

CONSTRUCTION
SECTOR COUNCIL



CONSEIL SECTORIEL
DE LA CONSTRUCTION

FOREIGN CREDENTIAL RECOGNITION:
HOW IT WORKS OUTSIDE OF CANADA

*An international
comparison of
the FCR process*

Foreign Credential Recognition: How It Works Outside of Canada

An international comparison of the FCR process

The Construction Sector Council (CSC) is a national organization committed to the development of a highly skilled workforce – one that will support the current and future needs of the construction industry in Canada.

Created in April 2001, and financed by both government and industry, the CSC is a partnership between labour and business. The CSC is governed by a Board of Directors who represent a variety of interests within the construction industry. At the heart of the CSC's mandate is the need to address human resource issues through partnerships within the construction industry.

Like many industries, the construction industry faces a number of human resource challenges. These include the need to accurately forecast labour demand and supply, to increase the mobility of workers, to make the most of new technologies, and to cope with an aging workforce. As a result, the CSC has identified four key priorities:

- Labour Market Information
- Technology at Work
- Career Awareness Programs
- Standards and Skills Development

This study is part of the CSC's Labour Market Information activities.

This report is also available in French, and it is available electronically at www.csc-ca.org.



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Halifax, Nova Scotia

Fall 2006

Funding for this project was provided by the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program.

The opinion and interpretations in this publication are those of the Construction Sector Council and do not necessarily reflect those of the Government of Canada.

Canada

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This report documents existing approaches and innovative ways that foreign credentials are currently being assessed and recognized. The Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) research focuses on five jurisdictions, namely:

- United States
- European Union
- United Kingdom
- New Zealand
- Australia

The research also describes the FCR efforts of select organizations within Canada.

The foreign credential and recognition process involves the assessment and recognition of academic credentials, language skills, and/or occupational competencies. The report also presents observations drawn from the research on a number of interesting questions:

- What is the role of educational institutions, regulatory bodies, and the private sector?
- Are national bodies responsible for the recognition of foreign degrees, professional accreditation, and licensing?
- Do professional associations have the necessary information on both education systems abroad and work experience equivalencies?
- Do educational and occupational standards vary by area and occupational characteristics of the labour market?
- Are there differences between regulated and unregulated occupations?
- Are there differences between the recognition and assessment of formal versus informal credentials?
- Is competency in language assessed?
- Is the foreign credential assessment recognized by employers?
- What is the link between credentials and skills/competencies?
- Are there standardized assessment processes?
- Do prospective immigrants have their credentials recognized before immigration?
- Does the private sector help establish competencies and credential standards for internationally trained workforce candidates?

The United States is recognized as a dominant player in the global market for skilled immigrants. The recent Comprehensive Immigration Reform Bill 2006 proposes a number of significant changes to the immigration measures, including an expansion in the level of employment-related immigration. In particular, the bill proposes an increase in the cap on employment-based visas from 140,000 to 450,000 and on high skilled temporary work visas from 65,000 to 115,000 (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 2006, p.207).

There are five types of permanent employment visas, namely:

- EB1 – Priority workers have an outstanding or extraordinary ability in the arts, science, commerce, academia, etc.;
- EB2 – Professionals with advanced degrees or persons with exceptional ability;
- EB3 – Skilled workers with at least two years of specialized training or experience in the skill, professionals with a bachelor's degree, and unskilled workers with less than two years experience for which qualified workers are not available in the United States;
- EB4 – Special immigrants including religious workers and current and former employees of U.S. government agencies; and
- EB5 – Immigrant investors with a minimum level of capital.

The immigration process requires employers to sponsor an immigration petition to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) and submit a Labour Certification Application to the Department of

Labour. The petition application requires differing levels of evidence depending on the type of visa. For instance, U.S. employers for EB3 skilled workers must provide evidence of at least two years of related training or experience. Employers of EB3 professionals are to provide evidence of a U.S. baccalaureate degree or equivalent degree and evidence that such a degree is required for entry into the occupation.

The U.S. federal government does not assess foreign credentials. The government may, in some cases, require an evaluation from a competent authority such as an independent foreign credential evaluation service. The competent authority for regulated occupations is the licensing authority at the state or local level. In the case of unregulated occupations, the recognition of credentials is the responsibility of the hiring employer. The National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials (NCEFE) determines the standards to assist credential evaluators in assessing the equivalence of foreign qualifications.

The U.S. Department of Labour has identified occupations for which *“there are not sufficient U.S. workers who are able, willing, qualified and available and the employment of aliens in such occupations will not adversely affect the wages and working conditions of U.S. workers similarly employed”* (U.S. Department of Labour, Employment & Training Administration, <http://workforcesecurity.doleta.gov/foreign/perm.asp>). These occupations are:

- Physical Therapists;
- Professional Nurses; and
- Aliens of exceptional ability in the sciences, arts, and performing arts.



The following describes an advanced approach to assessing and recognizing the foreign credentials of nurses.

Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS)

The CGFNS “is a not-for-profit, immigration-neutral, internationally-recognized authority on the education, registration and licensure of nurses and other healthcare professionals worldwide” (Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools 2005, p.1). The CGFNS was established in the late 1970s to ensure that foreign-trained nurses meet licensure requirements in the United States. Since then, the commission has analyzed the credentials of about 500,000 healthcare professionals from six countries.

The CGFNS has developed a Certification Program (CP) Certificate specifically designed for first-level general nurses¹ educated and/or licensed outside the United States. In a majority of U.S. states, the CP Certificate is a prerequisite to the national licensure examination, NCLEX-RN®, for practicing nurses.

The Certification Program² consists of a credentials review, a qualifying examination, and an English language proficiency examination.

The credentials review certifies that an applicant is a first-level general nurse by evaluating the applicant’s

education and licensure in terms of United States standards. To meet the educational requirements, applicants need to have completed a secondary school education, separate from nursing education, and graduated from a government-approved, general nursing program of at least two years.

The qualifying exam³ tests the nursing knowledge of foreign-trained nurses. To be eligible, applicants must have completed a prescribed number of hours of classroom instruction and clinical practice in four areas of nursing. The one-day qualifying exam is offered four times a year in 55 test locations around the world and thereby allows applicants, before travelling to the United States, to gauge whether they will pass the national licensure exam.

The applicant has the option of taking one of four English language proficiency examinations.⁴ Applicants are exempt from taking the exam if they meet certain criteria. The exams measure listening, comprehension, structure and written expression and reading comprehension. The scores are valid up to two years from the date of administration.

