

Assessing the
Qualifications of
Refugees

**BEST
PRACTICES AND
GUIDELINES**

Final Report



Canadian Information Centre
for International Credentials



cmec

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COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF EDUCATION, CANADA

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), is an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education. CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. All 13 provinces and territories are members.

CANADIAN INFORMATION CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) is a unit of CMEC's International sector. It was established in 1990 to provide information to individuals, organizations, and governments on the process for recognizing academic credentials for work and study purposes in and outside Canada, and to fulfill Canada's obligations under UNESCO recognition conventions. Because assessment is largely the responsibility of educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and academic credential assessment services, CICIC also provides tools and resources to assessors in these organizations on its Assessor Portal at <http://Assessor.cicic.ca>. This report builds on CICIC's history of supporting capacity building in this sector and developing best practices and guidelines, such as the [*Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials \(QAF\)*](#).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the fall of 2015, federal, provincial, and territorial governments committed to welcoming and settling 25,000 Syrian refugees in communities across Canada.² At the time, the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), along with other organizations in Canada, began discussing the ramifications that could arise once these newcomers settled and sought recognition of previously completed studies in order to work or undertake further studies in Canada. How would the broad and diverse organizations responsible for assessing and recognizing academic credentials and professional qualifications support refugees? This is especially crucial, as refugees and those in refugee-like situations may not have access to the documentation normally required for these procedures.

This report provides an overview of academic credential and qualification assessment in Canada. It identifies not only which organizations are responsible for assessing and recognizing these documents, but also the growing number of tools and resources developed to support these procedures. It outlines the legal framework for assessing the qualifications of refugees in Canada and identifies some of the barriers they face. It also provides context for the different levels of risk for organizations.

A summary of the two-day workshop titled “Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees,” organized by CICIC and held on November 24 and 25, 2016, in Mississauga, Ontario, is provided. The workshop was attended by 93 participants working in key sectors: members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC); professional regulatory bodies and apprenticeship authorities; postsecondary educational institutions; government departments and agencies; and additional guest speakers from Canada and Europe. The workshop was designed to assist refugees in entering the labour market and gaining admission to further studies by building knowledge within the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community of alternative approaches to assessment and recognition for refugees and persons in refugee-like situations.

Discussions at the workshop and additional consultations with key sectors led to the identification and development of best practices and guidelines that can be used by organizations to put in place an alternative qualification-assessment procedure without access to verifiable documentation. These consist of:

- **five different approaches** that may be used, depending on the situation and type of organization: country profile plus comparability statement; background paper; some documentation; some verifiable documentation; testing of skills and competencies;
- **13 recommended best practices and guidelines** that are consistent with the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in the context of international best practices. These are related to: governance; building awareness; eligibility; minimum documentation requirements; translation requirements; use of background paper and sworn affidavits; use of competency-based assessments; use of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR); sharing documentation; contacting institutions; transparency and public communications; transparency in the assessment report; and fees; and
- a **practical worksheet** developed to support organizations that are thinking of developing new policies or refining existing ones. It is a companion to the 13 recommended best practices and guidelines.



AN OVERVIEW OF ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT IN CANADA

With one of the world's highest proportions of citizens born outside its borders, Canada's identity and prosperity alike are rooted in welcoming newcomers. Canada's First Nations, Inuit, and Métis populations, its linguistic duality, and its diversity of immigrants from around the world form part of Canada's identity as a cultural mosaic. One of the key challenges to this identity, particularly in the past two decades, has been the recognition of qualifications obtained outside Canada.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL AND A QUALIFICATION?

An **academic credential** is a document provided as evidence of learning based on completion of a recognized program of study at an educational institution. Degrees, diplomas, and certificates are examples of academic credentials.

A **qualification** is a broader term that encompasses academic credentials as well as other required documents for admission to postsecondary studies or to regulated occupations (e.g., statements of professional standing, language-test results, academic credentials).

While CICIC's mandate focuses on the assessment and recognition of academic credentials, the broader term "qualifications" is sometimes used to reflect the reality that many organizations and government policies focus on qualifications, and some of the best practices in assessing and recognizing academic credentials can be applied to a broader range of qualifications.

It has been well documented that the earnings advantage experienced by university-educated immigrants at entry has declined significantly since the early 1980s, and had almost disappeared in the 2000s.³ This is compounded by research documenting the "match rate"—the percentage of professionals whose field of work corresponds to their academic credentials. Using 2006 Census data, a 2010 Statistics Canada study found that 24 per cent of immigrants educated outside Canada were working in the regulated profession for which they had trained, compared to 62 per cent of the Canadian-born.⁴ This difference can be attributed to a range of factors (e.g., different scopes of practice and training, different levels of skills and competencies). Nevertheless, this kind of research has reinforced the often anecdotal evidence that far too many highly skilled professionals are in low-wage and low-skill jobs.

This concern regarding the importance of recognizing academic credentials obtained outside of Canada is not new. The 1970s and 1980s saw the introduction of UNESCO regional recognition conventions designed to facilitate the mobility of students and the recognition of their academic credentials. Over the past two decades, the number of international students in Canada with a valid study permit has more than tripled—from 125,524 in 1995 to 474,871 in 2014—most of whom required an assessment of their academic credentials obtained outside Canada to gain admission.⁵ Often, newcomers also need recognition of their qualifications to work in their field of study. A 2001 report by the Conference Board of Canada attempted to quantify the economic benefits of



BACKGROUND INFORMATION (cont'd)

addressing unrecognized learning, surveying 12,000 households. Of the 487 who responded that their learning was not recognized, 63 per cent identified an “unrecognized foreign credential” as a barrier to increased earnings, labour-market access, or further studies.⁶

The past decade has seen increased attention paid to the recognition of qualifications in Canada. For example, in 2009, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) published the *Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*, which identified target occupations and emphasized the importance of fairness, timeliness, transparency, and consistency in recognition processes.⁷ Four provincial governments have established fairness commissioners to ensure greater fairness in the assessment and recognition of qualifications obtained outside of Canada and needed for practice in regulated occupations.⁸ In 2011, the Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC) published a review of the assessment and recognition of international credentials and work experience by trades and apprenticeship regulatory authorities across Canada.⁹ This report has informed subsequent pan-Canadian work on improving consistency in the assessment of qualifications in the trades as well as facilitating the integration of internationally trained newcomers into the trades.

Lastly, agencies and other organizations that provide services to immigrants have developed innovative solutions such as the Multi-stakeholder Work Groups model developed by the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS) to facilitate the employment of immigrants in regulated occupations. These occupation-specific working groups meet frequently to reduce barriers to professional certification and include representatives from professional regulatory authorities, professional associations, educational institutions, employers, unions, sector councils, government, internationally educated professionals, and ISANS employees.

In Canada, the assessment of academic credentials is decentralized, with six academic credential assessment services, over 500 professional regulatory authorities, and some 300 recognized postsecondary educational institutions. In addition, employers, private career colleges, as well as trade and apprenticeship offices may also perform their own assessments. Because credential assessment and recognition is the responsibility of this broad range of organizations, CICIC has focused on developing standards, resources, and tools to support consistency and capacity in academic credential assessment. In 2012, CICIC published its revamped *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)*¹⁰ to provide

guidance and standards for the fair recognition of credentials. It has been adopted by all member of ACESC and endorsed by the executive of the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC). An accompanying step-by-step guide on how to assess an academic credential was published on-line in 2017. The pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community can access this guide, as well as additional tools and resources to guide their work, by using CICIC’s Assessor Web portal at <http://Assessor.CICIC.ca>.

WHAT IS AN INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC CREDENTIAL ASSESSMENT?

An **international academic credential assessment** is the process by which academic credentials from one country are compared to those of another country. In Canada, it typically involves two steps: the authentication of a foreign credential and its comparability to similar credentials issued in a particular province or territory. Such assessment is most often performed for the purposes of employment, for obtaining a licence to practise in a regulated occupation, or for admission to a postsecondary educational institution.

Other practical tools and resources have also been developed, both in and outside Canada. Guidance on the assessment and recognition of academic credentials can be found in:

- subsidiary texts of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC);¹¹
- the *European Area Recognition (EAR) Manual*;¹²
- the *European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions (EAR-HEI)*;¹³ and
- World Education Services (WES) Canada’s guide, *Best Practices: Strategies and Processes to Obtain Authentic International Educational Credentials*.¹⁴

In 2015, the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA) released a manual entitled *Quality Assurance for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada*.¹⁵ The manual provides alternative, quality-assured assessment and recognition processes, along with a range of assessment tools (e.g., evidence collection and portfolio development) that are particularly useful when traditional approaches to assessing and recognizing qualifications are not possible.

While Canada and the international community have made significant progress on recognizing qualifications earned outside Canada, there remains more work to be done. As Canada significantly increases the number of refugees it accepts annually, it becomes critical that the pan-Canadian community of assessors together determine how best to address the new and distinct challenges of recognizing qualifications held by refugees.

WHAT IS INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATION RECOGNITION?

International qualification recognition

is the process by which an organization—typically a postsecondary educational institution, a professional regulatory authority, or an employer—recognizes that an individual’s academic credentials as well as other required documents meet their respective requirements for admission, licensure, or employment.

When members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) issue an academic credential assessment report, it is a non-binding expert opinion. Postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, or employers may conduct their own assessments, or they may choose to use an assessment report to inform their recognition decision.



