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

• **Vision:**

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

• **Challenges:**

  Provincial versus Federal jurisdictions; fragmentation and complexity of the system of qualifications recognition, including credential assessments
• **One Possible Solution:**

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 individual, but establish the comparable level of educational credential 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 scholarship
• 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
Country profiles are further developed in the generic credential templates, which provide, in detail, the following information:

- Credential’s actual name and standardized 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