The CGFNS also administers several other programs and services, including a Credential Evaluation Service (CES) for international healthcare professionals, VisaScreen™: Visa Credentials Assessment Program, and a Credential Verification Service for New York state (CVS).

¹ The term “first-level general” nurse is as defined historically by the International Council of Nurses. In most countries, first-level nurses are registered or professional nurses and second level nurses include nurse assistants and enrolled, vocational, or practical nurses. A general nurse studied theory and had clinical practice in a variety of nursing areas.

² Effective May 1, 2006, the fees for the Credential Program are \$US 368 for new applicants and \$US 308 for re-applicants.

³ The paper and pencil examination includes multiple-choice questions and questions with determinant answers.

⁴ The exams include (1) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL); (2) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) iBT (Internet-Based Testing); (3) Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC); and (4) International English Language Testing System (IELTS).

“The Centre will serve as an international resource for the development, promotion, and dissemination of research, policy, and information on nurse migration”

The CES analyzes the credentials of healthcare professionals (except physicians) educated and licensed outside the United States. The service is a prerequisite for state licensure of foreign registered nurses and licensed practical nurses in certain U.S. states and territories. The CGFNS offers two reports:

- The Healthcare Profession Report describes the foreign education and licensure in terms of similar U.S. professions; and
- The Full Education Course-by-Course Report lists every course and provides comparable U.S. credit hours and grades for each course.

The International Commission on Healthcare Professions (IHP), a division of CGFNS, administers the VisaScreen™. Visa Credentials Assessment Program. The program is for internationally-born healthcare professionals⁵ who are interested in seeking an occupational visa to work in the United States.

VisaScreen™ is a U.S. federal government approved certification program and is required for the healthcare professions. The program consists of an education analysis, licensure validation, English language proficiency assessment, and in the case of registered nurses, an exam of nursing knowledge.

The International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. (ICD), another division of CGFNS, provides credentialing of international educational standards for any profession. The ICD is an approved credential evaluation agency for over 500 regulatory bodies in the United States.

The CGFNS has also launched the following services:

- CES Connect™ – online reporting that allows Boards of Nursing to access and print the completed Credentials Evaluation Services (CES) reports for applicants. The site was launched in March 2005 through 25 webcasts, incorporating live demonstrations, to state Boards of Nursing.
- Additional in-depth study aides that include practice exams of 125 questions (including rationales for correct and incorrect answers), information about nursing in the United States, and references for more study; and
- Audiotapes on “*Comprehensive English for Healthcare Professionals*” covering medical English, including idioms and slang.

As well, the CGFNS recently collaborated with the International Council of Nurses (ICN) to launch the International Centre on Nurse Migration. “*The Centre will serve as an international resource for the development, promotion, and dissemination of research, policy, and information on nurse migration*” (Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools 2005, p.5). The Centre’s website, www.intlnursemigration.org, is a portal for policy, research studies, and other information regarding migration trends and statistics.

⁵ Nurses, physical therapists, speech-language pathologists and audiologists, medical technologists, medical technicians, occupational therapists, and physician assistants.

The European Union⁶ member countries form a single market where EU-nationals can move freely from country to country. There are a number of initiatives in place to facilitate the mobility of skilled workers within the European Union. As well, there is a range of approaches for assessing and recognizing the credentials of third-country nationals.⁷

3.1. EU-NATIONALS

The Commission of European Communities has introduced three main instruments to support mobility of workers within the EU:

- Europass Portfolio;
- Portal on Learning Opportunities throughout the European Space (PLOTEUS); and
- European Qualifications Framework.

The European Commission is committed to worker mobility and has designated 2006 as the “*European Year for Workers’ Mobility (Towards a European Labour Market)*”.

The Europass Portfolio and European Qualifications Framework are of particular interest as they specifically address skill assessment and recognition.

Europass Portfolio

The European Commission launched the Europass in early 2005. The aim of the initiative “*is to increase the transparency of qualifications and skills, thereby promoting the mobility of workers and students throughout Europe*” (British Council 2006, p.13).

The Europass is a portfolio of five documents⁸ detailing an individual’s skills and competencies. The documents are described as follows:

- The Europass Curriculum Vitae (CV) is prepared by the individual and includes personal contact information in addition to details of work experience, education and training, personal skills, and competencies. Individuals are to describe and indicate where they acquired their social, organizational, technical, computer, artistic, and any other skills and competencies.
- The Europass Language Passport is a self-assessed document, identifying an individual’s language skills at a standard European Level. The assessment uses the six European Levels of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to record, in a standardized format, the level of language proficiency. The six European Levels (A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2) are for listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing.

⁶ The EU consists of 25 member states with a total population of over 450 million.

⁷ A non-EU citizen.

⁸ The Europass replaces preceding documents, i.e., the common European CV and the Europass-Training.

“The aim of the initiative is to increase the transparency of qualifications and skills, thereby promoting the mobility of workers and students throughout Europe”

- The Europass Mobility is a record of any organised period of time⁹ that an individual spends abroad for the purpose of learning or training. The document is completed by the two partner organizations,¹⁰ one in the country of origin and the second in the host country. The organizations describe the experience and the skills and competencies¹¹ acquired during the experience. The description of the experience includes its objective and duration, the name of the initiative during which the experience is completed, the qualification to which the education or training leads (if any), and the name of the community or mobility program. The description of the formal learning is based on the transcript of records per the European Credit Transfer System.
- The Europass Certificate Supplement records the skills, competencies, and qualifications gained through vocational training. The authority awarding the vocational qualification certificate completes and issues the Europass Certificate Supplement.
- The Europass Diploma Supplement¹² records the educational achievements at the higher educational level. It describes the nature, level, context, content, and status of the qualification. The supplement is issued to graduates of higher education institutions along with their degree or diploma.

A network of National Europass Centres (NECs) supports the Europass. NECs are located in each member country of the European Union. As well, a dedicated Europass Portal¹³ enables individuals to complete the Europass CV and the Europass Language Passport online.

The European Commission promotes the following benefits of the Europass Portfolio:

- *“Helps citizens to convey their qualifications and competencies in an effective way;*
- *Provides a comprehensive tool for users based on an accessible electronic format;*
- *Enables people with diverse backgrounds and experiences to gain access to opportunities for learning and employment throughout Europe, particularly by helping people to move between countries or across employment sectors;*
- *Promotes strong links between education and training, business and industry, ensuring the continuing relevance and adequate appreciation of competencies and qualifications; and*
- *Is an open system that supports European policy developments related to the transparency of competencies and qualifications”* (<http://www.europass.ie/europass/textonly/Publications/File,1149,en.pdf>).