REFUGEES IN CANADA AND THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING THEIR QUALIFICATIONS¹⁶

Between November 2015 and January 2017, Canada welcomed over 40,000 refugees from Syria alone.¹⁸ In Quebec, the government exceeded its target of accepting 7,300 Syrian refugees by the end of 2016.¹⁹ In 2014 alone, Canada welcomed just over 23,000 refugees from around the world, including close to 8,000 refugee claimants who were already in Canada.²⁰ While initial efforts focused on the selection, transport, and immediate settlement needs of the refugees, such as housing and education for children, **a key issue for many refugees is the recognition of their qualifications in order to find employment, gain admission to further studies, and settle into their new lives in Canada.** While there are some organizations in Canada that have established practices and clear policies regarding the assessment and recognition of qualifications held by refugees, many have not. This is a reality faced not only in Canada, but perhaps especially in Europe, where close to a million refugees claimed asylum in the European Union in 2015, with Syria being the top source country.²¹

There is an international consensus that refugees and those in refugee-like situations should have access to alternative assessment procedures for their qualifications. The legal framework for flexibility and alternative practices is included in the 1951 United Nations' *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) and UNESCO's revised regional recognition conventions.

The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which Canada acceded to on June 4, 1969, contain several provisions that serve as a legal basis for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees:²²

- **Article 19** provides that refugees who hold diplomas recognized by competent authorities and wish to practise a "liberal profession"²³ should be granted "treatment as favourable as possible, and... not less favourable than" other immigrants.²⁴
- **Article 22** on public education again stipulates that refugees should be treated as favourably as other immigrants "as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees..."²⁵

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A REFUGEE, A CONVENTION REFUGEE, AND A REFUGEE CLAIMANT?¹⁷

A **refugee** is "a person who is forced to flee from persecution and who is located outside of their home country."

A **convention refugee** is "a person who meets the refugee definition in the 1951 Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees."

A **refugee claimant** is "a person who has fled their country and is asking for protection in another country. We don't know whether a claimant is a refugee or not until their case has been decided."

While the CICIC workshop focused on the recognition of qualifications of refugees and those in refugee-like situations, it is important to note that:

- not all refugees lack access to verifiable documentation; and
- individuals who are not refugees may also lack access to verifiable documentation.

- Both **Articles 19 and 22** state that refugees should be treated at least as well as immigrants “generally in the same circumstances,” which **Article 6** defines to mean that refugees should fulfill the same requirements as other groups “with the exception of requirements which by their nature a refugee is incapable of fulfilling.”
- **Article 25** makes provisions for cases where a refugee does not have recourse to the assistance of authorities in the country he or she has fled. It requires that:..

“

[w]hen the exercise of a right by a refugee would normally require the assistance of authorities of a foreign country to whom he cannot have recourse, the Contracting States...shall arrange that such assistance be afforded to him by their own authorities or by an international authority.... [T]hey shall deliver...to refugees such documents or certifications as would normally be delivered to aliens by or through their national authorities. Documents or certifications so delivered shall stand in the stead of the official instruments...and shall be given credence in the absence of proof to the contrary.²⁶

”

Taken together, these articles from the 1951 Refugee Convention can be interpreted to mean that if refugees, by virtue of being refugees, do not have access to verifiable documentation, then alternatives must be found.

In addition to our legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the revised UNESCO recognition conventions also include provisions for refugees. On the recommendation of provincial and territorial governments, Canada signed the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), with a view to ratification.

Article VII of the LRC states that:

“

“[e]ach Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfill the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.”²⁷

”



WHAT IS THE LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION?

The aim of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) is to facilitate the inbound and outbound international mobility of students, academics, and professionals with academic credentials and/or qualifications.

The convention stipulates that:

- requests for recognition should be assessed in a fair and timely fashion;
- recognition should be granted unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated;
- through their national information centres (also known as the European Network of Information Centres—ENIC), competent authorities should disseminate information on their respective education systems, including:
 - o quality-assurance practices;
 - o a list of educational institutions;
 - o academic programs;
 - o academic credentials and qualifications.

CICIC is Canada's national information centre and collaborates with signatory states through the ENIC-NARIC networks.

QAF, developed in 2012 by CICIC, likewise states in **Principle and Recommendation 23** that “[i]n 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.”²⁸

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC) has recognized that very few ratifying states have fully implemented the provisions of Article VII,²⁹ and while the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1997 LRC, and the 2012 QAF indicate support for assessing refugees' qualifications, until recently there has been limited guidance on how an organization might develop policies to help address some of the challenges faced by refugees in entering the labour market and pursuing further studies. To help fill this gap, the LRCC is in the process of developing a new subsidiary text on this issue, which is expected to be up for adoption by LRCC members at its eighth meeting in the fall of 2017. UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and some ENIC/NARIC members have held or are planning events to build capacity and strengthen policies and practices on recognizing the qualifications of refugees, such as CICIC's 2016 workshop, *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees*.

In Canada, some educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and academic credential assessment services have developed policies. For example, since 1978, the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) has worked with universities and colleges across Canada to admit refugee students.

Since 2002, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) has had an alternative documentation process available to refugees and others who cannot obtain official documents sent directly

from the issuing institutions. In 2016, the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC) established a policy to guide their assessment of refugee qualifications. In February 2016, Engineers Canada released its policy statement on convention refugees.³⁰ In May 2016, World Education Services (WES) Research published its excellent research report, *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Credential Assessment*, and has since completed its own pilot project focused on Syrian refugees.³¹

These are all excellent initiatives, though they stand out as exceptions rather than standard practices. Despite our progress, the situation in Canada today is unfortunately not that different from that described in 1999, whereby “refugees...frequently do not know what to expect by way of recognition in our country...our systems of qualification recognition are less than clear.”³²

BARRIERS FACED BY REFUGEES

Some notable public figures in Canada have underscored the importance of recognition for refugees in particular. At a 2016 forum hosted by York University, Re-imagining Refuge: Towards Equitable and Sustainable Communities, former Governor General of Canada, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, identified better recognition of credentials as one of two suggestions for improving the settlement process for refugees.³³ Similarly, recognition was discussed at the October 2016 Federal-Provincial-Territorial Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration.³⁴

There is a long list of literature on the barriers faced by refugees in Canada and in other countries. At a 1999 Council of Europe seminar on the Recognition of Refugee Qualifications, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) identified barriers faced by refugees in having their qualifications recognized, which included lack of information and unclear procedures, lack of procedures to deal with insufficient documentation, and lack of financial and bridging support.³⁵ A recent resource published by Engineers Canada identifies a number of challenges faced by convention refugees, not only in terms of documentation, but also in terms of the trauma they may have experienced, language barriers, and work experience that cannot be officially verified, among other issues. For professional regulatory authorities with good-character requirements that are met through criminal-record checks, the Engineers Canada resource points out that “[c]onvention refugees may in fact have a record of convictions. Such convictions may be on grounds that are related to their refugee status and not for offences recognized in Canada (such as political dissent or homosexual relationships) or may be false convictions imposed by corrupt regimes or based on tainted evidence, including admissions obtained by torture.”³⁶

There are four related yet distinct challenges that are apparent in assessing the qualifications of refugees:

- incomplete or interrupted education;
- missing or partial documentation;
- an inability to verify documentation with the issuing institution; and
- the impact of war and disasters on quality assurance and accreditation.

First, due to the age profile of current Syrian refugees and the long migration path they may have taken, many have completed partial studies or have completed studies in more than one country.



BACKGROUND INFORMATION (cont'd)

Second, it is no surprise that many refugees flee dangerous situations quickly and simply do not have time to gather all of their documentation. Some may arrive with:

- partial documents or copies;
- pictures saved on mobile phones or uploaded to on-line cloud services;
- student-issued transcripts; or
- student IDs.

And some may arrive with nothing at all.

Third, even for those able to produce some or all of their documents, it may not be possible to verify the documents with the issuing institution. This may be due to closure of the institution or inaccessible, damaged, or destroyed records. It may also be due to a real or perceived threat to family members who have stayed behind. Even with applicants who do authorize an organization in Canada to contact their home educational institution, there may be no response, or worse, a negative response that the assessor finds suspicious.

Fourth, in some cases of protracted war and the absence of quality-assurance mechanisms, particularly those typically overseen by governments, assessors face the challenge of assessing the comparability of education obtained without the usual quality-assurance/accreditation measures in place.

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF RISK FOR ORGANIZATIONS ASSESSING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF REFUGEES

Academic credential and qualification assessments are conducted for the purpose of ascertaining their comparability to those found in Canada and identifying any fraudulent documents. Typically, organizations responsible for this procedure rely on their respective documentation requirements and assessors' expertise when examining documents to mitigate the risk of fraud in the documents being assessed. In recent years, increasing emphasis has been placed on obtaining official documents directly from the issuing educational institution or competent authority as the best practice for combatting fraud.³⁷ Given the decentralized nature of academic credential assessment in Canada, it is important to understand that different types of organizations face different levels of risk in combatting fraud.

For professional regulatory authorities, their legislated mandate normally includes a duty to protect the public. Of course,

CONTINUUM OF RISK

high

- certified as a teacher

medium

- assessment report from an ACESC member

low

- admission to *Secondaire I* or Grade 7
- admission to a B.A. in economics
- admission to a third-year engineering degree
- admission to write medical exams

there are distinctions to be made between professions: the public's expectation of protection is not the same for real-estate agents as it is for surgeons and physicians. In addition, different professions have different approaches to assessing whether internationally educated applicants meet their entry-to-practice requirement. Many health professions have competency exams that could be useful and adapted to refugee candidates. Other professions, such as the teaching, rely heavily on the assessment of academic credentials and professional qualifications, without a competency test available.

