Professional Competency Profile (PCP) for Credential Evaluators

A credential evaluator refers to an individual who is involved in the assessment and recognition of international educational credentials. This work is often done within educational institutions, governmental and professional regulatory bodies, and assessment agencies. However, the professional title itself may vary across offices as well as geographic locations. Whatever the term used may be, credential evaluators function as agents of international mobility and as facilitators in the proper placement of students and professionals alike. To support the professional competency of those doing this work, two profiles are presented here – for the evaluator and the senior evaluator. Serving as a tool and guide, these profiles identify the core dimensions of the competent evaluator. However, an institution may elect to adapt these descriptions to its own needs and the purpose and country which it serves.

Evaluator

The role of the credential evaluation professional is multi-faceted. There are four main areas in which the evaluator must demonstrate competence – (1) Qualifications and Resources, (2) Professional Integrity, (3) Technical Knowledge and Analytical Skills, and (4) Communication and Data Processing Skills.

I. Qualifications and Resources[1]

> • Minimum of Bachelor or Equivalent
> • Familiarity with Minimum of 1 Language beyond Native Language
> • Access to Appropriate Resources
> • Engagement in Activities to Remain Up-to-Date in Field

First and foremost, it is recommended that the credential evaluation professional have, at minimum, a bachelor's degree or equivalent. Evaluation work entails research in and the analysis of world educational systems. Completion of a university degree is an indication that one has acquired experience in the elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education cycles within one or more systems. Additionally, developing a working knowledge of multiple foreign languages enables the evaluator to review international credentials more skillfully. Similarly, the professional must have access to a proper credentials evaluation library (electronic and physical) that includes the educational systems of different countries, spans different time periods, and covers different professions, as reflected in TAICEP's webpage on reference materials. Lastly, as systems change and new resources emerge, the credentials evaluator must engage in activities that enable him/her to remain up-to-date in the field. Examples of such activities include but are not limited to conference attendance, webinars, committee work, study visits, presenting and publishing.

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[1] Resources do not constitute a competency. However, they have been referenced and included here as they are necessary tools for a competent credentials evaluation professional.

II. Professional Integrity

- Confidentiality
- Impartiality

Credentials evaluation involves working with personal, confidential data, with outcomes that affect the lives of applicants. While performing assessments, one should understand the impact of a recognition decision. It is also critical that confidentiality and impartiality be maintained throughout the process. For example, each application must be assessed on its own merits, without bias or prejudice with regard to, for example, a person's gender, race, color, religion, or sexual orientation. One's professional integrity, objectivity, and fairness must be maintained at all times. Please also see TAICEP's Statement of Ethics.

III. Technical Knowledge and Analytical Skills

- Understanding of the Educational System that is the Basis of Comparison
- Understanding of the Educational System for Which Assessment is Requested
- Ability to Conduct Research and Analyze Information
- Ability to Distinguish Educational Patterns and Time Periods
- Ability to Compare and Contrast Educational Systems as well as Hybrid Systems from Transnational Offerings
- Ability to Apply the Above, along with One's Institutional Requirements to Formulate Credential Assessments

This category highlights the key knowledge areas and skills a credential evaluation professional must possess to provide competent assessments and placement recommendations. At the foundation lies a sound understanding of the educational system that the international credential is being compared against. Building upon this base, the evaluator must be able to conduct the research necessary to identify and understand an educational system and the pattern within which it may fall (e.g., British, French, Russian, Latin American, Bologna Declaration-influenced systems…). The evaluation professional must be able to discern the appropriate records of study and their authenticity, distinguishing, for example, among what is regarded as official records and certified true copies versus unofficial records and notarized documents. When the educational records are not officially issued in the native language of the credential evaluator or the language required by his/her institution, the evaluation professional must also be able to establish whether the translations are adequate and reliable.

He/she must also possess the ability to determine the type of institution where the studies were completed (e.g., polytechnic, university, hospital school…), its recognition, and the appropriate body that would bestow this recognition. The evaluation professional must be able to ascertain the level of education, and whether, for example, a program of study is elementary, secondary, postsecondary, or postgraduate in level and whether it is academic or vocational in nature. Similarly, the credential evaluator must discern the components of the program, including the minimum entrance requirements, curriculum, length, mode of delivery, learning outcomes, what the final qualification gives access to, and, if applicable, its standing within the country's qualifications framework. Depending on the focus of the institution of the evaluator, further understanding of training in key professional fields should also be developed, including, but not limited to medicine, teaching, accounting, engineering, and law. A grasp of

the grading systems should also be demonstrated, along with the systems of measurement of studies (e.g., hours, credits, coefficients…).

As indicated earlier, no systems stand still and remain unchanged. For this reason, a broad understanding of how educational systems evolve and reform must be held, and that an evaluation of a credential must be on the basis of the time when it was completed. Additionally, the evaluator must possess a grasp of how educational systems relate and differ, and apply this knowledge when assessing transnational programs. Finally, the evaluation professional must successfully apply the criteria and policies of his/her institution, as well as any relevant legislation, to formulate a credential assessment, mastering the details of credentials evaluation, while also maintaining a view of the broader picture and context which these details serve.

IV. Communication and Data Processing Skills

- Ability to Explain the Evaluation Process and Policies
- Ability to Produce a Clear Evaluation Report
- Ability to Record and Retrieve Information regarding Research, Applications, and Equivalencies

Communication skills ensure the seamless transfer of information that is needed to enable a successful credential evaluation. The evaluation professional must be able to explain the application requirements and evaluation process, both verbally and in written form. He/she must also be able to produce a clear evaluation report, so that the recipient understands the outcome and can use it toward the purpose for which it is intended. The evaluator must also possess the ability to respond to an appeal and explain the criteria and policies used in completing a report. Finally, the evaluation professional must be able to store and retrieve information related to the applications received and reports processed, facilitating the flow of applications and overall operations of the office.

Senior Evaluator

- Substantial Experience in Evaluating a Wide Variety of Credentials
- Contribution to the Advancement of One's Office
- Contribution to the Growth of the Field

A senior evaluator represents a professional who has developed substantial knowledge, skills and experience in the areas described above (under the section of "Evaluator"), so as to be able contribute to the development of one's institution or organization, as well as the advancement of the overall field. The recommended minimum number of years of experience is five for the designation of a senior evaluator. However, depending on the volume and scope of credentials evaluations prepared by a professional annually, this period may possibly be shortened or lengthened. During this time, he/she should have developed experience with evaluating a wide variety of credentials, as appropriate to the office. This may include qualifications spanning different regions, time periods, professional fields as well as all the major educational patterns (e.g., British system, French system, Russian system, Latin American system, and Bologna Process-patterned systems…).

By nature of his/her role, the senior evaluator leverages this experience, contributing to the development of his/her office. Examples include reviewing outgoing files, making recommendations and assisting with shaping policy, establishing best practices, and training and supervising staff. Additionally, the senior evaluation professional contributes to the advancement of the field through the exchange of knowledge. Related activities include serving on committees of related professional organizations, giving conference presentations and/or training workshops, and contributing to publications, such as blogs, country profiles, newsletters and books. With specialized knowledge gained, the senior evaluator serves as a resource in credentials evaluation, both within his/her institution and beyond.