**Develop a comprehensive list of standards that need to be established to address the needs of credential evaluators**

Yujian Wang

International Credential Evaluation Specialist

Montana State University-Bozeman

**Intro**

When comparing credentials from abroad with those in the United States, finding “equivalence” is not possible. The reason is there is no credential out there truly equivalent to the U.S. bachelor’s degree. Rather, the term used in “comparable” (1) .We should keep this in mind when considering the standard for student data from different countries. To have the credential comparable to U.S. system, what kind of information needs to be required to help determining the degree, grading score, credit conversion etc.

I have faced challenges trying to figure out academic documents from unfamiliar countries. Such as the accreditation of the institution, the course credits, program length, grading scales, course level and so on. In my opinion, by establishing standards for student data, it will help international applicants apply to U.S. institution easier, it will also help study abroad students bring their credits back to the U.S. institution easier.

**Data Standard**

1 Accreditation:

When student is applying to an U.S. institution, the first thing an admission officer check is the accreditation/recognition of student’s home institution, or the accreditation of the exam board. In many countries, accreditation of an educational institution or the accreditation of an examination board is regulated by the Ministry of Education. This normally requires the admission evaluator have knowledge of a specific education system. Usually, the question of whether or not to accept an education credential from a country is to ask, “Academically, what can this student do with this credentials in his/her home country?” (2)

2 Documentations required for international students:

Identification Information:

* Student Name
* Date of Birth

Education background:

* Name of the institution in both indigenous language and in English
* The location of the institution
* Student’s entry date for this program
* Entrance requirement
* Name of the program
* Program length, and any other description about the program. Is it vocational or academic
* Grading scale

Official Transcript:

In some countries, transcript can be called as marks sheet or a statement of marks. In the U.S., it is very easy for student to order an official transcript from their current or previous institution. It may not be the case in many other countries. In many countries, student only gets one copy of the transcript, and the school will not mail an “official transcript” to another institution. In many countries, students can request a copy of their transcripts with necessary seals and signatures from the school. In many U.S. institutions, this would consider as an “official” copy.

Translations:

If student is not from an English speaking country, and his/her transcript is not in English, a translations of student’s credentials should be required. The translation should be done by an accredited translation agency, an embassy or a faculty member in the foreign language department. The translations should be word for word, with no interpretation, and the format should be consistent as the original document. Grades should list in the translation as they listed in the original language transcript (2).

**Conclusion**

For a credential evaluator, the document mentioned above should be required prior to the reviewing process. An established standard for all credential documents is essential. It not only can assist the admission officer make the admission decision more quickly, but also help evaluation agency produce accurate evaluation report.

Reference:

1. The AACRAO International Guide: A resource for international education professionals, Deana Williams, Robert Watkins, Mary Baxton, 2010
2. NAFSA: Evaluation Foreign Education Credentials: An introductory Guide, Kathleen Freeman