⁹ This can include a work placement in a company, a semester in a university degree program, or other education and training experiences.

¹⁰ The partners may include universities, schools, training centres, companies, or NGOs.

¹¹ Includes job-related, language, computer, organizational, and social skills.

¹² The supplement was developed jointly with UNESCO and the Council of Europe.

¹³ CEDEFOP: The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training, <http://europass.cedefop.eu.int>

“ It is expected to make European general and adult education, vocational education and training systems more transparent and accessible and is, therefore, expected to enhance student and worker mobility.”

The European Commission will conduct an evaluation of the Europass and present the results to the European Parliament by January 1st, 2008 at the latest and every four years thereafter.

European Qualifications Framework

In June 1999, 29 Education Ministers signed the Bologna Declaration to reform the structures of the higher education systems. One of the objectives set out in the declaration was to create a system designed to facilitate and improve the international comparability and transparency of academic and professional qualifications.

In light of this objective, a European Qualifications Framework (EQF) has been designed to “function as a ‘translation device’ to make relationships between education and training qualifications of different national systems clearer. It is expected to make European general and adult education, vocational education and training systems more transparent and accessible and is, therefore, expected to enhance student and worker mobility.

The main element of the EQF is a set of eight reference levels describing learners’ knowledge, skills, and competencies at each level and ‘learning outcomes’, in essence what a learner knows, understands and is able to do. The EQF reference levels thus represent a shift from the traditional approach, which emphasizes learning inputs (length of a learning experience, type of institution).

Emphasis on comparing the ‘learning outcomes’ is expected to provide a better match between the needs of the labour market and education and

training provisions and to facilitate the validation of non-formal and informal learning” (EU News, Policy Positions & EU Actors 2006).

In July 2005, the European Commission published a working document entitled *Towards a European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning* and launched a Europe-wide stakeholder consultation. The Commission of the European Communities report (May 9, 2006, p.15) recommends that member states:

- *“Use the European Qualifications Framework as a reference tool to compare the levels of different qualifications systems within a lifelong learning perspective;*
- *Relate their national qualification system to the European Qualifications Framework by 2009;*
- *Ensure that, by 2011, all new qualifications and “Europass” documents issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level;*
- *Use an approach based on learning outcomes when defining and describing qualifications, and promote the validation of non-formal and informal learning; and*
- *Designate a national centre to support and coordinate the relationship between the national qualifications system and the European Qualifications Framework.”*

In September 2006, the Commission released a final report recommending the establishment of the framework.

3.2. THIRD-COUNTRY NATIONALS

At present, EU member states are faced with the challenge of developing and adopting a harmonized framework for the immigration of third-country nationals. Since 1999, the European Commission has put forward several directives towards the development of a Common Immigration Policy.

The Commission recently identified action steps to strengthen the implementation of nine Common Basic Principles (CBP) for integration. The third CBP is *“employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible”* (Commission of the European Communities September 2005, p.16). To address this principle, the European Commission identified the continuing need to explore additional ways of recognizing newcomers’ qualifications, training and/or professional experience, while respecting minimum training requirements established by the relevant EU directives.

A recent report on migration and integration states that the *“growing number of third-country nationals... requires new approaches to integration, going*

beyond the integration of minorities and refugees, which has been the main focus until recently” (Commission of the European Communities June 2006, p.4).

In some member countries, there are requirements for the completion of a language test and other introduction programs. In Germany, third-country nationals with a residence permit, except highly-qualified individuals, are required to participate in an integration course if they are unable to communicate in German. In the Netherlands, immigrants coming for reasons of family reunification, as well as refugees, will soon be required to meet standards concerning language before allowed entry. This requirement will hold for labour migrants who entered the country for a non-permanent goal, but have stayed more than three years. The government in France is planning to require migrants to commit to a *“reception and integration contract”* and migrants will receive tuition for French language courses.

As well, some countries have procedures to enable third-country nationals to obtain recognition of their credentials acquired outside the EU. The following table summarizes several initiatives currently in place to recognize the skills and educational attainments of migrants.

“employment is a key part of the integration process and is central to the participation of immigrants, to the contributions immigrants make to the host society, and to making such contributions visible”



TABLE 1: ASSESSMENT AND RECOGNITION OF ACADEMIC AND PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS, EU COUNTRIES

Denmark	Five regional knowledge centres clarify the competencies of refugees and immigrants.
Finland	National Board of Education issues advisory statements on foreign qualifications that can be useful when seeking employment.
Germany	The National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC) provides advice regarding recognition of foreign credentials for all purposes to all relevant German authorities. The NARIC assures that equal criteria are applied for the recognition of foreign academic and professional credentials across Germany.
Ireland	The National Qualifications Authority facilitates the recognition of international qualifications.
Italy	A 1999 decree foresees that third-country nationals residing in Italy or abroad are allowed to ask on the basis of the yearly fixed quotas for the recognition of their professional skills achieved in a third country.
Netherlands	The government has established a system of accreditation of prior learning to promote the application of recognition, assessment, and accreditation of competencies. The initiative is supported by the social partners and educational organizations.
Sweden	The government introduced a new labour market program called 'skill assessment in the workplace' designed to assess foreign credentials, individual skills and work experience. Immigrants with skills from abroad are offered a three-week apprenticeship with their profession to demonstrate their skills on the job. At the end of the three weeks, the individual receives a skills verification certificate from the workplace.

The government of the United Kingdom recently issued a five-year strategy document (Secretary of State for the Home Department 2005) outlining the future direction of its migration and integration policies. The key elements of the strategy are:

- *“Development of a new transparent points system to bring together and streamline the assessment of work and student entry under four tiers; and*
- *Establish a new advisory body on skills shortages to promote a more flexible system that is responsive to the labour market.”*

The current system of labour migration involves four streams:

1. The Worker Permit Scheme is the most established labour migration route. Permits are issued for up to five years. The government compiles a list of occupations (Skills Shortage List¹⁴) for which there is a serious shortage of suitable people in the UK. In cases where the occupation is not on the list, employers are required to demonstrate the lack of suitable UK residents or EU workers to fill the position.
2. Introduced in 2002, the Highly Skilled Migration Programme (HSMP) targets elite professionals and uses a points-based system with an emphasis on education, work experience, and past earnings. The program allows highly skilled migrants to enter the UK without an offer of employment and without an employer sponsor.
3. Other labour migration programs include the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Scheme, the Sector Based Scheme (food manufacturing and

hospitality sectors), the Working Holiday Makers Scheme, and the International Students Scheme.

