessary capabilities to produce the tools associated with a QAF and to support their operational implementation.

Governance of the QAF also requires a support committee made up of representatives of organizations that adhere to the QAF. The mandate of this committee is to assist CMEC-CICIC in managing the QAF, in particular with a view to its continuing improvement.

Ongoing improvement process

Quality assurance is based on ongoing improvements and on periodic reviews. Sustained collaboration leads to identification of the improvements to be made to the QAF and its tools on a regular basis.

CMEC-CICIC, assisted by the support committee of the QAF, helps organizations that adhere to the QAF refine their assessment practices. This work takes different forms depending on needs and circumstances. The objective is to concretely support organizations in their efforts.

However, improvements made on a regular basis do not exempt the QAF from a more formal review.

This is why after being used for a significant period of time (three to five years), the QAF is reviewed and adapted to new conditions. The reports of these reviews are also collated and preserved for public consultation.

Stakeholders

- CMEC, as a sponsor organization;
- CICIC, as an operational motivator organization. Under the aegis of CMEC, CICIC maintains the documentation pertaining to the different organizational practices of quality assurance and is the custodian of the QAF;
- QAF Support Committee, which assists CMEC-CICIC in managing the QAF;
- ACESC, as a representative of a significant subgroup of services and agencies that assess academic credentials. Its unifying capabilities and its power of advocacy make it, if need be, a pivotal organization in efforts to achieve consistency;
- organizations involved in the assessment of international academic credentials (e.g., assessment services and agencies, universities, colleges, professional associations, regulatory bodies, employers, etc.);
- end users, including applicants for occupational licensing, registration, and certification, and individuals seeking admission to an educational program or formal academic credential assessment for employment purposes.

Publications

Publications are a central instrument for ensuring the transparency and integrity of international academic credential assessments. For this reason, the following are public documents under the QAF:

- the QAF;
- list of organizations involved in assessing international academic credentials that adhere to the QAF;
- QAF adherence files and annual self-evaluation reports submitted by the organizations that adhere to the QAF;
- timetable of past and future reviews of the QAF;
- reports resulting from the review procedures of the QAF.

REFERENCES

"(...) the QAF recognizes that those who apply for

an assessment of their international academic

credentials need guarantees regarding the quality

of the services rendered."

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APPENDIX A: PAN-CANADIAN CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

"The general objective of the QAF is to continually improve international academic credential assessment based on a concerted pan-Canadian approach and vision of quality."

Preamble

This document is an integral part of the *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials*. It is largely based on General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials produced by the provincial credential assessment services under the aegis of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, which in turn is linked to *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* produced by the Council of Europe and UNESCO in connection with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (1997).

This code of good practice is a response to globalization of markets and increasing labour force mobility and, thus, recognizes the importance of linking the principles adopted in Canada to the good practice models developed elsewhere in the world.

In Canada, the provinces and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over education, and education systems vary from one jurisdiction to another. Given the inherent diversity of Canada's education systems, the *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials* recognizes the following:
   • the need to promote fair, credible, and concerted methods for assessing international academic credentials;
   • the need to promote consistency and the portability of assessments done by organizations involved in assessment (assessment services or agencies, postsecondary educational institutions, professional associations, regulatory bodies, the private sector, etc.);
   • the benefits that accrue to Canada from collaborative efforts to examine issues associated with the assessment of international academic credentials.

This code of good practice contains 41 principles and recommendations subscribed to by all organizations that adhere to the *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials*.

Fundamental principles

1. Assessment must be performed without discrimination because of age, ancestry, colour, citizenship, disability, family status, gender, marital status, place of origin, political beliefs, religion, sexual orientation, or source of income.
2. Assessors must be free from conflicts of interest, and excuse themselves from cases where there is a possible appearance of conflict of interest.
3. Holders of international academic credentials must have adequate access, upon request, to academic credential assessment services.
4. The procedures and criteria used in the assessment of foreign academic credentials must be part of a quality assurance process, whereby the methodology aims to make assessment procedures consistent, clear, rational, and reliable to ensure all applicants receive a fair treatment.
5. Procedures for the assessment of international academic credentials must be periodically reviewed with a view to increasing clarity and eliminating, as much as possible, any requirement resulting in undue complications in the procedure.
6. The general approach to dealing with international academic credentials and comparing them to a particular system must consider the diversity of educational traditions in different countries.
7. The same basic methodology must apply whether the aim of the assessment is to provide

- access to the labour market;
- admission to secondary or postsecondary educational institutions; or
- access to a regulated profession or trade.

