

Study of Qualifications and Assessment Agencies
Office of the Fairness Commissioner, March 2009

The assessment of qualifications is the most critical part of the registration process for internationally trained professionals, and this study was administered for the first time, to shed light on the machinations of regulatory and assessment agencies.

Areas of study

- Degree equivalency assessment'
- Occupation-specific credentials assessment
- Competency assessment
- Prior learning assessment
- Examination

Key findings:

1. Degree equivalency and occupation-specific credentials assessment

- The credentials assessment process does not assess learning outcomes. It focuses on factors external to the individual
- Certain practices require substantial investment of time; double verification from inside and outside agencies
- Some internal policies are neither relevant nor necessary
- Significant backlogs and lengthy wait periods – wait can take from two weeks to 12 months
- All agencies studied stated the credentials assessment process can start before skilled immigrants arrive in Canada

2. Competency Assessment

- Process is lengthy
- Process is costly, up to \$40,000
- Process may take from six to ten months

3. Prior Learning Assessment

- Not all decision-makers are appropriately trained
- Structure and control in the process varies from agency to agency
- Not all agencies have a review or appeal process
- Process varies from two weeks to nine months
- Fees vary from \$400 to \$15,000

4. Examinations

- Canada is the top source country for candidates taking exams; exams are therefore geared for domestic graduates
- Exams are predominantly multiple choice; paper and pencil as opposed to online
- Exams vary in length from two to 28 months
- Costs can be a barrier to access

Some agencies also implement measures that can be adapted; promising practices