

Tool 1 – QAF Application Form for New Assessing Organizations

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

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)¹ is a code of good practice, which can be voluntarily adopted by and guide policies of Canadian assessing organizations. All organizations that adhere to QAF subscribe to its 64 principles and recommendations.

Canadian assessing organizations that voluntarily wish to adopt QAF must demonstrate adherence, by submitting documented evidence, followed by a peer-review process coordinated by CICIC. The outcome of the process results in a confirmation of adherence.² In cases where an assessing organization requires corrective measures to be implemented before adherence can be affirmed, CICIC will issue a letter to confirm provisional adherence, conditional upon the implementation of said corrective measures within a specific timeframe. A follow-up date will also be set, at which time it will be verified that the corrective measures have been met and implemented.

The Tool 1 – QAF Application Form for New Assessing Organization serves as the mechanism by which a Canadian assessing organization can formally communicate to CICIC its intention to adopt QAF within its policies and demonstrate adherence to it. Adherence to QAF can be demonstrated through the self-assessment process by providing supporting documentation and comments and by using a scale³ for specific criteria. Carrying out a self-assessment will result in one of five possible outcomes:

- **No adherence:** The assessing organization fails to comply with the criteria.

¹ CICIC. Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF). Retrieved from: [https://www.cicic.ca/1504/consult_the_pan_canadian_quality_assurance_framework_for_the_assessment_of_international_academic_credentials\(qaf\).canada](https://www.cicic.ca/1504/consult_the_pan_canadian_quality_assurance_framework_for_the_assessment_of_international_academic_credentials(qaf).canada).

² Should QAF adherence be demonstrated and confirmed by CICIC as an outcome of this current application process, in future years, the assessing organization will need to demonstrate continued adherence on a cyclical basis through a self-assessment. The Tool 2 – Self-Assessment Form serves as the mechanism by which a Canadian assessing organization demonstrates continued adherence to QAF. Both Tool 1 and Tool 2 can be accessed on CICIC's website at: www.CICIC.ca.

³ The adherence scale model is largely based on the *Standards & Guidelines: A Quality Assurance System based on Peer Reviews for the ENIC-NARIC Networks*, as well as additional information from the following related page: <https://www.enic-naric.net/page-standards-guidelines-quality-assurance>.

- **Partial adherence:** Some aspects or parts of the criteria are met, while others are not. The interpretation of the criteria is correct, but the manner of implementation is not effective enough.
- **Substantial adherence:** The assessing organization is to a large extent in accordance with the criteria, the spirit/principle of which is followed in practice.
- **Full adherence:** The assessing organization acts entirely in accordance with the criteria, and its implementation is effective.
- **Criteria are not applicable:** Can be used for situations where one or more criteria do not apply to the role and mandate of the assessing organization. Additional contextual information should be provided.

Submitting the Tool 1 – QAF Application Form for New Assessing Organizations

Canadian assessing organizations can send the completed form and supporting documentation to CICIC, with contact information available on CICIC’s website at: www.CICIC.ca.

Demonstrating adherence to QAF

A. QAF principles and recommendations

The assessing organization provides a brief summary outlining its level of adherence to the 64 QAF principles and recommendations and confirms its level of adherence in more detail as per the below:

A.1. QAF fundamental principles

QAF Principles and Recommendations	Number	Level of Adherence				
		No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
Fundamental principles	1 to 13					

A.2. QAF assessment procedure

QAF Principles and Recommendations	Number	Level of Adherence				
		No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
General procedure	14 to 16					
Processing times	17					
Information requirements	18 to 21					
Fees	22 to 24					
Translations	25 to 27					
Document requirements	28 to 34					

Document delivery	35					
Status of institutions and programs	36 to 38					
Purpose/outcome of the assessment	39 to 42					
Level of study	43 to 46					
Assessment criteria	47 to 48					
Duration of the program of study	49					
Requests for review or appeals	50					

A.3. QAF alternative assessment procedure for applicants without access to verifiable documentation

QAF Principles and Recommendations	Number	Level of Adherence				
		No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
Alternative procedure	51 to 52					
Information requirements	53					
Eligibility	54 to 57					
Document requirements	58 to 60					
Verification	61					
Types of alternative assessment	62 to 63					
Document sharing	64					

Comments from the organization:

B. Communication

The assessing organization produces evidence (e.g., websites, application forms, relevant publications, email templates to communicate with applicants, other communication material) and confirms it provides clear, current, accurate,

comprehensive, and publicly accessible information to applicants regarding the following items:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
General procedure for an applicant to apply for an assessment					
Alternative assessment procedure for an applicant without access to verifiable documentation					
Documentation to be provided and the requirements regarding the authentication and translation of documents					
Mode of submission, required content, and format of required documents					
Documentation that may, or will, be shared with other organizations, retained by the assessment service, or returned to the applicant					
Steps in the assessment process the applicant can undertake from outside of Canada					
Specific role of professional associations, regulatory bodies, and educational institutions in the assessment and recognition processes					
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					
Anticipated time required for the assessment process					

Cost of the assessment					
Procedure for appealing decisions or reviewing opinions					

Comments from the organization:

C. Assessing organization-level competencies

C.1. Reference works and documentation centre

The assessing organization produces evidence and describes the breadth of its documentation centre, indicating the number and kind of historical and current reference documents the centre contains. The assessing organization produces evidence that it maintains: an up-to-date list of the associations in and outside Canada of which it is a member, updated international academic credentials databases to which it subscribes, and up-to-date electronic distribution lists to which it belongs or other collaborative tools in its employ.

