

## > FOREIGN CREDENTIALS AND WORK EXPERIENCE

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When you look at the resumé of an internationally trained immigrant you'll see academic qualifications from an educational institution in another country – likely an institution that is unfamiliar to you. You may also see that the candidate has some international work experience. What can you do to better understand and assess the qualifications and work experience?

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Job applications and resumé from internationally trained immigrants can be difficult to assess. Terms like job titles, industry sectors, academic qualifications, and names of educational institutions and programs don't always translate well into more familiar Ontario terms. That's a big reason why, as an employer, you may prefer to see several years of successful Canadian work experience in an immigrant job applicant's resumé. This would be evidence that the applicant's skills and knowledge are transferable, and also that the applicant has been able to culturally adapt to the Canadian workplace.

But, of course, every skilled immigrant arrives in Canada with no Canadian experience. You're likely to have some uncertainty and doubt about what the international qualifications and experience really mean. There are resources to help

you remove some of that uncertainty and doubt. You could find that an immigrant applicant with no Canadian education or work experience is an excellent match with your skill requirements.

### ASSESSING FOREIGN CREDENTIALS

World Education Services-Canada (WES Canada - [www.wes.org/ca](http://www.wes.org/ca)) provides research and intelligence about foreign academic credentials and institutions. WES provides credential evaluation reports that offer clear and consistent analysis of foreign credentials and academic qualifications, and equate these to more familiar degrees, diplomas, or certificates issued by Canadian educational institutions. WES has been contracted by the Government of Ontario to deliver academic credential assessment service in Ontario.

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### DID YOU KNOW...?

Canadian employers seem to show a strong preference for hiring job applicants who have Canadian work experience. But preferring "Canadian experience" can unfairly prevent or discourage people from applying, and can create a discriminatory barrier. This preference is often based on the uncertainty and doubt related to understanding an internationally trained immigrant's academic qualifications and work experience.

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### TRY THIS:

If you would prefer "Canadian experience" it might be helpful to ask yourself if you have questions about the candidate's technical or "hard" skills, or their "soft" skills. If it is the latter, try making a list of the soft skills essential to the position. If, for example, strong teamwork skills are important to you, ask a question in the interview that requires the candidate to provide evidence of his or her experience working in a team.

## FOREIGN CREDENTIALS: ASSESSMENT VS. RECOGNITION

It's important to distinguish between credential assessment and credential recognition. Credential assessment is relatively straightforward. You, or any immigrant seeking employment, can have foreign credentials assessed for a reasonable fee through WES Canada. This will provide a comparison of foreign credentials to more familiar local credentials.

Credential recognition, however, refers to the process that an immigrant must go through in order to work as a professional in a regulated profession (e.g. a doctor, lawyer, teacher, accountant, or many other professions). An assessment might suggest that a foreign credential is similar to a particular local credential – but that's not the same as actually having the local credential.

It is often very difficult and time consuming for immigrants to obtain recognition for their international credentials, and to gain the required Canadian credentials to qualify for skills-appropriate employment in their profession. Generally speaking, the higher the level of clearance required the more difficult and

time-consuming it can be to obtain, and hence the more difficulty you may have in finding a qualified immigrant.

As an employer you generally have little or no control over this process. While the procedures and associated delays are a frustration felt primarily by the immigrants, it can also be very frustrating for you as an employer wanting to hire an otherwise qualified immigrant. While governments, labour, industry associations, credentialing bodies and other stakeholders continue to work to improve the situation, it remains a significant hurdle in some sectors.

Employers in several sectors in the Ottawa region - particularly finance, information technology, and health care professionals who would work for government - often require bonding and security clearance. This can be a very lengthy process. An immigrant from certain countries (and this list of countries changes often) needs to be in Canada for 5 or more years in order to be eligible for a security clearance.

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## TIP:

Some of these techniques can help you determine whether an applicant with international training or education meets the requirements for the job:

- Ask for certification papers and additional course documentation
- Review portfolios or dossiers of relevant documents that might not appear in the resume
- Obtain an assessment of credentials through a credential evaluation service
- Discern skills through the interview process
- Assess technical demonstrations at the worksite
- Focus on skills and competencies rather than on specific credentials