8. The criteria used to assess international academic credentials have been formulated with the purpose of ensuring greater consistency of assessment outcomes across Canada. It is acknowledged that some variability in decisions or opinions must be expected and that decisions may vary depending on the provincial or territorial system of education involved.

Assessment procedures

General procedure

9. The assessment of an international academic credential must
    - situate the academic credential within the framework of the education system of origin to take into account its relative place and function compared to other academic credentials of the system in which it was issued;
    - identify, in the host provincial or territorial education systems, the level and type of academic credential that is most comparable to the international academic credential, taking into account the purpose for which the assessment is requested; and
    - determine, where applicable, the level of comparability between an academic credential issued in Canada and an international academic credential, with a view to possible recognition of the latter.

10. The assessment must take into account the results of previous assessments in similar cases in order to ensure consistency in recognition practice. Precedents must be recorded in an inventory and used as a guideline for providing consistent decisions or advice. Any substantial change in established practices must be justified and recorded.

11. The decisions or opinions of assessing organizations should be based on the information available to them at the time the assessment is performed. Further information may result in modification of these decisions.

12. The precedent decisions or opinions and guidelines should be routinely reviewed to ensure they are still current, accurate, and applicable.

Processing times

13. The time normally required to process applications for assessment must be specified, and every effort must be made to produce an assessment within that time period. Time is counted from the moment when all the necessary documentation has been provided by the applicant and by the educational institutions. If there is a delay, the assessing organization must inform the applicant of the reason for the delay and of the length of time required to complete the assessment of the academic credential.

Information requirements

14. The assessing organization must provide standardized information regarding the procedures and criteria for the assessment of international academic credentials. Information must be clear, current, accurate, and publicly accessible. It must be provided automatically to all applicants and to persons responsible for making preliminary inquiries about academic credential assessment and must indicate, in particular,
    - the documentation to be provided and the requirements regarding the authentication and translation of documents;
    - the mode of submission, required content, and format of required documents;
    - what documentation may or will be shared with other organizations, retained by the assessment service, or returned to the applicant;
    - the steps in the assessment process the applicant can undertake from outside of Canada;
    - the specific role of professional associations, regulatory bodies, and educational institutions in the assessment and recognition processes;
    - the scope of the assessment notice or assessment report, in particular where admission to an educational institution or access to a profession or trade is concerned;
    - the anticipated time required for the assessment process;
    - the cost of the assessment; and
    - the procedure for appealing decisions or reviewing opinions.

15. Responsibility for providing information is shared by the assessing organization, the applicant, and the educational institution that conferred the academic credential.
    - The assessing organization must provide the applicant with complete information regarding its requirements for academic credential assessment.
    - The assessing organization must maintain or have access to a bank of information on education systems.
    - The applicant is responsible for providing the documents and information required by the assessment service.
    - Educational institutions are responsible for providing information about academic credentials earned at the institutions and any other relevant information such as course content, program structure, etc.

Fees

16. Fees charged to those who apply for the assessment of international academic credentials must be kept as low as possible.

17. To the greatest extent possible, special arrangements should be made for persons with limited income and for other disadvantaged groups so that no one will be prevented from applying for assessment of his or her international academic credential because of the cost involved.

18. In cases where the cost of assessing documents is included in the overall admission or registration fee, efforts should be made to make the assessment fees separate.

Translations

19. Subject to the usual practices, requirements, and directives of the assessing organization, only the translation of essential documents should be required. The translation of essential documents issued in a language other than one of the two official languages of Canada must be entrusted to certified translators.

20. Official documents, including the titles of international academic credentials, must be provided in the language in which they were issued.

Document requirements

21. For verification purposes, official documents issued and received directly from the educational institutions will be preferred. If official documents cannot be used, original documents may also be accepted. The type of document used for verification must be clearly indicated on the assessment report.

22. Documents that clearly indicate successful completion of at least one academic year are required for assessment. Academic documents indicating failed or unsuccessful completion of an academic year or program, if accepted, will normally not be factored into or affect the assessment outcome.

23. In some exceptional cases, such as those involving refugees and others who are unable to document their qualifications for good reasons, sworn statements before a legal authority may be accepted in lieu of full documentation.

24. All submitted documents must be examined to make sure they are authentic, have not been falsified, and are not fraudulent.