The assessing organization produces evidence and confirms:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
It has sufficient quantity and diversity of historical and current reference documents					
It uses these reference documents in its assessments					
It subscribes to international academic credentials databases					
It is a member of relevant associations in and outside Canada, and it subscribes to electronic distribution lists or uses similar appropriate collaborative tools					

Comments from the organization:

C.2. Document management

The assessing organization produces evidence that it uses a document management system that allows easy access to any information sought, while respecting legally binding provisions in provincial, territorial, federal, and international legal frameworks (e.g., privacy and personal information protection and exchange of electronic data legislation). It describes how the archiving of assessment outcomes (i.e., decisions or opinions) is designed to allow organized, systematic retrieval of previous outcomes. It describes how its document management procedures guarantee the security and protection of applicant information and, in particular, original documents.

The assessing organization produces evidence and confirms internal policies are in place for:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
Document-keeping procedures					
Length of time documents are preserved					
A procedure for accessing earlier outcomes					
Respecting legally binding provisions in provincial, territorial, federal, and international legal frameworks (e.g., privacy and personal information protection and exchange of electronic data legislation)					
Management of original documents					

Comments from the organization:

C.3. Experience of the assessing organization

The assessing organization must have complied with QAF for a minimum of one year. Furthermore, it must have issued a significant number of international academic credential assessment reports for use and recognized⁴ in Canada, based on QAF principles and recommendations, during this time period.

The assessing organization produces evidence and confirms it has:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
Complied with QAF for a minimum of one year					
Issued a significant number of international academic credential assessment reports for use and recognized in Canada, based on QAF principles and recommendations during this time period					

Comments from the organization:

D. Key attitudes, values, and competencies of academic credential assessment personnel

The assessing organization provides a brief explanation of all personnel directly involved in its academic credential assessment procedure and its reporting structure. The summary should clearly outline:

- types of roles and titles;

⁴ I.e., demonstration of recognition of assessment reports by publicly funded institutions for purposes of further education, licensure, and/or employment.

- number of full-time equivalent employees;
- principal responsibilities within the overall academic credential assessment procedure; and
- the profile of the most senior academic credential assessor.

The assessing organization’s personnel have received appropriate training, are knowledgeable in credential assessment processes and international education, and are able to process applicants requesting an assessment of their international academic credentials, based on QAF.

The assessing organization produces evidence and confirms:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
It has sufficient personnel to carry out the volume and types of assessments in a satisfactory manner					
It has a sufficient number of academic credential assessors with appropriate attitudes, values, and competencies					
At least one academic credential assessor has key attitudes, values, and competencies described in CICIC’s Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor ⁵ with a minimum of one year of practical experience, under supervision, assessing international academic credentials for different levels of study					
It provides its personnel with appropriate training and relevant knowledge, as well as access to professional development					

⁵ CICIC. Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor. 2012. Retrieved from: https://www.cicic.ca/1532/identify_key_competencies_of_an_academic_credential_assessor.canada.

<p>opportunities, guaranteeing maintenance of an appropriate level of expertise in academic credential assessment. Its personnel participate in structured training, engaging with peers in the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community, conducting research, and pursuing opportunities for professional development (e.g., conferences, workshops, webinars)</p>					
<p>It ensures its personnel are familiar with international legal frameworks related to international academic credential recognition (e.g., 1997 Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, 2019 Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education), as well as CICIC's tools and resources accessible to the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community (e.g., the EVALUATION listserv, terminology guides, the step-by-step guide on how to assess an academic credential issued outside of Canada)</p>					

Comments from the organization:

E. Assessment procedure

Beyond the QAF assessment procedure (A.2.) and the QAF alternative assessment procedure for applicants without access to verifiable documentation (A.3.), the assessing organization produces evidence that it applies measures designed to:

	Level of Adherence				
	No	Partial	Substantial	Full	Not Applicable
Prevent the falsification of assessment reports or their fraudulent use by applicants					
Clearly inform the applicants of the purpose for which the academic credential has been assessed and/or any restrictions on the report's use					

Comments from the organization:

F. Case studies

The assessing organization prepares three case studies to demonstrate adherence to QAF and its fundamental principles (A.1.). More specifically:

- two comprehensive case studies should focus on QAF's assessment procedure (A.2.);
- one comprehensive case study should focus on QAF's alternative assessment procedure for applicants without access to verifiable documentation (A.3.).

All three case studies must:

- cover at least three different issuing education systems outside Canada;

- be anchored to a process that both situates the applicant’s international academic credential in the context of the relevant issuing education system outside Canada, and also determines whether the academic credential is comparable to an academic credential issued within at least one of the 13 provincial and territorial education systems in Canada, taking into consideration the levels, types, and particular characteristics of academic credentials typically found in Canada;⁶
- use different disciplines and levels of credentials (e.g., secondary through doctorate levels, academic or vocational/career programs);
- describe how the assessment procedure (i.e., A.2, A.3) was interpreted and applied;
- provide a list of reference works and documentation used to support the assessment procedure;
- describe the resulting assessment outcome and its justification;
- provide the template(s) used to document the resulting assessment outcome and to communicate the outcome to the applicant;
- provide any additional details, if applicable.

G. Statement of Compliance

The undersigned states that

Insert name of assessing organization on the line above.

adheres to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF).

Reviewed and signed by:

Name of the Canadian assessing organization

Signature

Date

Name

Title

⁶ Competent recognition bodies and assessment services in Canada may use various terminology to describe their academic credential assessment outcomes, such as but not limited to: assessment against Canadian education standards; comparative evaluation of studies taken outside Quebec (comparative evaluation).