General academic credential assessment services have a responsibility to the end user to ensure that their assessment reports are reliable and reflect adherence to certain standards.³⁸ Once issued, their reports can be used for a variety of purposes. The academic credential assessment service may have less flexibility because it may not know in advance how its report will be used by an organization that receives it. Within Canada's legal framework, these services provide an expert, non-binding opinion on the assessment, as opposed to formal recognition, which is an important distinction explained earlier in this report. As such, it is beyond the scope of their work to hire subject-matter experts to assess the competencies of an applicant.

For postsecondary educational institutions, the risk of fraud is lower. If a student makes fraudulent claims about his or her academic credentials, the student is unlikely to progress in the program. As such, it is effectively a shared risk. While institutions may have a moral responsibility to limit admission to students who are likely to succeed in their programs, prospective students also risk failure if they do not have the necessary academic background, knowledge, and/or skills. At the same time, in the case of highly competitive programs, institutions also face the risk of displacing a more qualified applicant who applied for admission, which could raise concerns about procedural fairness and could have some reputational effects on the institution. As well, in the admission to professional programs that are a prerequisite to certification in a regulated profession, it may be critical that the institution and the professional regulatory authority discuss and adopt similar requirements. This would ensure that a graduate is not penalized when seeking certification at the end of the program because he or she did not meet the normal entrance requirements to the professional program at the earlier stage.

It may be helpful to consider the level of risk on a continuum, rather than in absolute terms. As speakers' presentations and participants' discussions at the November 2016 workshop demonstrated, **alternative practices can be put in place at every point along the continuum.**



WORKSHOP SUMMARY

WORKSHOP – ASSESSING THE QUALIFICATIONS OF REFUGEES

On November 24 and 25, 2016, CICIC held a two-day workshop on assessing the qualifications of refugees.³⁹ It was attended by 93 participants working in key sectors:

- members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC);
- professional regulatory bodies and apprenticeship authorities;
- postsecondary educational institutions;
- government departments and agencies; and
- additional guest speakers from Canada and Europe.

CICIC recognized that numerous organizations in Canada have considerable experience with alternative approaches to assessing the qualifications of refugees and those without access to verifiable documentation. Many of those organizations presented their work and experience over the two days. As such, the workshop afforded an opportunity to:

- learn from the experience of organizations across Canada and in Europe; and
- build on their expertise and insights by having participants collectively provide concrete guidance to organizations performing assessments in order to help them develop policies and practices in accordance with their respective organizations' mandate and purpose.

The workshop was held at the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga, Ontario.

Day 1

The first day of the workshop consisted of a robust program that began with introductory remarks from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), CICIC, and the keynote speaker and advisory committee member, André Gariépy, Commissioner for Admission to Professions at the *Office des professions du Québec*. These presentations set the context for the subsequent working discussions, including:

- the legal framework for assessing the qualifications of refugees;
- the continuum of risk faced by different organizations assessing qualifications;
- different issues faced by refugees and those in refugee-like situations; and
- a summary of the different approaches to assessing the qualifications of refugees.

The speakers also underscored the political, social, and economic imperatives to find fair alternatives to assess the qualifications of refugees and those in refugee-like situations.

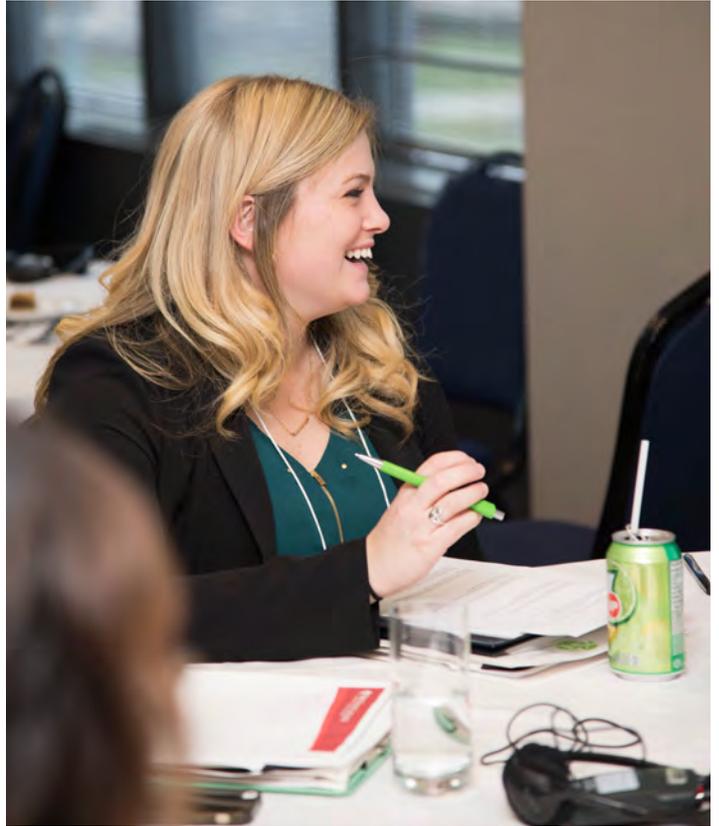
These were followed by country-profile presentations on Afghanistan, Iraq, and of course, Syria, for which more time was allotted. These were led by two members of ACESC and focused on documentation, how to verify it where possible, and alternative approaches and strategies that were country-specific. Afghanistan was chosen because it presents not only documentation issues but also a lack of formal, government-mandated quality-assurance mechanisms (accreditation), especially during the Taliban years. The International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) presented a report it had commissioned—which included field research in Afghanistan—to better understand the



Workshop participants and speakers



WORKSHOP SUMMARY (cont'd)



Workshop participants and speakers

complexities of documentation and quality assurance of Afghani educational institutions. As such, the case study of Afghanistan raised other questions that refugees may face, such as the lack of recognition of their studies due not to the absence of documentation but to the lack of quality assurance/accreditation of their institutions, particularly during periods of prolonged war and/or political instability. This case was particularly important, given the significant number of organizations that refuse to assess credentials from Afghanistan. WES's expert, Sulaf Al-Shaikhly, herself a former professor in Iraq, gave an exceptionally detailed and resource-rich presentation on the documentation challenges with academic credentials issued by institutions in Iraq and Syria, including tips, pitfalls, and helpful strategies gleaned from their research and practice.

Next, participants heard presentations from organizations within the ENIC-NARIC networks in three European countries—Germany, Norway, and the Netherlands—outlining the different approaches that these countries have taken to address the challenges in recognizing qualifications of refugees and others in a refugee-like situation who cannot meet standard document requirements. These organizations are CICIC's counterparts in their respective countries and have already faced the Syrian refugee crisis for a longer period of time than Canada has. They have been working to promote the adoption of best practices in accordance with the LRC and within their own national contexts.

The presentation by the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the Länder in the Federal Republic of Germany (KMK)—Germany's ENIC-NARIC centre—focused on: regulations and policies developed by education ministers to support the admission of refugee students into higher-education institutions; a reduction in admission fees for refugees to facilitate access to higher education, and funding of the *Studienkolleg* (a one-year university preparation course); a handbook for universities; and a mobile app for refugee students trying to access higher education.

The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT)—the Norwegian ENIC-NARIC centre, which has a long history of developing alternative measures for assessing the qualifications of refugees—presented two key initiatives they have spearheaded: (1) the UVD-procedure—an intensive, expert-based interview process to determine whether an applicant without verifiable documentation has met the necessary learning outcomes; and (2) the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees—a document for refugees that attests to their completed studies and is being accepted in an growing number of European countries.

The last presentation was given by Nuffic—the ENIC-NARIC centre for the Netherlands—and outlined initiatives they have undertaken, including the development of an “indication of level” (non-binding statement) assessment report; a tool kit for higher-education institutions;



Natasha Sawh, former CICIC Coordinator



WORKSHOP SUMMARY (cont'd)

and a Web application informing refugees of study opportunities.

The first day concluded with a networking reception allowing participants to discuss the learning outcomes from the workshop agenda and get to know other assessors from the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community.

Day 2

The second day featured two panels. The first focused on presentations from universities and colleges in Quebec and Nova Scotia, along with World University Service of Canada (WUSC) and the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). WUSC was chosen because multiple institutions indicated they relied on and trusted WUSC's selection process to identify and place refugees on their campuses. CAPLA's presentation focused on the history of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR); the quality-assurance manual that CAPLA developed; and the importance of finding ways to assess and recognize what people know and can do, which can be documented and demonstrated in a variety of ways, including, but not limited to, an assessment of formal academic credentials.

The second panel included health and non-health regulators from British Columbia, Nova Scotia, and Ontario, along with WES's pilot project on assessing the qualifications of up to 200 Syrian refugees. Working with immigrant settlement organizations to identify prospective applicants, WES used their extensive database, affidavits, and other documentation to translate and provide an alternative assessment report to be used by employers, professional regulatory authorities, or postsecondary educational institutions for recognition purposes.

The Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC) presented on its initiative to waive the fees for convention refugees. They used affidavits and interviews with an expert familiar with the education program claimed to determine whether the applicant could proceed to competency-based assessments prior to licensure. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) presented on the detailed checklists it uses to ensure procedural fairness on a case-by-case basis, together with applicant interviews to determine what documents they are able to provide (not to assess competency). The College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS) developed three courses (on-line and in-person) to facilitate the integration of all internationally educated nurses (IENs).