25. Submission of documents that are suspected to be fraudulent or falsified will normally result in refusal to complete the assessment process. Verification with the issuing institution or jurisdictional authority will usually be conducted if it is suspected that a document has been altered or falsified. Only after confirmation of the document's authenticity from the pertinent authority will the assessment resume. In cases where it is difficult to obtain an answer from the pertinent authorities, the assessment organization may determine whether documents whose authenticity is not proven are to be accepted or rejected. In such cases, the organization must document the grounds for accepting or refusing the documents, including precedents, document analysis techniques, or other grounds. Documents deemed to be fraudulent, or falsified in any way, may be retained by the assessing organization.

26. In cases where documents submitted for assessment are detected as being fraudulent or altered after an assessment report has been issued, the organization should retrieve and rescind the report as well as enact other internal policies.

Status of institutions and programs

27. In view of the wide diversity of educational institutions, the status of an academic credential must be established by taking into account the status of the program and institution where the academic credential was earned.

28. Academic credential assessments should only be undertaken for studies done in recognized institutions. A recognized institution is one that has been formally approved by competent authorities within the country or that is widely accepted by other institutions and organizations inside and/or outside the country.

29. Where recognition of an educational institution does not guarantee recognition of all the academic credentials issued by that institution, an academic credential will only be assessed if the program of study that has been taken is recognized by a competent authority.

Purpose/outcome of the assessment

30. Since the same data and criteria are used to establish the level of each academic credential, the assessment outcome for a specific academic credential must be consistent with other relevant assessment results.

31. The assessment of international academic credentials must take into account the purpose for which recognition is sought, and the assessment decision or opinion shall clearly indicate the purpose for which the academic credential has been assessed.

32. The outcome of the assessment of an international academic credential may take one of the following forms:
    - a written statement or report containing a comparative assessment of the academic credential prepared by an assessment service, a regulatory body, or an educational institution;
    - a written statement containing a comparative assessment of the academic credential and/or a report for general employment purposes delivered to the applicant and, if requested by the applicant, to a third party;
    - a written report to an educational institution or one of its divisions (faculty, department, etc.), pursuant to an agreement with the institution and for the purposes of admission to its programs; or
    - a written report to a regulatory body, pursuant to an agreement with that body, that will use this advice as the first step in its review of applications for licensing/registration/ certification that authorize the practice of a trade or occupation.

33. In the case of advice issued for educational institutions or their divisions and for regulatory bodies, a written statement containing a comparative assessment of the academic credential should be sent to the applicant, with a view to enhancing quality assurance and transparency.

Level of study

34. Assessment of a particular academic credential must be based entirely on analysis of the normal entry and completion requirements for that academic credential. The assessment outcome must not be influenced by the applicant's prior studies.

35. Assessment of a particular academic credential must be based on the entry and completion requirements in effect at the time the academic credential was completed.

36. Each academic credential submitted for assessment must be evaluated separately.

37. International academic credentials at the same level obtained in different programs may not be added together to constitute an academic credential at a higher level of study.

38. Assessment must be based on the examination of the academic credentials presented for assessment and must not cite the prior completion of other academic credentials if those prerequisite academic credentials are not submitted for assessment or if it is not necessary to mention them.

Assessment criteria

39. A variety of criteria must be applied to determine the level and type of a program of study, including but not limited to
    - entrance requirements (e.g., What are the normal requirements for admission to the program? What is the level of studies required in the country of origin?);
    - full-time duration of the program (e.g., What is the normal duration of the program when a person studies full time?);
    - structure of the program (e.g., How is the program structured? What type of program is it, such as apprenticeship, vocational, academic, etc.?);
    - contents of the program (e.g., In what discipline? What courses? How many hours of studies?);
    - end purpose of the academic credential in the country of origin (e.g., For what purpose was the program taken? To obtain the right to practise a specific trade or profession, or as a prerequisite for further studies?);
    - bridges to traditional academic credentials (e.g., To what other programs does this academic credential provide access in the country of origin?);
    - status of the teaching institution and/or program of studies.

Duration of the program of study

40. One academic year of study, as recognized by the official designated authority in the country of origin, must not entitle the applicant to more than one academic year of recognition. However, this year-to-year comparison may be overruled by other factors such as learning outcomes or the structure and content of the program of study.