4. European Union citizens do not require a special visa to work in the UK, although those from new Central and Eastern European member states need to register.

The UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre (NARIC), funded by the Department of Education and Skills, assesses qualifications of overseas-trained workers seeking skills recognition. The main functions of NARIC are:

- *“To provide a recognition service and comparability information for international qualifications from 183 countries worldwide with those in the UK; and*
- *To promote UK qualifications abroad through the promotion of recognition and acceptance of British awards.”* (UK National Academic Recognition Information Centre).

The UK NARIC provides the following services:

- A standard letter comparing each overseas qualification;
- A Career Path Report provides an in-depth description of the qualification as well as advice on the comparative UK level, and recommendation for future study or professional development; and
- A National Awards Information Service provides a detailed description of a qualification earned in the UK.

NARIC also manages the UK National Reference Point for Vocational Qualifications (NRPVQ), which advises

¹⁴ Shortages are in certain areas of Engineering, Healthcare, and Education. <http://www.skillclear.co.uk/skilllist.asp>



on skills recognition and provides equivalency assessments on trade and technician level qualifications. NRPVQ also represents the UK on the European network of National Reference Points for vocational qualifications.

EU and European Economic Area¹⁵ migrants to the UK use the Europass scheme to assist in skills recognition and employment. The Europass Initiative was officially launched in the United Kingdom in the fall of 2005. Specific information on the Europass Initiative for the United Kingdom is available on the UK National Europass Centre website.¹⁶

The UK Department for Education and Skills coordinates and provides links to competent authorities and professional bodies responsible for licensing and occupational regulation through the 'Europe Open for Professionals' website.¹⁷ The United Kingdom is also part of the European Union Directive on Mutual Recognition of Qualifications for Regulated Professions.

The following briefly describes some ways that competent authorities and professional bodies are assessing and recognizing foreign credentials in the United Kingdom.

Royal College of Nursing

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) is the national nurses association for the United Kingdom. As of September 2005, internationally trained nurses are required to complete the Overseas Nurses Programme (ONP) and take the International English Language Test System (IELTS). The ONP is a compulsory 20-day period of protected learning and, where appropriate, a period of supervised practice. The program content includes UK law, health and safety issues, record-keeping, drugs administration, and codes of conduct.

Engineering Council

In the United Kingdom, 35 professional bodies govern particular types of engineers and regulate the engineering profession. These professional bodies have charters that give them the exclusive right to confer a designation, as there is no requirement for engineers to be licensed.

The Engineering Council (EC) is a consortium of professional bodies and the regulatory authority for registration of professional engineers and technicians. The registration is dependent on meeting the membership requirements of the appropriate professional

“35 professional bodies govern particular types of engineers and regulate the engineering profession.”

¹⁵ These countries are in the European Economic Area, but are not members of the European Union: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

¹⁶ <http://www.uknec.org.uk>

¹⁷ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/europeopen/index.shtml>

“EU-national engineers are entitled to practice in the UK by registering with the Engineering Council. The Council has up to four months to reject the applicant based on incommensurate training or experience.”

body. The professional bodies emphasize practical experience and most prescribe a period of structure and supervised practical experience that cover technical and non-technical skills. In addition, some professional bodies require additional examinations, a professional interview, and a dissertation on a completed project before conferring a designation.

A report prepared by the Canadian Council of Professional Engineers (2003, pg.158-160) summarizes how foreign credentials are assessed and recognized in the United Kingdom:

- EU-national engineers are entitled to practice in the UK by registering with the Engineering Council. The Council has up to four months to reject the applicant based on incommensurate training or experience.
- Engineers who received their academic training from institutions accredited by one of the signatories to the Washington Accord are deemed to

have educational qualifications equivalent to those required by the Engineering Council. Designation by one of the 35 professional associations will still depend on an evaluation of practical experience.

- The Engineering Council is also a participant in the International Register of Professional Engineers, administered by the Engineers' Mobility Forum and subject to agreed-upon standards. Among the key standards are seven years of post-graduate experience and two years “in responsible charge of engineering work”.
- Engineers trained outside the UK may apply to have their experience recognized by one of the professional bodies. Some of the larger institutions have a roster of country representatives who are resident outside of the UK.

In New Zealand, the existing foreign credential assessment and recognition process is streamlined due, in part, to its small population and low immigration levels. In light of increasing global competition for skills and the growing needs of a diverse migrant population, the New Zealand government has recognized the need to review the existing immigration act. The review, to be completed by late 2006, may result in changes to New Zealand's migration program and skills recognition process.

The New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA) is responsible for assessing international educational qualifications against New Zealand qualifications for migration purposes. The Qualification Recognition Service (QRS), administered by the NZQA, prepares an assessment report that compares the prospective immigrant's qualification with the nearest comparable New Zealand qualification. The QRS does not assess incomplete, or short, informal or in-service courses and does not evaluate competencies or work experience.

New Zealand's Skilled Migrant Program targets a number of occupations including administrators, managers, professionals, and trades workers. Prospective skilled migrants are required to complete an Expression of Interest (EOI) form, including a self-assessment based on:

- Age;
- Health and character;
- English language skills;
- Employability; and
- Recognized qualifications or work experience.

Applicants are then awarded points on their suitability and EOIs are selected based on the score attained. The information is then verified and candidates are invited to apply for residence.

Prospective migrants interested in practising a profession may be required to apply for registration with, or membership of, a professional body. The skills recognition for the purposes of registration in certain professions in New Zealand is generally a separate process from that for the purpose of migration. The following briefly describes some ways that registration authorities are assessing and recognizing foreign credentials in New Zealand:

- The Nursing Council of New Zealand provides a competency assessment program for some applicants, particularly those who have not practised recently. The programs are six to eight weeks in duration and include both a theoretical and clinical component.
- The Medical Council of New Zealand has designed a brief online self-assessment tool for migrants interested in becoming a doctor.

