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# Introduction to Education Fraud and Degree Mills: What it is and How to Fight it

Presented by Shereen Mir-Jabbar,  
Credentialling Officer, Canadian Alliance of  
Physiotherapy Regulators



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# Overview

- Introduction
  - What is a fraudulent credential and what types of fraud exist?  
What are degree mills?
- Degree Mill examples
- Signs that a Credential could be Fraudulent
- Some examples of fraud we have dealt with
- Signs that a Credential could be a Degree Mill



# Overview



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- An example of a degree mill we came across
- Best practices for combatting fraud/degree mills
- What to do when you encounter fraud or a degree mill
- Summary of Key Points





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# Meet Asha



- Born in 1990
- Educated in India
- Received a 5-year Bachelor of Physiotherapy degree from the Indian Institute of Alternative Medicine, Kolkatta in 2005



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# Meet Asha



- Applying for a job as a physiotherapist at a hospital in India
- Employer is reaching out to you to determine if credential is authentic and sends you a copy of degree and transcripts
- What would you advise them?



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# What is a Fraudulent Credential?

A document that has been modified or reproduced without authorization of the original issuing body. A fraudulent document is also considered forged if it is claimed that it was issued by a legal entity that did not issue it.

**FAKE**

Source : **CICIC terminology guide**

# Types of Fraud



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Altered  
documents

Fabricated  
documents

Institutional  
fraud “inside  
jobs”

Degree Mills

Misleading or  
interpretive  
translations





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# What are Degree Mills?

- Degree-granting authority does not come from a generally accepted government agency
- Procedures for granting credit for prior learning and for determining the amount and quality of work done to earn the degree, do not meet generally accepted standards, and;
- Those who make the decisions on credit, and on quantity and quality of work, do not have the credentials, experience or training typically associated with people performing these tasks.



**Source: Degree Mills: The Billion Dollar Industry that has sold over a Million Fake Diplomas by Allen Ezell and John Bear (2012 edition).**





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# What Percentage of PhDs in the U.S. are fake?

- A) 25%
- B) 40%
- C) 100%
- D) > 50%

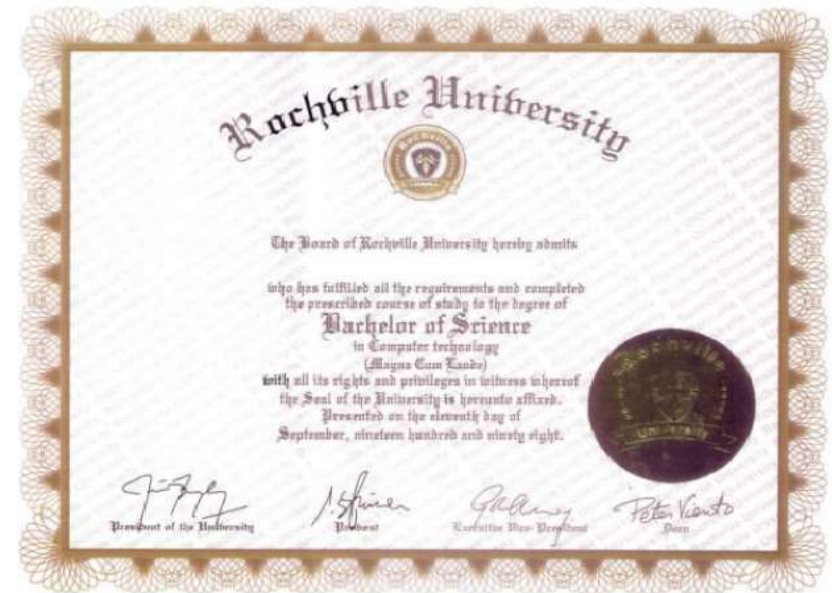


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# Example of Degree Mills: Axact

- Karachi-based software company accused of making millions of dollars with degree mill scam.
- One of the biggest Internet scams on record uncovered by New York Times exposé in 2015.
- Company offices only got raided after article was released.



