Research Roadmap for Credential Evaluation

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This roadmap will guide you through specific questions and best practices to use for every evaluation.

When completing research remember that there are a range of resources available that have varying levels of credibility. When possible, use primary or secondary resources. Examples of primary sources include information directly from the appropriate oversight body in a country such as legal documents, information directly from the government, information directly from an accreditation agency or program information directly from an institution website or publication. Examples of secondary sources include archived country profiles in a database, professional presentations from conferences, education system publications (ECE, NAFSA, PIER, AACRAO, NUFFIC, IQAS, UNESCO, etc.) or other researched and cited documents. A preference to these primary and secondary sources should not limit you from using all available resources; for example, Wikipedia frequently has links included in their citations which direct you to primary sources that you can utilize for research.

Research notes recorded as part of every evaluation should be an argument of why the decisions you made and the information you included in the report are correct. Be prepared that any evaluation could be cross-examined (the student sends in a complaint or question), and you are giving yourself all the information you need to quickly and easily defend your conclusions.

Primary Steps

- Open file
  - Open credentials.
  - Navigate to student info.
- Student Name
  - Does it match the credential(s)?
  - Is the name on the credential substantially different from that in the application?
    - If yes, make a note in research as a reminder to add the different name note to the report.
- Credentials
  - How many credentials are being evaluated?
  - Are we missing anything?
    - If no to the above, reach out to the student for missing documents and place on hold.
  - Are there any authenticity red flags?
    - Compare to samples, ECE Connection, EDGE or NARIC sites for some countries if the document shows significant red flags.
    - Your ability to detect irregularities will improve as you become a more seasoned evaluator; reach out to your trainer if you have concerns about the authenticity of a credential
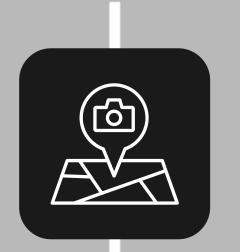
The following items need to be done for each credential in a student's file.

What is the name of the institution?

- Is it a different name than the institution's current name?
  - Resources for answering this:
    - Institution's website history page
    - Wikipedia page of institution
    - Transcript itself
    - Diploma supplement or letter included with credential
  - If yes, include former name on report/additional note about name change.
- Is it translated correctly? (if applicable)
  - Particularly for non-Latin alphabet credentials (i.e. Cyrillic, Chinese, Arabic, Farsi)
  - Resources for answering this:
    - DeepL translator / Google Translate
    - Language-specific cheat sheets in archives
    - ECE Connection samples with translations
  - If you have concerns about the validity or accuracy of a translation, please discuss with your trainer.

Is the institution and/or program recognized by the **appropriate body** in its country to award this kind of credential?

- What kind of recognition does this country use?
  - Programmatic vs institutional
  - Public vs private
  - Transnational recognition (i.e. Ofqual, City & Guilds, etc.)
  - Mix of any or all of the above
    - MOE (Ministry of Education) Resource List should answer these questions for most cases
      - IT IS NOT ALWAYS AT TOP OF COUNTRY ENTRY, SO BE SURE TO REVIEW ALL INFO .
      - If there is no note about programmatic recognition, the country generally relies on institutional recognition with some exceptions (i.e. India distance education).
- What is the appropriate body for this credential?
  - Ministry of Education, Accreditation agency, Ministry of Health, etc.
    - MOE Resource List should answer this as well.
- When was the degree completed? (If not completed, when did study conclude?)
  - Pre-internet
  - Post-internet
  - In the last five (5) years

Resources by Age

Pre-Internet (Pre-1996)	Post-Internet to >5 Years Ago	Within the Last 5 Years
Archived studies in AACRAO EDGE	Archived recognition info saved on local computer or shared drive	Archived recognition info saved on local computer or shared drive
Books	MOE Resource List	MOE Resource List
May also be available in archived recognition info on local computer or shared drive	Wayback Machine	
Occasionally on current site with start date of recognition		

Use the table above to determine recognition status using age-appropriate resources.

- Best practice is to find recognition information within 5 years of the enrollment
  - This is not always possible especially for older or specialty degrees.
- If the only resources available are outside the five (5) year range use the "bookend" technique.
  - Find closest possible pre-enrollment recognition.
  - Find closest possible post-enrollment recognition.
- Add screenshots and links to recognition information in your research notes.
  - Ensure that your screenshots include context .
    - Include full page screenshots while highlighting important information.
    - Include a note with relevant information summarized so you can easily defend your decision to students and others understand your logic in the future.

If you use a paginated resource, be sure to include the page number (specify PDF or actual) that you retrieved the screenshot from (the below example shows clips from 2 pages of a 533-page document, it is important to know where the information you cite came from).

- If no recognition information is available, make detailed notes in your research file of all the locations that you searched.
  - If you determine that the institution is unaccredited and there is no specific list of fake or unapproved institutions, include extensive notes and screenshots of where the institution is not listed and would be if recognized.

What level of education had to be completed prior to the student enrolling in the program?