New Zealand also has a Trans-Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement (TTMRA) with Australia. The agreement supports the flow of goods between New Zealand and Australia and the mobility of people to work in both countries. The TTRMA covers all occupations requiring registration, with the exception of medicine. A review of the TTMRA by the Productivity Commission suggested that the agreement could be improved by taking steps towards *reducing differences in registration requirements to address concerns that the entry of professionals through the "easiest jurisdiction" might lower overall competencies*. (Joint Standing Committee on Migration, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia September 2006, p. 219). As well, the Commission suggested that Australian and New Zealand Medical Councils work towards harmonizing competency standards and thereby remove the exemption by the time of the next review, scheduled for 2008.

In Australia, there is no single authority responsible for assessing and recognizing overseas qualifications and therefore many professional, government, and other organizations are involved in the process. The specific organizations involved depend on the type of qualification or occupation and whether the assessment is for purposes of migration or employment in a particular state or territory of Australia.

The skilled stream of Australia's Migration Program seeks to attract migrants with specialist qualifications, knowledge, and skills that are in demand in Australia. These occupations include managers and administrators, professionals, associate professionals, and tradespersons and related workers.

Skilled migrants are required to 'nominate' an occupation and, in most cases, provide proof of requisite qualifications for that particular occupation. As well, migrants are required to have sufficient English language ability to work. Generally, migrants are required to take the International English Language Testing System (IELTS) to assess English language ability. A higher level of English may be required for certain occupations.

The Australian Education International (AEI), through the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR), provides "*official information and advice on the comparability of overseas qualifications with Australian qualifications. This aims to help overseas-qualified people work and study in Australia*" (Australian Education International, Australian Government).

The AEI-NOOSR provides education assessments for individuals who need to determine the educational

level of an overseas qualification compared with an Australian educational qualification. The AEI-NOOSR educational assessments are based on comparison rather than equivalence. The differing philosophies, objectives, and course structures of the various educational systems preclude an assessment based on direct equivalence.

The AEI-NOOSR considers the following factors when assessing overseas qualification:

- *"The education system in the country concerned;*
- *The nature, educational level and recognition status of the awarding institution; and*
- *The level, length, and structure of the program undertaken."*

The cost of the assessment starts at \$295 (\$A) and varies with the number of qualifications to be assessed and residency status. In June 2005, the AEI-NOOSR launched the Educational Qualifications Assessment Online service to support the electronic receipt of applications to assess educational qualifications gained overseas.

As part of the education assessments, the AEI has developed a publications series describing the education systems for overseas countries. Each Country Education Profile (CEP) describes a country's education system and provides assessment guidelines¹⁸ for comparing higher education, post secondary, technical, and vocational qualifications from overseas countries to those within the Australian Qualifications Framework.¹⁹

¹⁸ The guidelines are advisory only. There are no procedures in Australian law whereby an overseas qualification is formally recognized in educational terms on the basis of these guidelines.

¹⁹ The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) is a unified system of national qualifications in schools, vocational education and training, and universities.



In general, a Country Education Profile provides the following information:

- A review of the AEI-National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (NOOSR) Assessment Guidelines;
- A list of the country's educational institutions and, if available, website links;
- A profile of the country's education system by sector; and
- A glossary of educational terms, acronyms, and definitions and, in some cases, useful foreign language words.

The profiles assist a multitude of users including educational institutions, employment and recruitment agencies, professional bodies, and government agencies as well as potential migrants. The CEPs are available for over 100 individual countries as well as five regions in hard copy as well as online.²⁰ The pricing ranges from \$50 (A\$) for a single CEP to several hundreds of dollars for the regions to \$1,622 (A\$) for a compilation of all the countries.

As well, Overseas Qualifications Units (OQU) have been established in most Australian states and territories to assist migrants who need to obtain recognition of their overseas-gained skills and qualifications. The service is only available to those individuals who are Australian residents or who already have permission to work or study in Australia. The OQUs provide, at a nominal fee, statements of educational equivalence for qualifications obtained overseas. The assessment uses the guidelines set out in the AEI-NOOSR Country Education Profiles.

The assessment and recognition of skills and qualifications for migration purposes is the responsibility of national assessment authorities. The authorities include professional associations and government authorities responsible for establishing assessment criteria for education and professional qualifications as well as skill levels and competencies. The methods of assessment vary, but can include:

- Assessment of foreign educational credentials and qualifications;
- Analysis of academic transcripts;
- Conduct of theoretical and/or practical examinations;
- Board interviews;
- Review of an entire career history and evidence of skills;
- Completion of a period of supervised practice; and
- Review of testimonials, referee reports, and employment/duty statements. (Department of Education, Science and Training, Commonwealth of Australia 2006, p.8)

The assessment authority prepares a letter of assessment and, in some cases, the assessment is provisional only, and upon arrival, the applicant may need to complete work experience, undertake further studies, take an examination, and meet specific regional licensing and registration requirements to practice the occupation.

The following highlights a number of ways national assessment authorities in Australia are assessing and recognizing foreign credentials.

²⁰ Hard copy CEPs are only available for those published before the launch of the CEP online in October 2005. Only online CEPs are updated.

“If the engineering qualifications are not recognized through the formal agreements, then applicants may seek recognition through the compilation and submission of a Competency Demonstration Report (CDR).”

Australian Medical Council (AMC)

The AMC administers national examinations of overseas-trained medical practitioners seeking to practise medicine in Australia. The examinations are designed to assess medical knowledge and clinical skills of overseas-trained doctors and consist of two parts:

- A one-day multiple choice examination that tests the principles and practices of medicine; and
- A half-day clinical examination that evaluates competence in terms of medical knowledge, clinical skills, and professional attitudes.

The AMC recently, in collaboration with the Medical Council of Canada and an international testing agency, developed a new international screening examination for overseas-trained doctors seeking employment in Australia. The examination will be conducted in 12 international centres commencing in November 2006.

Australian Nursing & Midwifery Council (ANMC)

The ANMC requires foreign-trained nurses to meet National Nursing Competency Standards to be eligible for migration to Australia. The assessment involves the evaluation of all relevant documents against National Nursing Competency standards and criteria. The specifics are outlined in the ANMC document entitled *Standards and Criteria for the Assessment of the Qualifications of Overseas-Educated Nurses and*

Midwives (www.anmc.org.au). If an applicant is unable to meet the competency standards, then there may be a requirement for completion of a Bridging Program in Australia.