Workshop participants in facilitated breakout groups

Omar Alghabra, MP for Mississauga Centre and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs (Consular Affairs), delivered warm and personal remarks regarding the importance of this work and his own experiences as an immigrant to Canada.

The second day concluded with two breakout sessions. In the first, participants were grouped according to their respective sectors:

- general academic credential assessment services;
- professional regulatory bodies – health;
- professional regulatory bodies – non-health;
- universities; and
- colleges and institutes.

Participants from government departments and agencies, as well as guest speakers, were divided up among these groups, with one facilitator from each of the five sectors. The groups were tasked with identifying best practices and principles that were important to their sector, focusing on four key questions:

1. Who should be eligible to submit alternative documents or evidence of their formal studies?
2. What should an organization do to fairly assess and recognize the qualifications of refugees?
3. What type of alternative evidence should an organization accept in lieu of official documentation?
4. What can be done to address barriers to implementing an alternative process?

**Philippe Massé,
Omar Alghabra,
Chantal C. Beaulieu,
Michael Ringuette, and
Natasha Sawh**



**Workshop participants
in facilitated
breakout
groups**



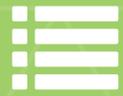
WORKSHOP SUMMARY (cont'd)

This important step allowed the different sectors to identify the best practices and guidelines that are most relevant, appropriate, and feasible for their sector, and gave participants an opportunity for focused networking opportunities within their own sector. In plenary, those groups reported their findings back to all participants.

In the second breakout session, participants were divided into eight groups. Each group contained at least one representative from each of the five sectors. Five of these groups were each facilitated by one of the facilitators from the first breakout session. In those five groups, the facilitator presented the findings from his or her sector, and asked participants to determine which of the guidelines and best practices would be applicable to all sectors. The remaining three groups were asked to focus on the fourth question, and each group was asked to consider how one of the following—organizations, governments, and CICIC—could best support this work. The findings from these breakout sessions, combined with the expertise of many of the workshop speakers and participants as well as the research conducted by CICIC, formed the basis of the best practices and guidelines developed for assessing the qualifications of refugees.



Workshop speakers and facilitators



DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Building on the approaches taken by postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and academic credential assessment services in Canada and beyond, five different approaches to different situations were identified. For this section, the following excellent resources provided guidance:

- WES's *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Assessment*;⁴⁰
- The EAR and EAR-HEI Consortium's manuals;⁴¹ and
- The background paper and guideline documents prepared by Erwin Malfroy, as well as the report prepared by the International Credential Evaluation Service for the 1999 Council of Europe Seminar on Recognition of Refugee Qualifications.⁴²

These five approaches are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, and many organizations that adopt a case-by-case approach will use different ones at different times. It may be useful to recall the distinction outlined earlier in this document between assessment (e.g., assessment report issued by members of the ACESC) and recognition (e.g., a decision made by an educational institution, a professional regulatory authority, an employer, etc.).

In developing alternative approaches to assess and recognize the qualifications of refugees, organizations will first have to determine eligibility criteria for the use of an alternative approach and whether the alternative approach has the same outcome as the regular procedures (e.g., is there a notation on the assessment report that indicates the evidence used to inform the report? Does the applicant have to take additional exams or other methods to prove their skills and competencies?). Organizations may also grapple with a range of additional considerations, such as:

- Is our alternative process fair to refugees? Is it fair to other applicants? Does our approach for refugees inform our practices for our other applicants?
- How best to balance the risk of fraud over the risk of creating unnecessary or unfair barriers?
- Is partial or conditional recognition possible?
- How will we communicate our alternative approach to prospective applicants?
- Will we reduce or waive fees or translation requirements?
- Are other avenues available to unsuccessful applicants (e.g., other programs of study, alternative careers)?
- Can other methods of measuring skills and competencies be used?
- What other support systems might refugees, in particular, need?



BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES (cont'd)

APPROACHES	WHAT CAN THE ORGANIZATION PROVIDE?	TYPES OF ORGANIZATION	
		ASSESSMENT SERVICES	RECOGNITION BODIES
1 Country profile plus comparability statement	Provide a country profile of the education system of the issuing institution and a comparison of the claimed credential with one offered in the receiving province or territory's educational system. No verification is conducted of the individual's study pathway.		
2 Background paper	Provide an assessment based on a background paper developed by the applicant describing the applicant's studies, courses, grades, corroborated by sworn affidavits and/or other evidence.		
3 Some documentation	Provide an assessment based on some documentation, (may be partial, copies, originals, unverifiable, etc.), corroborated by a background paper, sworn affidavits, and/or other evidence.		
4 Some verifiable documentation	Provide an assessment using regular procedures for some documents, and alternative procedures for others.		
5 Testing of skills and competencies	Provide an assessment based on interviews, testing, portfolio development, or other methods of assessing learning outcomes.		

RECOMMENDED BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES

The recommendations for these 13 best practices and guidelines below were informed by discussions at the November 2016 workshop and the research summarized in the Background Information section of this report, with an emphasis on the resources referenced in endnotes 40, 41, and 42. Furthermore, these findings have informed Canada's comments to the LRCC's consultation process for developing a new subsidiary text on this issue. As such, these are consistent with the LRC in the context of international best practices and guidelines.

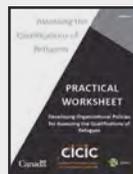
Distinctions have been made, where necessary, between **assessment services** (e.g., members of ACESC) that produce assessment reports for recognition bodies and **recognition bodies** (e.g., postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and employers) responsible for recognition.

1 – Governance

Assessment services and recognition bodies should develop policies and procedures that govern their alternative assessment process. These policies should:

- include information on eligibility, procedures for both staff and applicants, potential outcomes, and appeal procedures; and
- identify organizational responsibilities for:
 - approving candidates for an alternative assessment;
 - managing the alternative assessment process;
 - approving individual cases; and
 - evaluating, reviewing, and modifying policies and procedures.

Organizations should also put in place favourable conditions to implement these policies and procedures through the allocation of internal resources.



APPENDIX II – Practical Worksheet – Developing Organizational Policies for Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees.

2 – Building awareness

Refugees and those in refugee-like situations may face some challenges common to all newcomers as well as others that may be specific to their experiences and the situations that forced them to flee. Some have witnessed a profound failure of humanity and of institutions and authorities to treat them fairly. Organizations should provide appropriate training to their staff to build understanding and the cultural competence necessary to develop and carry out appropriate policies and procedures.



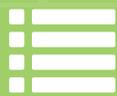
Engineers Canada
*Facilitating the integration of convention refugees.*⁴³



Asha Siad and Roda Siad
2016. *19 Days.*⁴⁴



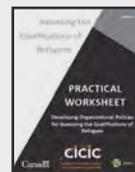
Canadian Council for Refugees
Library.⁴⁵



BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES (cont'd)

3 – Eligibility

All applicants who do not have access to verifiable documentation of their qualifications—for legitimate reasons beyond their control—should have access to an alternative assessment of their qualifications. There may be many reasons why an individual cannot access verifiable documentation, including refugee status, institutional closures, and environmental disasters. Organizations should document their rationale for using an alternative approach in each case.



APPENDIX II – Practical Worksheet – Developing Organizational Policies for Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees.

4 – Minimum documentation requirements

Many refugees and those in refugee-like situations may have access to some evidence of their partial studies and/or qualifications. As such, many organizations that adopt an alternative process require at least one document in addition to a sworn affidavit by the applicant. This could, for example, be in the form of:

- a student-issued or copied transcript or degree certificate;
- public lists of graduates or other evidence of enrolment or completion;
- evidence of admittance to state examinations;
- statements of professional standing;
- a licence to practise in another jurisdiction.

For recognition bodies, particularly postsecondary educational institutions and professional regulatory authorities, it is recommended that policies identify who or what body (e.g., registrar, council, board committee, appeal committee) has the discretion to waive this requirement in extenuating circumstances.



Bryce Loo. May 2016. *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Credential Assessment.* WES Research.⁴⁶

5 – Translation requirements

Where organizations have the capacity to accept and review documents in the original language, requirements for official or certified translations may be waived.

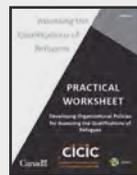
6 – Use of background papers and sworn affidavits

Background papers/affidavits should include, at a minimum, the information needed to conduct an assessment and/or recognize the relevant qualification or partial studies. This could include:

- name, location, and date of birth;
- reasons why the applicant cannot use the “regular” process;
- description of attempts made to obtain documents;
- name and dates of the institution/program attended;
- name of the academic credential granted and the date granted;
- titles, grades, course hours (credits), or other information normally included on a transcript;
- other information required (e.g., statement of professional standing, particularly when a specific academic credential is required to enter the profession in the issuing country).

A background paper and affidavits developed by the applicant are necessary in most cases and can be strengthened by affidavits from:

- fellow students who completed the program at the same time;
- instructors or professors who taught the applicant;
- former employers; and
- other individuals who are not family members.



APPENDIX II – Practical Worksheet – Developing Organizational Policies for Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees.