**Rochville University Degree**

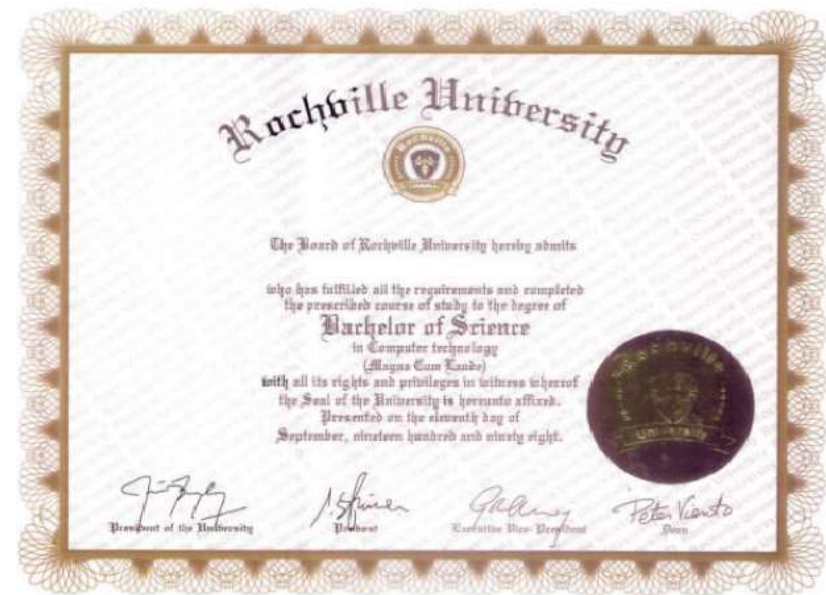


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# Example of Degree Mills: Axact

- CEO and other officials were taken to court, but was dismissed in November 2016 due to lack of evidence.
- Axact resumed its operations in September 2016, including selling more fake degrees.
- Executive arrested late 2016 and case is considered being re-opened by Pakistani officials.
- Executive Pleaded Guilty in U.S. Court



**Rochville University Degree**



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# Other recent examples of fraud and degree mills

- Beijing business caught selling bogus degrees from foreign universities
- Principal from Kansas resigns after high school student journalists question credentials.
- A former CHED official facing charges over involvement in a diploma mill operation in the Philippines

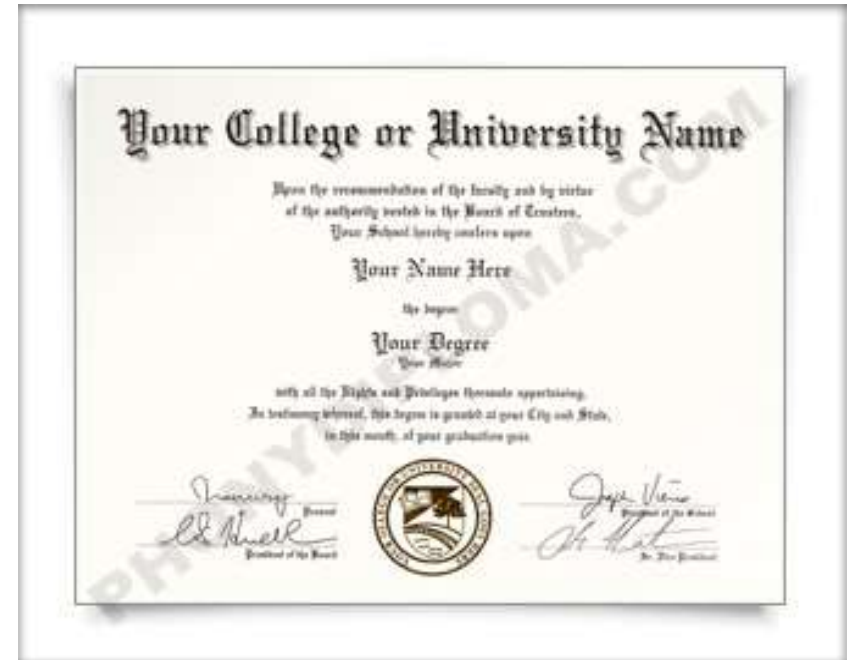
# Signs of Fraud



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- Too many different fonts being used
- Evidence of erasure or white/out
- Unusual alignment of text
- Historical discrepancies
- Unusual signatures





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# How Knowing a Font can Help Detect Fraud

(b) I have identified the type font used to produce both certified Declarations as “Calibri”. However, Calibri was not commercially available before 31st January 2007 and as such, neither of the originals of the certified Declarations is correctly dated and happy to have been created at some later point in time.

Quoted by Robert W. Radley, Radley Forensic Document Laboratory. Tweeted by Dawn Pakistani Newspaper correspondent, Zarrar Khuhro



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- Age or biographical discrepancies
- Informal language
- Unlikely degree titles
- Unusual institutional practices

**Your School Name Here**  
Your School Address \_\_\_\_\_ Name: Your Name \_\_\_\_\_ ID# : Your Student ID \_\_\_\_\_  
DOB: Your Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*\* ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPT \*\*\***