Engineers Australia

Engineers Australia is the designated assessing authority for most engineering occupations. The authority recognizes three occupational categories, namely Professional Engineer, Engineering Technologist, and Engineering Associate. Foreign credentials are recognized through either formal agreements²¹ with engineering accreditation bodies in other countries or a competency assessment process. If the engineering qualifications are not recognized through the formal agreements, then applicants may seek recognition through the compilation and submission of a Competency Demonstration Report (CDR).

An Overseas Qualifications Assessment Kit, available online, provides detailed information on the steps involved in the assessment process. In brief, the process involves a self-assessment and the compilation and submission of the CDR. The components of the CDR are:

- Certified copies of qualifications and academic records;
- Summary statement of employment history from graduation to date;
- Summary of Continuing Professional Development;
- International Language Test Results;

²¹ Australia is a signatory country to the Washington Accord and the Sydney Accord and international registers such as the APEC Engineer Register, the Engineer Mobility Forum, and the Engineering Technologist Mobility Forum.

“assessment of foreign credentials involves either a Skills Assessment or the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).”

- Narrative²² on three separate career episodes; and
- Summary statement of evidence for the competency elements.

The Australian Computer Society (ACS)

The ACS is a professional organization approved to provide advice on skills recognition for prospective migrants to Australia. The assessment of foreign credentials involves either a Skills Assessment or the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL). The Skills Assessment requires applicants to provide documentary evidence of academic records, summary of relevant experience and positions held, employer references, and a résumé. The Recognition of Prior Learning assessment is available for those applicants not meeting the criteria for formal education qualifications.

The RPL process requires applicants to have six years of work experience and demonstrate they have acquired knowledge in areas of the ACS Core Body of Knowledge (CBOK). The applicant is required to provide evidence that they have core knowledge equivalent to university training and have used those skills to benefit employers.

This evidence includes:

- A detailed résumé;
- Copies of published papers, articles, public addresses, etc.;
- Work samples;
- Copies of certificates, transcripts, and professional development course outlines; and
- Two detailed (1,000 words each) descriptions of a significant project or work episode.

Trades Recognition Australia (TRA)

Trades Recognition Australia (TRA) assesses trade skills and knowledge of Skilled Tradespersons and Related Workers²³ based on a set of competencies.²⁴ The Uniform Assessment Criteria (UAC) is the standards by which the skills of an individual are assessed. Specifically, the TRA uses a Skill Pathway approach for determining whether an applicant meets the benchmark definition of an Australian tradesperson.

The Skill Pathway provides a complete assessment framework that is applicable for all source countries

²² Each narrative must be written in English and be a minimum of 1,000 words.

²³ Skilled trades are occupations requiring technical knowledge and manual skills and where training is usually through an apprenticeship.

²⁴ Competencies are detailed specifications of the knowledge and skills required in the workplace.

and relevant occupations. The approach provides a benchmark definition of an Australian tradesperson and sets out the requisite assessment criteria related to employment, training, apprenticeship, and language skills. The TRA International Skills Assessment application form²⁵ requires applicants to provide information about trade training and work experience and lists the acceptable forms of evidence, as follows:

- Trade or trade-related training certificates, diplomas, and details including duration, date of completion, and subjects covered;
- Details of training and experience during apprenticeship and proof of apprenticeship;
- Employer written statements describing nature and content of work experience;
- Evidence of any trade licensing or registration; and
- Detailed description of trade work experience including types of duties; duration and frequency of duties; types of machines, equipment, and hand tools used; supporting reference material used to conduct work; and items made or repaired.

“The approach provides a benchmark definition of an Australian tradesperson and sets out the requisite assessment criteria related to employment, training, apprenticeship, and language skills.”

²⁵ <http://www.workplace.gov.au/workplace/Category/SchemesInitiatives/TRA>

In Canada, the foreign credential recognition and assessment field involves a multitude of stakeholders – “there are 13 jurisdictions, more than 50 regulated occupations, more than 400 regulatory bodies, five assessment agencies, 240 post-secondary institutions, hundreds of thousands of employers and a large NGO community of about 250 service agencies dedicated to immigrant integration” (Fernandez 2006, p.4). A recent (August 2006) report prepared by The Alliance of Sector Councils and the National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development provides an overview of credentialing programs and services in Canada. As well, the 2006 Canadian Association for Prior Learning and Assessment (CAPLA) Conference scheduled for mid-October will highlight a number of Canadian and international FCR initiatives that use a prior learning and assessment approach.

In early 2005, Campus Canada hosted a workshop – “Moving Towards the Development of a Common Framework for Foreign Credential Assessment”. The objective of the workshop was to “streamline foreign credential assessment and recognition policies, processes, and practices by initiating partnerships among key assessment institutions and organizations including universities and colleges, sector councils, provincial assessment agencies, and regulatory bodies.”

Over fifty participants representing sector councils, universities, colleges, government, and industry associations attended the workshop. The participants identified the following guiding principles for the development of foreign credential initiatives:

- Multi-stakeholder involvement;
- Pan-Canadian focus and application;
- Employer and labour market participation;
- Building on existing best/promising practices; and
- Develop a phased approach – diagnostic, recommendation, and implementation.

The workshop participants also identified the following ways to address the existing challenges and barriers facing foreign credential recognition:

- “Validate the process currently being developed and tested by the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council and expand its testing across other sectors as well as internationally;
- Develop an overall framework for national standards and guidelines for credentials, competencies and communication assessment;
- Convene training forums to address the needs of assessment practitioners;
- Using a phased²⁶ approach, create a national database/data warehouse of foreign credentials;
- Consult with professions and trades on [a] language assessment model(s) in order to develop a national [conceptual] framework for language assessment; and
- Provide seed funding to further develop innovative ideas.”

In light of the workshop outcomes, it is interesting to review how a few²⁷ of the participants address the

²⁶ Phases would include scope and process, research and best practices, specifications and standards, testing and implementation.

²⁷ For information on other programs and services refer to Fernandez, S. for The Alliance of Sector Councils (TASC) and National Visible Minority Council on Labour Force Development. (August 2006). *Who Does What in Foreign Credential Recognition. An Overview of Credentialing Programs and Services in Canada.*

“Many immigrants to Canada, though well-educated and highly skilled, still face barriers in obtaining recognition of their qualifications, training, and experience.”

issue of foreign credential assessment and recognition. The review focuses on the FCR efforts of the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council (CTHRC), the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and the Canadian Centre for Language Benchmarks (CCLB).