EAR Consortium. 2012. *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual.*⁴⁷



EAR-HEI Consortium
Second edition in 2016. *European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions (EAR-HEI).*⁴⁸



ENIC-NARIC networks
*Recognise qualifications held by refugees – guide for credential evaluators.*⁴⁹



Erwin Malfroy. 1999. Council of Europe Seminar on the Recognition of Refugee Qualifications. Background paper.⁵⁰



Erwin Malfroy. 1999. Council of Europe Seminar on the Recognition of Refugee Qualifications. “Guidelines for the recognition of refugee’s qualifications”.⁵¹



Bryce Loo. May 2016. *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Credential Assessment.* WES Research.⁵²



BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES (cont'd)

7 – Use of competency-based assessments

Wherever possible, in the absence of documentation that meets standard document requirements, recognition bodies should endeavour to give eligible applicants access to competency-based assessments. These could include:

- in general, competency-based interviews with subject-matter experts to inform recognition decisions;
- for a regulated profession or trade, existing competency-based assessments, such as paper-based or practice-based competency exams required of all new applicants for licensure, or a competency assessment conducted following an internship or other practicum-based job placement;
- for an educational institution, the ability to challenge final exams or the assessment of a portfolio;
- in an employment context, an employer may design an assignment or other test to determine whether applicants possess relevant competencies.



NOKUT

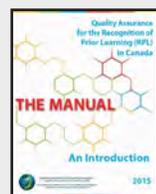
*Recognition Procedure for Persons without Verifiable Documentation (UVD-procedure).*⁵³

8 – Use of prior learning assessment and recognition (PLAR)

Wherever possible, in the absence of documentation that meets standard requirements, recognition bodies should:

- endeavour to use a broad range of assessment approaches to recognize the applicant's prior learning;
- assess what an applicant knows and can do and whether he or she has the competencies required for:
 - o admission to an educational institution;
 - o entry into practice in a regulated occupation; or
 - o employment in a non-regulated occupation.

As such, the assessment of formal qualifications is one part of a broader PLAR process, and some of the PLAR processes can also be useful in assessing an applicant's successful completion or partial completion of a formal academic program.



CAPLA. 2015.

*Quality Assurance for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada: The Manual.*⁵⁴



CAPLA. 2012.

*Assessing the Skills and Competencies of Internationally Trained Immigrants: A Manual for Regulatory Bodies, Employers and Other Stakeholders.*⁵⁵

9 – Sharing documentation

To facilitate an applicant’s pursuit of work or study opportunities, and only with the consent of the applicant, assessment services and recognition bodies should, where possible, share documents that have informed their assessments.

Such documents may include, but are not limited to:

- transcripts;
- degree certificates;
- lists of graduates;
- student identification;
- correspondence with an issuing institution;
- statements of professional standing;
- a licence to practise in another jurisdiction;
- affidavits and background papers; and
- translations of any of the above.



NOKUT. 2016. *NOKUT's Qualifications Passport for Refugees.*⁵⁶



Council of Europe Pilot project. "Recognition of Qualifications held by Refugees."⁵⁷

10 – Contacting institutions

In some cases, while an applicant may not be able to obtain documentation from an institution, an organization in Canada may be able to do so. However, given the potential for harm to an applicant seeking refuge in Canada or to their family members who may have been left behind, it is imperative that organizations in Canada always have the express written consent of the applicant before any contact is made with issuing institutions in the country (or countries) an applicant has fled.

11 – Transparency and public communications

Assessment services and recognition bodies should provide information on the availability of an alternative assessment process. They should also provide, at a minimum, information on how to initiate the process (e.g., completion of an initial intake application to determine eligibility, or contact information for the person responsible for managing the process).

For recognition bodies, where resources permit, it is recommended to meet with prospective applicants by phone, videoconference, or in person, to:

- describe the process; and
- determine which documents the applicant may be able to provide.



BEST PRACTICES AND GUIDELINES (cont'd)

12 – Transparency in the assessment report

Assessment services that provide a report for other recognition bodies should state in that report the basis on which the assessment was conducted (e.g., identify which documents and/or affidavits were presented).

13 – Fees

Where possible, application fees for the alternative qualification-assessment procedure should be waived or reduced for displaced persons, refugees, and those in a refugee-like situation if there is evidence that fees present a financial barrier. These may also be related to the procedure, such as translation requirements.



- ¹ APPENDIX I – *Workshop Agenda and Participants*.
- ² Those targets, as well as new targets of accepting 25,000 government-assisted refugees and 12,000 privately sponsored refugees in Canada by the end of 2016 or early 2017, have mostly been met. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/commitment.asp>
- ³ Garnett Picot, Feng Hou, and Theresa Qiu. May 2014. *The Human Capital Model of Selection and the Long-run Economic Outcomes of Immigrants*. Analytical Studies Branch Research Paper Series. (Ottawa: Statistics Canada). Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2014361-eng.htm>
- ⁴ Danielle Zietsma. February 2010. “Immigrants Working in Regulated Occupations” in *Perspectives on Labour and Income*, Vol. 11, No. 2. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/75-001-x/2010102/article/11121-eng.htm>
- ⁵ IRCC. 2014. *Facts and Figures 2014*. <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/2014-Facts-Figures-Temporary.pdf>
- ⁶ Conference Board of Canada. 2001. *Brain Gain: The Economic Benefits of Recognizing Learning and Learning Credentials in Canada*. Retrieved from <http://www.conferenceboard.ca/e-library/abstract.aspx?did=56>
- ⁷ Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). 2009. *A Pan-Canadian framework for the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications*. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/foreign-credential-recognition/funding-framework.html>
- ⁸ The four provinces are Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Nova Scotia. In Quebec, the *Commissioner for Admission to Professions* serves a slightly different function in receiving individual complaints, but the overall objective of creating a new accountability structure for regulated professions and supporting regulators’ efforts to make their processes more fair, transparent, consistent, and effective is common to all four provinces that have adopted this model.
- ⁹ SATCC. February 2011. *Understanding the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Trained Workers in the Red Seal Trades: A Cross-Canada Review of Methodology and Processes in Apprenticeship Systems to Assess and Recognize Credentials and Trade Experience*. Retrieved from <http://saskapprenticeship.ca/resources/plans-research-reports/reports/>
- ¹⁰ CICIC. 2012. *Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials*. Retrieved from [https://www.cicic.ca/1504/Consult-the-Pan-Canadian-Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-the-Assessment-of-International-Academic-Credentials-\(QAF\)/index.canada](https://www.cicic.ca/1504/Consult-the-Pan-Canadian-Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-the-Assessment-of-International-Academic-Credentials-(QAF)/index.canada)
- ¹¹ The full name of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) is the *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, 1997*. Additional information on the LRC and its subsidiary texts is available on CICIC’s Web site: <https://www.cicic.ca/1398/An-overview-of-the-Lisbon-Recognition-Convention/index.canada>
- ¹² EAR Consortium. 2012. *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual*. Retrieved from <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>
- ¹³ EAR-HEI Consortium. Second edition in 2016. *European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions (EAR-HEI)*. Retrieved from <http://www.enic-naric.net/ear-manual-standards-and-guidelines-on-recognition.aspx>
- ¹⁴ WES Canada. 2012. *Best Practices: Strategies and Processes to Obtain Authentic International Educational Credentials*. Retrieved from <http://wenr.wes.org/2012/07/wenr-junejuly-2012-best-practices-strategies-and-processes-to-obtain-authentic-international-educational-credentials>



ENDNOTES (cont'd)

- ¹⁵ CAPLA. 2015. *Quality Assurance for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) in Canada: The Manual*. Retrieved from <http://capla.ca/rpl-qa-manual/>
- ¹⁶ The explanation about international conventions in this section should not be construed as a legal opinion or otherwise substitute for legal counsel.
- ¹⁷ Canadian Council for Refugees. 2010. *Refugees and Immigrants: A Glossary*. Retrieved from <http://ccrweb.ca/en/glossary>
- ¹⁸ IRCC. January 29, 2017. #WelcomeRefugees: Canada resettled Syrian refugees. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/refugees/welcome/index.asp>
- ¹⁹ Ici Radio-Canada. November 25, 2015. *Le Québec accueillera 7300 réfugiés syriens d'ici la fin de 2016*". Retrieved from <http://ici.radio-canada.ca/nouvelles/societe/2015/11/25/003-plan-quebec-accueil-refugies-syriens-villes.shtml>; and *Immigration, Diversité et Inclusion Québec*. January 2017. Retrieved from <http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca/fr/informations/accueil-refugies-syriens/index.html>
- ²⁰ IRCC. *Facts and Figures 2014*. Retrieved from <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/pdf/2014-Facts-Permanent.pdf>
- ²¹ BBC News. March 4, 2016. *Migrant Crisis: Migration to Europe explained in seven charts*. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34131911>
- ²² UNHCR. 1951. *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>; and UNHCR. April 2015. *States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/basic/3b73b0d63/states-parties-1951-convention-its-1967-protocol.html>
- ²³ "Liberal professions" are not defined in the conventions, but according to the UNHCR reference guide, they are usually taken to include professionals such as "lawyers, physicians, architects, dentists, pharmacists, engineers, veterinarians, artists, and probably other profession[al]s such as accountants, interpreters, scientists, etc." Rosa da Costa. June 2006. *Rights of Refugees in the Context of Integration: Legal Standards and Recommendations*. Legal and Protection Policy Research Series. (Geneva: UNHCR). Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/44bb90882.pdf>
- ²⁴ UNHCR. 1951. *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. Retrieved from <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>
- ²⁵ Ibid.
- ²⁶ Ibid.
- ²⁷ UNESCO and the Council of Europe. 1997. *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, 1997*. Retrieved from http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13522&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html and <http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/165>
- ²⁸ CICIC. 2012. *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-\(QAF\)/index.canada](https://www.cicic.ca/1504/Consult-the-Pan-Canadian-Quality-Assurance-Framework-for-the-Assessment-of-International-Academic-Credentials-(QAF)/index.canada)