- *Timeframe is critical for this question as entry requirements change rapidly in some countries.*
- Is this listed on the credential?
  - Is it reliable?
  - Does it make sense in the framework of the student's personal education ladder and the typical sequence for the country?
    - If no to either of the above, defer to finding outside support.
- Is there a single standard entry requirement for this credential in this country?
  - If yes, use age-appropriate resources in table shown below to support this claim.
  - If no or if there are multiple access avenues for the credential, use age-appropriate resources in table shown below to support your conclusion.
- Admission requirement for credentials in the post-Internet era can frequently be found in program details on the institution's website or Wayback archived site
- How many years of study were completed?
  - This is not always apparent based on transcript (Indian MBBS with Part I/Part II).
  - Be aware that there may be a disparity between the years of study completed and the listed program duration.
  - Was this completed part time or full time?
  - If possible, find a plan of study or program details to support this answer.
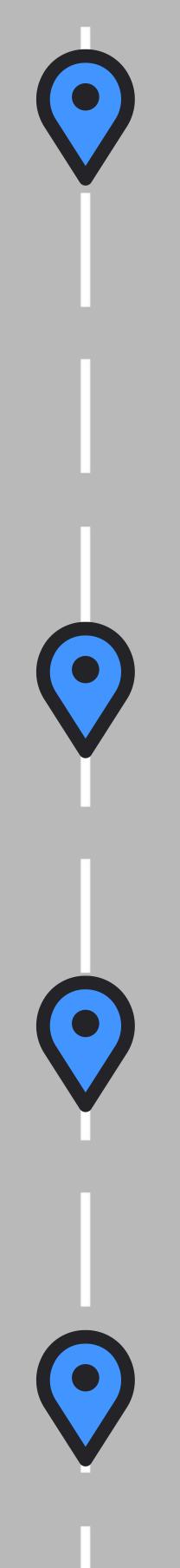 - *Timeframe is critical for this question as programs change rapidly in some countries.*

Resources by Age

Pre-Internet (Pre-1996)	Post-Internet (Since 1996)
Archived country profiles in AACRAO EDGE	Archived country profiles OR live profile in AACRAO EDGE
Age-appropriate education ladders	Education ladders in secondary resources and NQFs from official government websites
Legislation*	Institution websites
Search engines	Wayback Machine
Transcript^	Legislation*
University Libraries-archived catalogs†	Search engines
	Wikipedia
	Transcript^
	Diploma Supplement (if provided)

*Country-dependent, some countries have strongly legislation-based systems while others have little to no regulation.
^Be wary as this can be unreliable.
†Country-dependent, most commonly used for Canadian universities.

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Did the student earn a degree?

- What type?
  - This is not always straightforward, particularly with non-Latin alphabet credentials.
    - If non-Latin alphabet, find confirmation of diploma name in original language.
    - ECE presentations, Wikipedia, translation tools, and language cheat sheets are good resources for this.
  - Pay close attention to translations.
- If no, is the degree in progress?
  - This does not represent a completed degree if it is in progress, which affects US equivalency.
  - If the degree is in progress, you must put "Incomplete" on evaluation.
  - Some provisional certificates have the same validity as a final degree while others do not; provide sufficient proof to indicate the conferral of the degree (this is very country specific, i.e. India versus Mexico).

Does this credential represent a secondary, undergraduate, graduate, professional, or vocational degree?
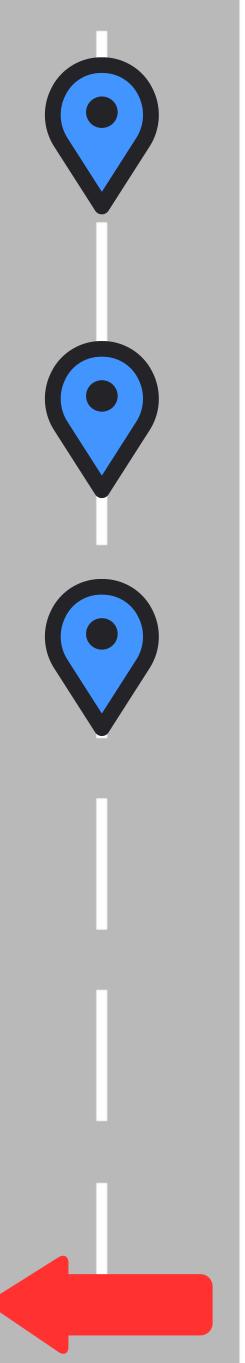
- Use information from research gathered in previous questions to answer this question
- If none of these, what does it represent?
  - This will likely require the aid of your trainer as credentials outside these categories require special handling.

Does this credential need to be combined with another credential to equate to a US credential equivalent?

- Use institution policy as your first resource to answer this question.
- If no institution policy exists, you can build your argument using resources in your country resources, EDGE, or government websites.
  - Be sure to detail your logic in research notes and include screenshots and links to resources cited.

What is this credential equivalent to in the US?

- Use institution policy as your first resource to answer this question.
- If you have no institution policy, you can build your argument using resources in the country folder, EDGE, or government websites.
  - Be sure to detail your logic in research notes and include screenshots and links to resources cited.

Have you entered program and recognition information into your research notes *from the timeframe of the student's enrollment*?

- If no, **explain why** in your notes.

What type of educational system does this represent?

- Credit, hours, marks, or outcomes?

Is there a grading scale on the credential?

- Is it age appropriate for the transcript?
  - Many scales can be for current standards and do not match old scales.
- Do you need to normalize this to US grading standards?
  - Does this scale match a standardized scale (Scholaro, AACRAO EDGE, Institution Policy)?
    - If no, and review is a CBC, you must determine an appropriate conversion.
      - Search AACRAO EDGE, ECE, and archived country studies to see if there is an appropriate scale.
      - If you cannot find any match, you may create your own scale, but explain the logic you used in your research notes and cite any relevant research you completed to support this new scale.
- If no scale included, and the review is a CBC, have you looked for resources to support the scale you used?
  - Note in research where you looked and any information you were able to find
  - If scale is standard for the country make note of that too (i.e. Francophone 20-point scale).

END

Research is now complete!

MOVE ON TO COMPILING YOUR REPORT OR COMPLETING YOUR EVALUATION.