A Tool Box for Decision Makers: Information Repository on International Credentials

International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)

Alberta Advanced Education

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International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)

- Mandate of IQAS is to promote the recognition of international credentials in Alberta, Saskatchewan and NWT

- Accomplish this by:
  - Issuing assessment certificates to immigrants that assess and recognize their international credentials
  - Providing expertise and advise to employers, professional licensing bodies, educational institutions and other stakeholders
  - Leading and contributing to the development of policies and frameworks that promote international credential recognition at the provincial and national level

Background on the information repository

- In 2004, roundtable with representatives from post-secondary institutions across Alberta and Saskatchewan
- Identified a number of issues related to international credential recognition including:
  - Difficulties in finding the information on international credentials to make decisions quickly and efficiently
  - Resources and publications at some institutions have been reduced
  - Increasing volume of international credentials from a broader range of countries

Challenges in International Credential Recognition

- Major themes identified by stakeholders:
  - Difficult to obtain current and reliable information on international credentials
  - Lack of information developed from a Canadian perspective (e.g., publications are from other countries)
  - Multiple research efforts across institutions/organizations and no mechanisms to share this information

Information Repository on International Credentials

- An information tool designed to help decision makers (employers, professional licensing bodies, educational institutions and others) to make informed and timely decisions

- Major strategic objectives are:
  - Enhance decision/international credential recognition capacity of stakeholders
  - Promote transparent, consistent and accurate assessment outcomes within and across stakeholder groups
  - Promote increased timeliness and efficiency in the international credential recognition process

GOALS

- To develop a common repository of information related to international education and credentials

- To engage interested stakeholders in the development of this repository and encourage sharing of knowledge

- To achieve, through collaborative research, standardized assessment results of international credentials throughout Canada

Canadian Reality Check

- **<u>Vision</u>:**

  Full recognition and utilization of skills and knowledge immigrants bring to Canada

- **<u>Challenges</u>:**

  Provincial versus Federal jurisdictions; fragmentation and complexity of the system of qualifications recognition, including credential assessments

- **<u>One Possible Solution</u>**:

  Provide a comprehensive information on educational systems that could be used by stakeholders across jurisdictions to arrive at standardized assessment results

  Engage as wide a spectrum of stakeholders as possible

Overview of international credential assessment in Canada and elsewhere

- International credential evaluation in Canada – Federal government
- CICIC (Canadian Information Center for International Credentials) –www.cicic.ca
- The Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada – www.canalliance.org
- International credential evaluation in other parts of the world (e.g., Europe, Australia, USA)

Resources used in international credential evaluations

- Printed Publications (see list of some of the most useful publications)
- Lack of Canadian publications
- Internet resources (see list of some of the websites)
- International conferences and presentations
- Informal sharing of resources and information internally within an institution and among institutions

International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)

- IQAS opened by the Alberta government in 1994
- Agreements with Saskatchewan and Northwest Territories
- Compares educational academic credentials received in other countries to educational standards in a Canadian province
- Provides assessments for: general employment; admission to educational institutions; and professional licensing

IQAS Evaluations

- Over 3500 individuals applied to have their educational credentials evaluated in 2005

- Continuous increase in demand for services (over 40% in 2006)

- Large employers requesting IQAS assessments (City of Edmonton, City of Calgary, Canadian Armed Forces etc.)

- Over 20 post-secondary institutions in Alberta and Saskatchewan use IQAS assessments as part of their admission process

- Approximately 35 professional licensing bodies accept IQAS evaluations as part of their licensing process

Steps Completed for Evaluation

- IQAS assessments do not evaluate the knowledge or the level of achievement of an <u>individual</u>, but establish the comparable level of <u>educational credential</u> presented by an individual

- **Document Review**

  - Appropriate Overall Appearance, Format and Content

  - Evidence of Tampering

  - Consistency in Biographical Data

  - Valid Dates, Seals and Signatures

  - Document Issued by the Proper Authority

  - Program Offered by the Institution at that Specific date

- Translation Review

  - Interpretation versus literal word-for-word translation

  - Assessments based on original language documents plus translations

  - In-house language expertise or refer to an expert translator

- Recognition Status of Institutions

    - A recognized institution is one that has been formally recognized by competent authorities in a country and/or is widely accepted by other institutions and agencies inside or outside the country

    - Recognition of an educational institution does not guarantee the recognition of all credentials issued by the institution

- Description of Educational Program
  - Entrance requirements
  - Full-time duration of study program
  - Structure of the program
  - General Contents of the program
  - Purpose of the degree
- General Statement of Comparability

Issues in Educational Assessment

- What happens when there is no 'good' fit?
- Years of scholarity
- Vocational programs – secondary versus post-secondary
- Issues of 'mapping' 10, 11 and 13-year secondary program in other countries to Alberta 12
- Length of study for first university degrees
- Non-formal professional education
- Counting credits/hours for post-secondary courses

Country profiles

- Country profiles include, but are not limited to, the following information:
- Country and historic education overview
- Description of the educational system and its structure (historical and current)
- Major stages of education (primary, secondary etc.)
- Documentation
- Grading scales used at different levels of education
- Notes on resources used to compile the profile

Credential Template

- Country profiles are further developed in the generic credential templates, which provide, in detail, the following information:

- Credential's actual name and <u>standardized</u> English translation

- Alternate names and translations

- Time period credential offered

- Issuing body

- Admission requirements

- Program description

- Functionality of the credential

- Summary of external placement recommendations
- IQAS suggested placement recommendations for employment
- IQAS suggested placement recommendations for post-secondary admission
- Possible course equivalencies
- Rationale for IQAS decisions
- Grading scale if applicable
- Other relevant information

Country Profiles Completed and in Progress

- Country Profiles and Templates Completed:

    China, South Korea, the Philippines

- In Progress:

    United Kingdom, Russia (including former USSR), India

Outcomes

- A common repository of information is created and shared across the system
- The research is conducted from Canadian perspective and standardized approach is developed
- A common understanding of international credentials is shared across Canadian provinces
- Institutions, associations, employers can access current, well-researched information on international credentials and make timely and informed decisions