Appeals or requests for review

41. Upon request, the assessing organization must inform the candidate of the factors on which its decision or opinion is based, of the appeal or review procedures available to him or her, and of the applicable deadlines. Appeal procedures should be progressive and provide for more than one level of decision making; they ultimately prevent the assessing organization from being placed into the position of being both judge and party by providing a right to lodge an appeal with an external, independent group.

APPENDIX B: TOOLS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PAN-CANADIAN CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE IN THE ASSESSMENT OF INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIALS

"It [the QAF] requires standards for competencies

of individual academic assessors, as well as standards

of competency an organization should attain to sustain

high-quality work in the assessment of international

academic credentials."

Every academic credential assessment organization that wishes to adhere to the *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials* and to continuously maintain its adherence shall use two tools to that end.

Tool 1 will serve as a guide to prepare the adherence application. The organization's application will be supported by appropriate documentation.

Tool 2 will be used as a self-evaluation report, annually submitted to the QAF's support committee and to CICIC by the organizations adhering to the QAF to confirm their adherence to the *PAN-CANADIAN CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE*.

Tool 1: Guide to the preparation of a QAF adherence application

1.1 COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

1.1.1 **The organization explains how it complies with all the principles and recommendations set out in the *Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Academic Credentials.***

The organization provides a brief explanation of what it is doing to comply with each of the principles and recommendations, according to the list given below, pointing out any it is not complying with:

  a) fundamental principles
  b) general procedures
  c) application processing times
  d) information requirements
  e) fees
  f) translations
  g) documents to be provided
  h) status of institutions and programs
  i) purpose/outcome of the assessment
  j) level of studies
  k) assessment criteria
  l) duration of the program of study
  m) appeals or requests for review

1.1.2 **It produces examples of publications (brochures, application forms, advertising materials, Web site addresses, etc.) it distributes to its clienteles, to explain the following:**

   a) the documents to be provided

   b) the translations to be provided, where applicable

   c) the import of the assessment notices and reports

   d) application processing times

   e) the procedure to follow to apply for an assessment

   f) the appeal or review procedures

   g) the cost of the services offered

2.1 ORGANIZATION-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

2.1.1 **Reference works and documentation centre**

   a) The organization shows it has an adequate collection of works and other reference materials (whether published or not) in print or electronic format, such as historical and current publications on the education systems of many countries.

   b) The organization describes its documentation centre, indicating the number and kind of historical and current reference documents that the centre contains.

   c) The organization provides a list of the national and international associations of which it is a member, the international credential databases to which it subscribes, and the e-mail distribution lists or other collaborative tools of this nature to which it belongs.

2.1.2 **File management**

The organization's file-management system should allow easy access to any information sought, while protecting the confidentiality of data in accordance with the federal, provincial, or territorial statutes and policies in force. The archiving of decisions or opinions resulting from assessments should be designed to allow organized, systematic retrieval of previous decisions or opinions. File-management procedures should guarantee the security and protection of client files and in particular, the originals these files may contain.

The organization describes

   a) its file-keeping procedures

   b) the length of time documents are preserved

   c) the procedure for accessing earlier decisions or opinions

   d) the procedures for protecting confidential information

   e) the procedures for managing original documents

2.1.3 **Experience of the organization**

   a) The organization must comply with the *Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice* for at least one year and have handled a substantial number of international academic credential assessments.

   b) The organization indicates how long it has been operating and, on an annual basis, the number of applications it processes and the number of assessments of international academic credentials it performs.

3.1 STAFF COMPETENCIES

3.1.1 The organization presents a description of its personnel indicating, for each type of job, the number of full-time equivalents and principal duties.

3.2.2 The organization presents the profile of its assessor who has the most experience in terms of
  a) level of education
  b) specialized training in academic credential assessment
  c) number of years of practice in academic credential assessment
  d) competencies in relation to the CMEC-CICIC profile of competencies for persons responsible for assessing academic credentials
  e) any other relevant attribute

3.2.3 The organization describes its training program and the typical professional-development activities it offers or makes available to its personnel.