- ²⁹ The LRCC, which is made up of members of each Party to the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), meets every three years to oversee the implementation of the LRC. The LRCC conducts surveys of members and approves recommendations related to the recognition of qualifications (known as subsidiary texts). The 2016 LRCC *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention – Final Report* is available at: <http://www.enic-naric.net/the-lisbon-recognition-convention-97.aspx>
- ³⁰ Engineers Canada. February 2016. *Facilitating the integration of convention refugees*. Retrieved from <https://engineerscanada.ca/facilitating-integration-convention-refugees>
- ³¹ Bryce Loo. May 2016. *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Credential Assessment*. WES Research. Retrieved from <http://knowledge.wes.org/WES-Research-Report-Recognizing-Refugee-Credentials.html> and <https://www.wes.org/ca/partners/refugee-pilot-project/>
- ³² International Credential Evaluation Service. (1999). *Report: Seminar on Recognition of Refugee Qualifications*. Retrieved from <http://cicic.ca/docs/en/refugee.en.pdf>
- ³³ Brenna Baggs. October, 2016. “Refugees are a strength for Canada, not a threat, York symposium told” in *University Affairs*. Retrieved from <http://www.universityaffairs.ca/news/news-article/refugees-strength-canada-not-threat-york-symposium-told/>
- ³⁴ Government of Canada. October 12, 2016. *Federal provincial territorial forum of Ministers responsible for Immigration meet to discuss future immigration planning*. News Release. Retrieved from <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/news/2016/10/federal-provincial-territorial-forum-ministers-responsible-immigration-meet-discuss-future-immigration-planning.html>
- ³⁵ International Credential Evaluation Service. (1999). *Report: Seminar on Recognition of Refugee Qualifications*. Retrieved from <http://cicic.ca/docs/en/refugee.en.pdf>
- ³⁶ Engineers Canada. February 2016. *Facilitating the integration of convention refugees*. Retrieved from <https://engineerscanada.ca/facilitating-integration-convention-refugees>
- ³⁷ CICIC’s QAF and WES’s *Best Practices: Strategies and Processes to Obtain Authentic International Educational Credentials* cited previously are two examples that support the use of official documents where possible.
- ³⁸ The end user may be an employer, an educational institution, or a professional regulatory authority.
- ³⁹ APPENDIX I – *Workshop Agenda and Participants*.
- ⁴⁰ Bryce Loo. May 2016. *Recognizing Refugee Qualifications: Practical Tips for Credential Assessment*. WES Research. Retrieved from <http://knowledge.wes.org/WES-Research-Report-Recognizing-Refugee-Credentials.html> and <https://www.wes.org/ca/partners/refugee-pilot-project/>
- ⁴¹ EAR Consortium. 2012. *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual*. Retrieved from <http://ear.enic-naric.net/emanual/>; and EAR-HEI Consortium. Second edition in 2016. *European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions (EAR-HEI)*. Retrieved from <http://www.enic-naric.net/ear-manual-standards-and-guidelines-on-recognition.aspx>
- ⁴² International Credential Evaluation Service. (1999). *Report: Seminar on Recognition of Refugee Qualifications*. Retrieved from <http://cicic.ca/docs/en/refugee.en.pdf>; and Erwin Malfroy. (1999). Council of Europe Seminar on the Recognition of Refugee Qualifications. Background paper. Retrieved from http://www.aic.lv/ace/WP/Refugees/back_pap.htm; and “Guidelines for the recognition of refugee’s qualifications.” Retrieved from http://www.aic.lv/ace/WP/Refugees/guid_ref.htm



ENDNOTES (cont'd)

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- 44 https://www.nfb.ca/film/19_days/
- 45 <http://ccrweb.ca/en/library>
- 46 <http://knowledge.wes.org/WES-Research-Report-Recognizing-Refugee-Credentials.html>
- 47 <http://ear.enic-naric.net/manual/>
- 48 <http://www.enic-naric.net/ear-manual-standards-and-guidelines-on-recognition.aspx>
- 49 <http://www.enic-naric.net/recognise-qualifications-held-by-refugees.aspx>
- 50 http://www.aic.lv/ace/WP/Refugees/back_pap.htm
- 51 http://www.aic.lv/ace/WP/Refugees/guid_ref.htm
- 52 <http://knowledge.wes.org/WES-Research-Report-Recognizing-Refugee-Credentials.html>
- 53 <http://www.nokut.no/en/Foreign-education/NOKUTs-general-recognition/Recognition-Procedure-for-Persons-without-Verifiable-Documentation/>
- 54 <http://capla.ca/rpl-qa-manual/>
- 55 <http://capla.ca/assessing-the-skills-and-competencies-of-internationally-trained-immigrants-a-manual-for-regulatory-bodies-employers-and-other-stakeholders-2/>
- 56 http://www.nokut.no/Documents/NOKUT/Artikkelbibliotek/Kunnskapsbasen/Rapporter/UA/2016/Malgina_Marina_Skjerven_Stig_Arne_NOKUTs_Qualifications_Passport_for_Refugees_1-2016.pdf
- 57 <http://www.coe.int/en/web/education/recognition-of-refugees-qualifications>



Connecting the dots between mobility and credential recognition

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Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees

WORKSHOP

November 24–25, 2016



Canadian Information Centre
for International Credentials



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INTRODUCTION

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP

Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees is a practical workshop for academic credential assessors and recognition experts from regulatory bodies, postsecondary institutions, and academic credential assessment services. The objective of the workshop is to assist refugees to enter the labour market and access further education by building knowledge in the assessment community of alternative approaches to credential assessment and recognition for refugees and persons in refugee-like situations. The workshop is organized by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC).

ABOUT THE CANADIAN INFORMATION CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) was established in 1990 to provide one portal for individuals, organizations, and governments to obtain information on the process for recognizing academic credentials for work and study purposes in Canada and abroad and to fulfill Canada's obligations under UNESCO recognition conventions. Because credential assessment is largely the responsibility of postsecondary institutions, regulatory bodies, and academic credential assessment services, CICIC also provides some support in the form of tools and resources to the broad range of credential assessors in these organizations. This workshop builds on CICIC's history of supporting capacity building for this sector and developing best practices and guidelines, such as the [Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials](#).

CICIC is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). CMEC is an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education. CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. All 13 provinces and territories are members.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CICIC wishes to thank the Workshop Advisory Committee members:

- **André Gariépy**, Office des professions du Québec, Commissaire aux plaintes
- **Kam Holland**, Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Georgian College
- **Jan Sheppard Kutcher**, Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education
- **Marina Malgina**, Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), ENIC-NARIC Norway
- **Iona Mitchell**, Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)
- **Tim Owen**, World Education Services (WES), Canada

FUNDING ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This workshop was financed by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program.





AGENDA AT A GLANCE

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2016

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Breakfast and registration
9:00 – 9:20 a.m.	Welcome and opening remarks
9:20 – 10:30 a.m.	Opening panel – Understanding challenges faced by refugees
10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	Health break
10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Country modules: Understanding challenges in specific countries – Syria and Iraq
12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Country modules: Understanding challenges in specific countries – Afghanistan
2:00 – 2:45 p.m.	International perspectives – Part I – Germany
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.	Health break
3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	International perspectives – Part II – Norway and the Netherlands
4:30 – 4:45 p.m.	Wrap-up
5:00 – 6:30 p.m.	Reception for all participants

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 25, 2016

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Breakfast
8:30 – 10:15 a.m.	Practical approaches to assessing credentials from refugees – Part I – Postsecondary institutions and prior learning assessment and recognition
10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	Health break
10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Practical approaches to assessing credentials from refugees – Part II – Regulators and credential assessment services
12:15 – 1:15 p.m.	Lunch
1:15 – 2:15 p.m.	Facilitated breakout groups – Part I
2:15 – 2:45 p.m.	Report-back and discussion
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.	Health break
3:00 – 3:45 p.m.	Facilitated breakout groups – Part II
3:45 – 4:15 p.m.	Report-back and discussion
4:15 – 4:30 p.m.	Concluding remarks