To provide context to the review, it is also worthwhile noting that the federal government has committed to the establishment of a Canadian agency for assessment and recognition of credentials. The federal budget of May 2, 2006 announced the following:

“Many immigrants to Canada, though well-educated and highly skilled, still face barriers in obtaining recognition of their qualifications, training, and experience. In this budget, the Government is moving forward on its commitment to create an agency to ensure foreign-trained immigrants meet Canadian standards, while getting those who are trained and ready to work in their fields of expertise into the workforce more quickly.

Under the leadership of the Minister of Human Resources and Social Development Canada, consultations with the provinces and other stakeholders are underway on the mandate, structure and governance of the agency, and the Government will proceed on the basis of the advice received. To facilitate the consultation process and to take the first steps toward the establishment of a Canadian agency for assessment and recognition of credentials, this budget sets aside \$18 million over two years.” (The Alliance of Sector Councils September 2006, p.1)

Just recently (September 20, 2006), the Executive Director of The Alliance of Sector Councils prepared a discussion paper that raises a number of key questions and issues related to the structure and focus of the proposed agency. The paper will be presented and reviewed at the 2006 CAPLA Conference.

7.1. CANADIAN TOURISM HUMAN RESOURCE COUNCIL

Since its inception in 1993, the CTHRC has been devoted to supporting labour mobility and to addressing labour market concerns for the supply of qualified workers. The CTHRC has been committed to the development of standards and certification programs for the Canadian tourism sector.

The CTHRC certification program “*identifies and recognizes individuals who meet a specified standard defining competence in a field*” (Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council 2006, p.10). The following describes the main elements of the certification program.

- The intent of the certification model is to recognize competencies, experiences, and abilities rather than to regulate or control practices.
- Candidates are required to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills as defined in the national occupational standards.
- The program is voluntary and is considered a challenge model in that individuals may enrol and be tested once they meet the minimum requirements or prerequisites. To qualify, individuals are not required to complete any education, training, or professional development program, nor are they required to become a member of an association.
- The testing and evaluation tools are based on national occupational standards. The tools include multiple-choice examinations with emphasis on application of knowledge and a practical assessment of performance, while on the job, using different strategies including



incognito, structured interviews, case studies, observation, and portfolios.

- Recognition is through the award of a national pin, a certificate, and a designation.
- Training programs are optional, self-directed, and competency-based.
- Administration of the program is managed through provincial and territorial Tourism Education Councils (TECs).
- The emerit brand is used for marketing and communication purposes.

In 2004, the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council initiated *“preliminary research toward a consistent, coherent assessment and recognition process for immigrants entering employment, and in general, for non-regulated professions in Canada”* (Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council 2006, p.9). Over the last 18 months or so, the CTHRC has completed eight research reports covering the following topics:

- Federal Programs;
- Immigrant-Serving Agencies;
- Educator Engagement and Relationship to Existing Programs;
- Foreign Systems;
- Regulatory Practices;

- Legal Concerns;
- Employer Views; and
- Technology/Website.

The information gained from this research is to inform the development of a foreign credential recognition model for non-regulated professions. According to the most recent (May 2006) Certification Program Policy and Procedures Manual:

- *“An FCR model must include an objective assessment of applicant competencies. It must be aligned with the sector’s existing and recognized occupational standards and professional certification²⁸ (credential) program because the program contains stringent valid assessment tools to test one’s knowledge and performance, which are measured against industry standards.*
- *A system to assess and recognize foreign credentials is complex, and there are inherent responsibilities and obligations.*
- *A fundamental issue that must be addressed is the need for an equivalent system within Canada. Ongoing research will determine the possible impact of and requirement for change or addition to the (existing) certification program.”*

The CTHRC is presently preparing an omnibus report to integrate the major research findings and formulate an action plan for next steps.

²⁸ Certification is about recognizing achievements of an individual based on his/her current knowledge and abilities, regardless of how he/she came to acquire that knowledge and ability.

7.2. ASSOCIATION OF CANADIAN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

The Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) *“is the national and international voice through which Canada’s colleges and institutes inform and advise various levels of government, business, industry, and labour”* (Association of Canadian Community Colleges and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada 2004, p.2). In this role, the ACCC is pursuing ways to accelerate the integration of foreign-trained immigrants.

As part of the federal government’s initiative to develop an Immigration Internet Portal, the ACCC received funding in 2004 to:

- Conduct a diagnostic survey to determine the capacity of Canadian colleges and institutes to provide programs and services for immigrants;
- Organize a College and Institute Immigration Roundtable; and
- Augment the ACCC website with a profile of programs and services available for immigrants.

More recently (December 2005), the ACCC received funding through Human Resources and Social Development Canada’s Foreign Credential Recognition

(FCR) Program. The funds were allocated to two initiatives – the Canadian Immigration Integration Project (CIIP) and the Colleges and Institutes Supporting Immigrant Integration Into the Labour Market Project.

The CIIP is a three-year pilot to test a framework for the delivery of programs and services for immigrants in their country of origin. The purpose of the project is to improve the labour market outcomes for federal skilled workers by helping them prepare for integration while in the final stages of immigration.

This fall, the project will commence client delivery in three test sites – China, India, and the Philippines. The pilot offices will help recently approved skilled worker immigrants to prepare for the Canadian job market by offering the following three main services:

- A one-day group session provides information on the Canadian labour market;
- A personal counselling and planning session provides advice and guidance as well as assistance to develop an Individual Integration Plan; and
- Referrals to language assessment bodies, educational and training institutions, regulatory and accreditation bodies, immigrant-serving organizations, and prospective employers.

“ACCC is the national and international voice through which Canada’s colleges and institutes inform and advise various levels of government, business, industry, and labour”

“the project will develop a model for the establishment of College and Institute Immigrant Integration Centres.”

The intended project outcomes are that skilled workers who immigrate to Canada will:

- *“Have a more realistic understanding of the opportunities and challenges that they will face in Canada;*
- *Make better informed choices about their integration process; and*
- *Be better equipped to enter the Canadian labour force”* (Association of Canadian Community Colleges September 2006).

The Colleges and Institutes Supporting Immigrant Integration Into the Labour Market Project supports the exchange of innovative practices and enables colleges, institutes, sector councils, immigrant-serving organizations, and regulatory bodies to better collaborate. In November 2006, a symposium will *“facilitate partnerships and exchanges of innovative practices between colleges and institutes, sector councils, immigrant-serving organizations and regulatory bodies to address foreign credential assessment and recognition, and labour market integration”* (Association of Canadian Community Colleges September 1, 2006). As well, the project will develop a model for the establishment of College and Institute Immigrant Integration Centres.