4.1 CASE STUDIES

4.1.1 The organization presents two case studies dealing with different countries. To the extent possible, the two cases should deal with credentials at different levels. For each of these two studies, it provides a description of the procedures in place regarding
  a) the documents required
  b) the translations required
  c) the authentication of documents
  d) the official status of the institution that conferred the academic credential
  e) the description of the program
  f) the outcome of the assessment and its justification
  g) the references and resources used for the assessment

4.1.2 For each case study, a model assessment report is provided describing how the organization interprets and applies the measures designed
  a) to prevent forgeries and falsification of reports
  b) to clearly inform the client of the purpose for which the assessment notice or report is intended

Tool 2: Self-evaluation form for implementing the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Academic Credentials

1.1 COMPLIANCE WITH THE CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE

The organization complies with the principles and recommendations set out in the *Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice in the Assessment of International Academic Credentials.*

1.1.1 The organization confirms it complies with all stated principles:

a)	fundamental principles	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
b)	general procedures	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
c)	application processing times	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
d)	information requirements	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
e)	fees	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
f)	translations	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
g)	documents required	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
h)	status of institutions and programs	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
i)	purpose/outcome of the assessment	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
j)	level of studies	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
k)	assessment criteria	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
l)	duration of the program of study	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
m)	appeals or requests for review	Yes [ ]	No [ ]

Comments from the organization:

1.1.2 The organization distributes publications to explain the following to its clientele:

a) the documents required	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
b) the translations required	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
c) the scope of the assessment reports	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
d) application processing times	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
e) the procedure for applying for an assessment	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
f) the appeal or review procedures	Yes [ ]	No [ ]
g) the cost of the services offered	Yes [ ]	No [ ]

Comments from the organization:

1.2 ORGANIZATION-LEVEL COMPETENCIES

1.2.1 Reference works and documentation centre

The organization describes the depth of its documentation centre, indicating the number and kind of historical and current reference documents the centre contains. It keeps up to date a list of the national and international associations of which it is a member, the international credentials databases to which it subscribes, and the e-mail distribution lists or other collaborative tools of this nature to which it belongs.

a) The organization has a sufficient quantity and diversity of historical and
current reference documents.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) The organization uses these reference documents in its assessments.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

c) The organization subscribes to international credentials databases   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

d) The organization is a member of relevant national and international associations,
and subscribes to e-mail distribution lists or uses similar appropriate tools.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

1.2.2 File management

The organization uses a file-management system that allows easy access to any information sought, while protecting the confidentiality of data in accordance with the federal, provincial, or territorial statutes and policies in force. It describes how the archiving of decisions or opinions resulting from assessments is designed to allow organized, systematic retrieval of previous decisions or opinions. It shows how its file-management procedures guarantee the security and protection of client files and, in particular, the originals these files may contain.

The organization complies with the Code of Good Practice concerning the following:

a) its file-keeping procedures   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) the length of time documents are preserved   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

c) the procedure for accessing earlier decisions or opinions   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

d) the protection of confidential information   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

e) the management of original documents   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

1.2.3 Experience of the organization

The organization has complied with the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice for the past 12 months or more and shows that it handles a substantial number of international academic credential assessments.

a) The organization has complied with the principles and recommendations of the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice for the past 12 months or more.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) The organization carries out a substantial number of international academic credential assessments in accordance with the principles and recommendations of the Pan-Canadian Code of Good Practice.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

2.1 STAFF COMPETENCIES

The organization has personnel who have received appropriate training and are able to produce fair assessments of consistent quality. At least one of these assessors has the competencies included in the CMEC-CICIC profile of competencies for persons responsible for academic credential assessment and at least one year of practical experience, under supervision, assessing international academic credentials for different levels of study. The persons responsible for making assessments keep up to date by participating in training activities, consulting their colleagues, and doing research. The organization offers them opportunities for professional development; for example, through attendance at conferences and workshops.

a) The organization has sufficient personnel to carry out the number and type
of assessments indicated in a satisfactory manner.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) The organization has a sufficient number of assessors with
an appropriate level of competency.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

c) The organization offers its personnel satisfactory programs of initial training
and professional development to guarantee maintenance of an appropriate level
of expertise in academic credential assessment.   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

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3.1 EVALUATION PROCEDURES

3.1.1 The organization applies the principles concerning the following:

a) the documents required   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) the translations required   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

c) the authentication of documents   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

d) the official status of the institution that conferred the academic credential   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

e) the description of the program   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

f) the outcome of the assessment and its justification   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

g) the references and resources used for the assessment   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

3.1.2 The organization applies the measures designed

a) to prevent forgeries and falsification of reports   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

b) to clearly inform the client of the purpose for which the assessment notice
or report is intended   Yes [   ]   No [   ]

Comments from the organization:

**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)

LES RESSOURCES SONT AUSSI DISPONIBLES EN FRANÇAIS

www.evaluation.cicic.ca