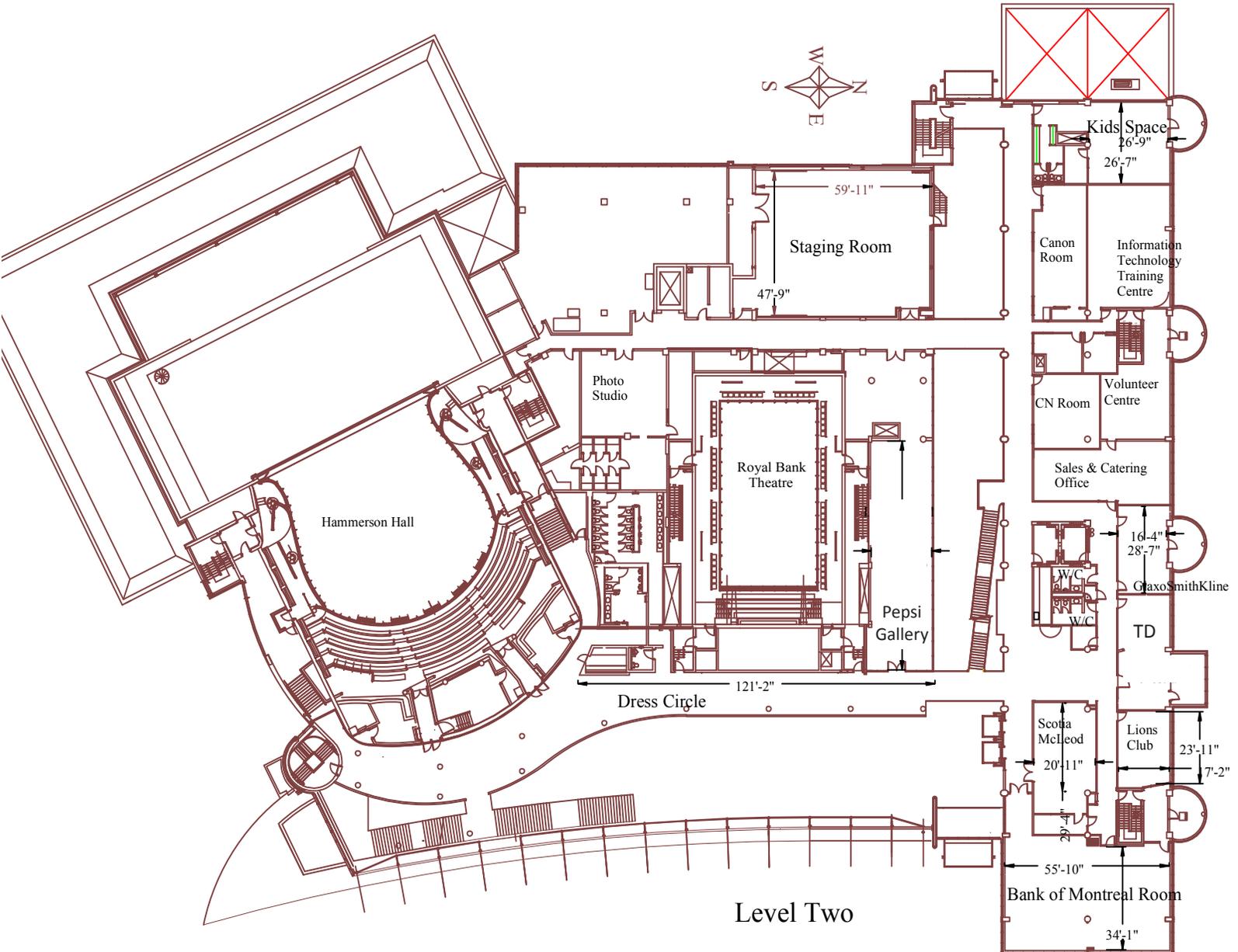


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AGENDA

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2016

8:00 – 9:00 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Breakfast and registration
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9:00 – 9:20 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Welcome and opening remarks
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SPEAKER

- **Philippe Massé**, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)

9:20 – 10:30 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Opening panel – Understanding challenges faced by refugees
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This session will provide an overview of the approaches that organizations have taken to facilitate the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and the challenges refugees face with respect to qualifications recognition.

CHAIR

- **Jonathan Wells**, ESDC

SPEAKERS

- **Natasha Sawh**, Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)
- **André Gariépy**, Office des professions du Québec, Commissaire aux plaintes

10:30 – 10:45 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Health break
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10:45 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Country modules: Understanding challenges in specific countries – Syria and Iraq
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This session will provide an overview of documentation challenges, quality assurance and accreditation practices, as well as the impacts of war on the education, and quality-assurance systems in Syria and Iraq.

CHAIR

- **Michael Rohaly**, International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)

SPEAKER

- **Sulaf Al-Shaikhly**, World Education Services (WES), United States

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.	Staging Room	Lunch
1:00 – 2:00 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	<p>Country modules: Understanding challenges in specific countries – Afghanistan</p> <p>This session will present research commissioned by the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) in early 2015. Its purpose was to assess the documentation challenges, quality assurance, accreditation practices, as well as the impacts of war on the education and quality-assurance systems in Afghanistan.</p> <p>CHAIR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sarah Ledwidge, International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) <p>SPEAKERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keith Johnson, Consultant • Tabasom Eftekari, Consultant
2:00 – 2:45 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	<p>International perspectives – Part I – Germany</p> <p>This session will present on the approaches taken in Germany to address the documentation issues refugees face. This includes the resolution of the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs on the procedures for admitting refugee students without access to their documentation, and the guidance they have developed for higher education institutions.</p> <p>CHAIR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Staples, ESDC <p>SPEAKER</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heba Ledwon, Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK), ENIC-NARIC Germany
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Health break





AGENDA (cont'd)

THURSDAY NOVEMBER 24, 2016 (cont'd)

3:00 – 4:30 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	International perspectives – Part II – Norway and the Netherlands This session will provide information on alternative approaches to assessing refugee qualifications in Norway and the Netherlands. It will provide information on Norway's intensive interview-based procedure for full recognition of academic programs completed by refugees, the Netherlands' experience with developing alternative assessment practices, and the European Qualifications Passport. CHAIR <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Jeff Stull, International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS) SPEAKERS <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Marina Malgina, Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), ENIC-NARIC Norway• Samer Alzaidy, EP-Nuffic, ENIC-NARIC Netherlands
4:30 – 4:45 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Wrap-up
5:00 – 6:30 p.m.	Pepsi Gallery	Reception for all participants

Hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar will be provided.

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 25, 2016

7:30 – 8:30 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Breakfast
8:30 – 10:15 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Practical approaches to assessing credentials from refugees – Part I – Postsecondary institutions and prior learning assessment and recognition

This panel will discuss practical and alternative approaches that their organizations have used in a wide range of cases, including missing documents, documents for which source verification is not possible, and piecing together a patchwork of evidence.

CHAIR

- **Michael Ringuette**, CICIC

SPEAKERS

- **Bonnie Kennedy**, Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)
- **Michelle Manks**, World University Service of Canada (WUSC)
- **Patsy MacDonald**, Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)
- **Yolaine Martineau**, Université de Montréal

10:15 – 10:30 a.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Health break
10:30 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Practical approaches to assessing credentials from refugees – Part II – Regulators and credential assessment services

This panel will discuss practical and alternative approaches that their organizations have used in a wide range of cases, including missing documents, documents for which source verification is not possible, and piecing together a patchwork of evidence.

CHAIR

- **Nuzhat Jafri**, Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner

SPEAKERS

- **Beka Tavartkiladze**, World Education Services (WES), Canada
- **Mark Rigolo**, Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC)
- **Iona Mitchell**, Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)
- **Karen Sigouin**, College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS)





AGENDA (cont'd)

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 25, 2016 (cont'd)

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.	Staging Room	Lunch CHAIR <ul style="list-style-type: none">Chantal C. Beaulieu, Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) SPEAKER <ul style="list-style-type: none">Omar Alghabra, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and MP, Mississauga Centre
1:15 – 2:15 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Facilitated breakout groups – Part I Participants will be divided into five groups (professional regulatory bodies – health; professional regulatory bodies – non-health and trades; universities; colleges and institutes; academic credential assessment services) to develop sector-specific recommended best practices and practical approaches.
	GlaxoSmithKline Room	
	TD Room	FACILITATORS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Professional regulatory bodies – health – Kevin Taylor, College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO)Professional regulatory bodies – non-health and trades – Iona Mitchell, OCTUniversities – Carina Brongers, University of British Columbia (UBC)Colleges and institutes – Kam Holland, Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Georgian CollegeAcademic credential assessment services – Philippe Legendre, Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec (MIDI)
2:15 – 2:45 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Report-back and discussion
2:45 – 3:00 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Health break

3:00 – 3:45 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Facilitated breakout groups – Part II
	GlaxoSmithKline Room	<p>These breakout groups, with representatives from each sector, will each be given some of the recommendations from Part I to determine which recommendations are relevant to all sectors and which should remain sector-specific. This will be the basis for the best-practices/guidelines document that will be developed from the workshop’s discussions.</p> <p>FACILITATORS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group 1 – Philippe Legendre, MIDI • Group 2 – Iona Mitchell, OCT • Group 3 – Kevin Taylor, CRTO • Group 4 – Kam Holland, ARUCC and Georgian College • Group 5 – Carina Brongers, UBC • Group 6 – Andrew Staples, ESDC • Group 7 – Jonathan Wells, ESDC • Group 8 – Michael Ringuette, CICIC
	TD Room	
3:45 – 4:15 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Report-back and discussion
4:15 – 4:30 p.m.	Bank of Montreal Room	Concluding remarks