In addition to these initiatives, the community college system provides PLAR assessment services, targeted

training programs that accelerate entry into the workplace, and fast track or bridging programs to integrate foreign-trained professionals and tradespersons, through a Canadian classroom setting, into the labour market. For instance, the Mount Royal College in Calgary has developed a PLAR process to assess competencies of internationally educated nurses. The process includes language assessment, diagnostic tests, objective structured clinical examinations, assessments of nursing judgments, nursing skills, and evaluation of critical thinking. A Bridge to Canadian Nursing Program has also been developed to address the learning needs of internationally educated nurses.

7.3. CENTRE FOR CANADIAN LANGUAGE BENCHMARKS

Created in 1998, the *“Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) establishes and maintains standards to govern a comprehensive national Canadian Language Benchmarks assessment system for use in adult ESL, education, training and labour market”* (http://www.language.ca/display_page.asp?page_id=217).

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB) is working to establish the Canadian Language Benchmarks and Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens as the national standards for describing,

measuring, and recognizing second language proficiency of adult immigrants and prospective immigrants to Canada. For the fiscal year 2006/2007, the following projects are planned:

- Canadian Language Benchmarks Online Self-Assessment (in English and French) – will allow website visitors to determine their Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) or Niveaux de compétence linguistique canadiens (NCLC) levels in two skill areas – reading and listening;
- Development of Exit Assessment Tools – the tools are designed to assess language skills upon exit from programs;
- Employer’s Kit – will offer a range of resource materials to help employers determine the language readiness of internationally educated applicants;
- Literacy Placement Tool – the tool will target immigrants who face literacy and language challenges by integrating higher-level literacy and numeracy tasks and will facilitate the placement of ESL/FSL learners into appropriate language and literacy training programs;
- Communication and Informational Tool about the CLB National Assessment System – a fold-out, poster-sized document with a map of the overall national assessment system will support career counsellors and ESL trainers in their communications with newcomers; and
- Workplace Language Assessment Tool – the tool will assess higher-level language proficiencies of clients seeking entry into workplace-related training opportunities.

The Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks has developed the first language assessment tool designed specifically for internationally-educated nurses. As well, the CCLB is collaborating with CTHRC to develop language benchmark profiles, based on existing Essential Skills profiles, for occupations within the tourism sector. The aim of the project is to “*demonstrate a clear framework for identifying, describing, and measuring the key language tasks required for immigrants and newcomers to competently perform work duties*” (Human Resources and Social Development Canada).

“The aim of the project is to demonstrate a clear framework for identifying, describing, and measuring the key language tasks required for immigrants and newcomers to competently perform work duties”

The growing global competition for skilled migrants precipitates the need to develop a foreign credential recognition process that emulates global best practices and aims to attract skilled migrants and successfully integrate migrants into the labour force.

This report provides information on existing approaches and innovative ways that foreign credentials are being assessed and recognized in the United States, the European Union, the United Kingdom, New Zealand, and Australia. As well, there is a description of the FCR efforts of the Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges, and the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks. The research highlights the following best practices and lessons learned in the area of FCR:

- **Pre-Migration Skills Assessment** – Several FCR initiatives support the “pre-assessment” of credentials before migrants arrive in the country. The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools and the Australian Medical Council, for instance, are involved in offering qualifying examinations in select international locations. Another interesting example is the on-line Overseas Qualifications Assessment Kit developed by Engineers Australia.
- **Academic Credentials Assessment** – The assessment of foreign educational credentials and qualifications is generally the responsibility of independent competent authorities. These authorities compare the qualifications and, in a few cases, assess if the qualifications are in fact equivalent. An assessment of equivalence requires consideration of the nature, level, context, content and status of the qualification as well as the objectives and course structures of the various educational systems.
- **Language Assessment** – In Canada, the Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks is involved in several initiatives including the development of the first language assessment tool designed specifically for internationally-educated nurses. In the European Union, the Europass portfolio includes a self-assessment document of an individual’s language skills using a standardized format of six European levels, known as the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. In several countries, the language competency of migrants is assessed using one of four standardized language examinations. One issue for consideration is the setting of minimum language standards and how these standards compare to those of other countries. It is interesting to note that the New Zealand’s skilled migration program generally requires a higher minimum standard of English than is required by Australia under its skilled migration program.
- **Worker Mobility** – In the European Union, the Europass portfolio is a standardized and comprehensive tool that records competencies as well as formal qualifications of workers. The portfolio supports the transparency of formal and informal qualifications, competencies, and skills. As well, the European Qualifications Framework is committed to improving worker mobility by introducing a means to validate non-formal and informal learning.
- **Competency Assessment** – The CGFNS and CTHRC Certification Programs are involved in the assessment and recognition of competencies, experiences, and skills. The assessment tools include review of academic credentials, examinations, and practical assessment of performance while on the job using structured

“the foreign credential assessment and recognition process is continually evolving as it faces the challenges of ensuring that credential levels meet the needs of the labour market”

interviews, case studies, observation, and portfolios. Other competent authorities assess competence by reviewing evidence such as detailed resumé, copies of published papers, work samples, copies of academic qualifications as well as detailed descriptions of significant project or career episodes.

- **Competency Assessment for Non-Regulated Occupations** - The CTHRC is committed to developing a consistent and coherent way to assess and recognize the credentials for non-regulated occupations. The FCR model will be aligned with the sector’s existing and recognized occupational standards and professional certification program.
- **International Mutual Recognition Agreements** – Several government and non-government mutual recognition agreements facilitate mobility of skilled professionals and maximize the efficiency of the integration of migrants into the labour market.

- **Streamlining Skills Recognition Process** – Australia is faced with the increasing need to remove duplication and close the gap between migration and employment assessment. To address these challenges in Australia, the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Migration has recommended improvements in communication, removing duplication between assessment bodies, improving data collection on licensing difficulties experienced by overseas trained workers, and improved monitoring of assessment completion times and fees charged by assessment authorities.

In conclusion, the foreign credential assessment and recognition process is continually evolving as it faces the challenges of ensuring that credential levels meet the needs of the labour market and, at the same time, the system is fair and efficiently managed. The report highlights a number of ways that select countries are dealing with these challenges.

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