SPEAKER

- **Natasha Sawh**, CICIC





PARTICIPANTS

Postsecondary institutions

Association of Registrars of Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) and Georgian College	Kam Holland
Brandon University	Andrea McDaniel
British Columbia Institute of Technology (BCIT)	Amanda Hill
Carleton University	Robert Finlayson
Centennial College of Applied Arts and Technology	Nancy Gao
Concordia University	Sandra Robinson
HEC Montréal	Marie-Eve Porlier
McGill University	Frank Babics
McGill University	Vanessa Carrillo
Memorial University of Newfoundland	Meghan Collett
Michener Institute for Applied Health Sciences, University Health Network (UHN)	Karyn Roscoe
Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU)	Heather Standing
Norquest College	Jane Ogbonna
Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT)	Robin Petrukovich
Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC)	Patsy MacDonald
OCAD University	Josh Paglione
Red River College	Hannah Gifford
Saskatchewan Polytechnic	Sherry Buller
Service régional d'admission du Montréal métropolitain (SRAM)	Natacha Joseph
Sheridan College Institute of Technology and Advanced Learning	Novel Sanchez
Thompson Rivers University	Marjorie Budnikas
Université de Moncton	Stéphanie Wheaton
Université de Montréal	Yolaine Martineau
Université Laval	Myriam Leclerc
University College of the North (UCN)	Michael Munro
University of Alberta	Thinh Nguyen
University of British Columbia (UBC)	Carina Brongers
University of Calgary	Jenny Cueto
University of Guelph	Janette Hogan
University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT)	Beth LeBlanc
University of Saskatchewan	Abumere Okonofua
University of Toronto	Andrea Armstrong
University of Waterloo	Julie Pocock
The University of Winnipeg	Colin Russell

Professional regulatory bodies and apprenticeship authorities

Alberta Education, Teaching and Leadership Excellence	Mieun Kwak
Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of Alberta (APEGA)	Amit Banerjee
Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia (APEGBC)	Mark Rigolo
Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (CAPR)	Rebecca Chamula
Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB)	Mourad Mohand-Said
Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT)	Giulia Nastase
Canadian Association of Social Workers (CASW)	Fred Phelps
CGFNS International	Mary-Anne Robinson
Chartered Professional Accountants (CPA) Ontario	Pankita Patel
College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario (CASLPO)	Colleen Myrie
College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Nova Scotia (CLPNNS)	Karen Sigouin
College of Massage Therapists of British Columbia (CMTBC)	Annette Ruitenbeek
College of Occupational Therapists of Ontario (COTO)	Elinor Larney
College of Respiratory Therapists of Ontario (CRTO)	Kevin Taylor
College of Veterinarians of Ontario (CVO)	Jan Robinson
Engineers Nova Scotia	Rosalie Hanlon
National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS)	Raquelle Forrester
Newfoundland and Labrador Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Teacher Certification	Lori Chafe
Nova Scotia Apprenticeship Agency	Crystal MacArthur
Ontario College of Early Childhood Educators (CECE)	Kimberly Cummings
Ontario College of Teachers (OCT)	Iona Mitchell
Ontario College of Trades	Mawlika Siva
Ordre des ergothérapeutes du Québec (OEQ)	Guylaine Dufour
Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada (PEBC)	Mahmoud Suleiman
Prince Edward Island Department of Education, Early Learning and Culture	Doreen Gillis
Saskatchewan Apprenticeship and Trade Certification Commission (SATCC)	Loreena Spilsted
Saskatchewan College of Psychologists (SKCP) and Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations (ACPRO)	Karen Messer-Engel





PARTICIPANTS (cont'd)

Academic credential assessment services

Comparative Education Service (CES)	Jean (Ye Jin) Yoo
Comparative Education Service (CES)	Monica Chong
International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS)	Sarah Ledwidge
International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS)	Sean Sweeney
International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)	Michael Rohaly
International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)	Jeff Stull
International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)	Jolanta Slaska
Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec (MIDI)	Philippe Legendre
World Education Services (WES), Canada	Beka Tavartkiladze
World Education Services (WES), Canada	Kevin Kamal

Government departments and agencies

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)	Jonathan Wells
Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)	Philippe Massé
Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC)	Andrew Staples
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	Dominique Mills-Clist
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC)	Roshni D'Souza
Manitoba Department of Education and Training	Youn-Young Park
Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education	Cara Spittal
Office des professions du Québec, Commissaire aux plaintes	André Gariépy
Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner	Nuzhat Jafri
Prince Edward Island Department of Workforce and Advanced Learning	Sarah-Jayne McKenna

Additional invited speakers

Sulaf Al-Shaikhly	World Education Services (WES), United States
Samer Alzaidy	EP-Nuffic, ENIC-NARIC Netherlands
Tabasom Eftekari	Consultant
Keith Johnson	Consultant
Bonnie Kennedy	Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)
Heba Ledwon	Kultusministerkonferenz (KMK), ENIC-NARIC Germany
Marina Malgina	Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT), ENIC-NARIC Norway
Michelle Manks	World University Service of Canada (WUSC)

CMEC Secretariat

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Natasha Sawh	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)
Michael Ringuette	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)
Noelline Ip Yam	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)





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Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees

PRACTICAL WORKSHEET

Developing Organizational Policies
for Assessing the Qualifications of
Refugees



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INTRODUCTION

The practical worksheet is intended to support organizations that are thinking of developing new policies or refining existing policies to assess the qualifications of refugees and those without verifiable documentation. It is a companion to the 13 recommended best practices and guidelines outlined in *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees – Best Practices and Guidelines – Final Report*.

Eleven considerations, and multiple associated questions, can assist in determining how an alternative procedure for assessing qualifications may be implemented within assessment services and recognition bodies.

Initial considerations consist of:

- I. eligibility for the process;
- II. alternative documents accepted.

Additional considerations that may also be examined consist of:

- III. organizational responsibilities;
- IV. communication to applicants;
- V. fees;
- VI. existing evidence/precedents;
- VII. partial studies;
- VIII. previous studies;
- IX. interviews;
- X. competency-based assessment (for organizations that do not have one for their regular assessment procedures);
- XI. status of the assessment/evaluation report/recognition decision.

This practical worksheet builds on the discussions and presentations that took place at CICIC's November 2016 workshop, *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees*. It also builds on a pre-conference workshop organized by CICIC at the September 2016 Annual Conference of the Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals (TAICEP).

CICIC also wishes to recognize the contribution of the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) to the development of this practical worksheet through the sharing of their organization's internal worksheet used for alternative documentation.

INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS



I – Eligibility for the process

- Will the alternative pathway be available:
 - o only to refugees?
 - o only to those from certain countries?
 - o only to those who begin and cannot complete the regular process?
 - o to those who request and document the reasons for which it is needed? or
 - o to anyone who requests and completes it?
- Is the process available to those who have:
 - o no documentary evidence (aside from sworn affidavits)?
 - o partial documentary evidence (e.g., student-issued transcript, professional membership card, statement of professional standing, student ID card, copy of degree certificate)?
 - o documentary evidence (originals or copies) that cannot be verified with the institution?

II – Alternative documents accepted

- Which of the following alternative forms of documentary evidence will be accepted? Which ones are required?
 - o background paper/CV from the applicant — will it have to include:
 - the chronology of studies and work?
 - more specific items listed below under “sworn affidavit by applicant”?
 - o sworn affidavit by applicant — will it have to include:
 - the name, location, and date of birth?
 - the reasons why the applicant cannot use the “regular” process?
 - a description of attempts made to obtain documents?
 - the name and dates of the institution/program attended?
 - the name of the academic credential granted and the date granted?
 - titles, grades, course hours (credits), or other information normally included on a transcript? For all courses, or only for specific ones?
 - other information required (e.g., statements of professional standing), particularly when a credential is required to enter the profession in the issuing country?
 - o sworn affidavit by another individual:
 - is this individual:
 - a non-family member?
 - an official at the institution attended?
 - a student at the institution attended?
 - a previous employer?
 - other?



INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS (cont'd)

- what information has to be included (see above for more specific items listed under “sworn affidavit by applicant”)?
- will affidavits from different individuals be treated differently (e.g., will an affidavit from an official be given more weight than an affidavit from a student)?

ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS



III – Organizational responsibilities

- Who is responsible for:
 - developing the organization’s policies and practices?
 - approving these?
 - the process, once initiated?
 - signing off on alternative documents/approaches accepted in individual cases? On the overall assessment/report/outcome?
 - reviewing the policies from time to time (e.g., following up with applicants in a few years to determine whether the process worked as intended)?

IV – Communication to applicants

- Is the information on the alternative approach publicly accessible?
- Is it available in multiple languages?
- Can a potential applicant contact our organization to understand the process and ask questions?
- What tools will be used to communicate the steps in the process, the potential outcomes, the timelines, and other relevant information (e.g., Web site, social media, video, brochure, phone call, face-to-face orientation session)?

V – Fees

- Are the fees clearly communicated?
- Is it possible to:
 - waive (or reduce) the fees? or
 - charge them only to “successful” applicants who complete the process and receive partial or full recognition?

VI – Existing evidence/precedents

- Has our organization assessed academic credentials from this institution in the past?
- Can sample documents issued by this institution be obtained from other organizations that assess academic credentials for comparison purposes?



ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS (cont'd)

VII – Partial studies

- Will our organization accept partial studies?
- Will students with partial studies be given transfer credit?

VIII – Previous studies

- Will previous studies be assumed to be completed? For example, if the student completed:
 - o a master's program, is it assumed that he or she also holds a bachelor's degree? or
 - o year 3 of a program, is it assumed that he or she completed years 1 and 2 and followed the regular program?

IX – Interviews

- When in the process will interviews/face-to-face dialogue be used?
- Will these types of procedures be used to develop the background paper/chronology or to assess competencies?

X – Competency-based assessment (for organizations that do not have one for their regular assessment procedures)

- When (if at all) will a competency-based assessment be used?
- How will this complement an alternative documentation approach?
- Who will be involved in developing and administering the competency-based assessment?

XI – Status of the assessment/evaluation report/recognition decision

- Will the result of this assessment hold the same weight as that of a “regular” assessment?
- Will there be a notation about the types of evidence used in the assessment report?





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