Date	Course No.	Title	Units Attempted	Units Earned	GRADE	GRADE POINTS
<b>FALL 1968</b>						
	COM 101	Introduction to Speech Communication	3.0	3.0	A-	12.0
	CSJ 101	Introduction to Business Computers	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	ENG 121	English Composition	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	ENG 161	Beginning French I	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	MTH 111	Analytical Geometry & Calculus I	3.0	3.0	B+	9.0
	PHY 113	Classical Physics	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
<b>SEMESTER TOTALS</b>			18.0	18.0	3.50	63.0
<b>SPRING 1969</b>						
	ENG 122	Critical Writing and Reading	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	FRE 152	Beginning French II	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	MTH 112	Analytical Geometry & Calculus II	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	PHY 114	Classical Physics II	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	PSY 101	Introduction to Psychology	3.0	3.0	A+	12.0
<b>SEMESTER TOTALS</b>			15.0	15.0	3.60	54.0
<b>CUMULATIVE TOTALS</b>			33.0	33.0	3.50	117.0
<b>FALL 1969</b>						
	ART 123	Art Appreciation	3.0	3.0	B-	9.0
	BIO 121	General Biology I	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	ECO 201	Intro to Microeconomics	3.0	3.0	A-	12.0
	FIM 161	Personal Finance Decision	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	HIS 122	World History 1647 to Present	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
<b>SEMESTER TOTALS</b>			15.0	15.0	3.60	54.0
<b>SPRING 1970</b>						
	ACC 201	Business Accounting I	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	ART 121	Intro to Music Appreciation	3.0	3.0	B	9.0
	BIO 122	General Biology II	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	ECO 202	Intro to Macroeconomics	3.0	3.0	A-	12.0
	FIM 200	Principles of Finance	3.0	3.0	A	12.0
	ENG 200	Written Business Communications	3.0	3.0	A+	12.0
<b>SEMESTER TOTALS</b>			18.0	18.0	3.53	63.0
<b>CUMULATIVE TOTALS</b>			51.0	51.0	3.64	180.0

**Abstracts & Remarks**

CO Change of grade  
 SA Acceptance award  
 EC Transcript changed  
 S Substitution  
 SP No grade  
 TC Transfer credit  
 AD Audit only, no credit received  
 \*Student has good standing unless otherwise indicated.

**Transcript Issued**  
06/09/1991

**Degree or Credential Certification**  
BBA 06/09/1991

**TRANSCRIPT IS ONLY VALID WITH THIS SIGNATURE**

*Thomas Alan Carothers*

OFFICE OF THE REGISTRAR

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- Spelling errors
- Unusual stamps or lack of stamps or security features
- Inconsistent terminology
- Conflicting dates and duration



# Sample Fraudulent Document

BOŠNA I HERCEGOVINA  
HRVATSKA ZAJEDNICA HERCEG-BOSNA

117688  
OCT 0 5 2011

VISOKA ZDRAVSTVENA ŠKOLA  
SVEUČILIŠTE U MOSTARU

## DIPLOMA VIŠEG OBRAZOVANJA

[REDACTED]  
Rođena [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Završila je 30 lipnja 2003  
u Visokoj Zdravstvenoj Školi Program Fizioterapije od šest semestara.

Visoka Zdravstvena Škola u Mostaru utvrđuje da je [REDACTED]  
položila sve propisane ispite i završila sve druge obaveze iz nastavnog programa  
te stekla pravo na zanimanje

### FIZIOTERAPEUTA

kao i sva prava koja joj pripadaju po propisima.

U Mostaru 2 srpnja 2003.



Dekan

dr.sc.Ljubo Šimić

# Sample Fraudulent Document



Sveučilište u Mostaru  
Visoka Zdravstvena Škola  
Matice Hrvatske bb, BiH 88000 Mostar

14.10.2011

118664  
NOV 25 2011

Ovo je izvadak iz indeksa od studenta pod brojem [REDACTED]

Predmet	Ukupno Sati			Ocjena
	Predavanje	Vježbe	Seminara	
<b>Semestar I.</b>				
Anatomija i histologija	50	5	-	3
Fiziologija s patofiziologijom	30	15	-	3
Fizika s elektronikom	30	-	-	2
Higijena i socijalna medicina	30	-	-	4
Informatika	10	20	-	3
Osnove kineziologija s biomehankom	30	30	-	2
Osnove motorički transformacija	10	15	-	3
Medicinski engleski	30	-	-	5
				Potpis Dekana dr.sc.Ljubo Šimić
<b>Semestar II</b>				
Fizika s elektronikom	30	-	-	3
Klinička kineziologija	30	45	-	3
Uvod u fizioterapiju	30	15	-	4
Osnove patologije	20	5	5	2
Osnove motorički transformacija	10	15	-	3
Osnove zdravstvene njege	15	15	-	4
				Potpis Dekana dr.sc.Ljubo Šimić
<b>Semestar III</b>				
Klinička kineziologija	30	45	-	3
Kardiologija i pulmologija	30	-	-	3

# Sample Fraudulent Document



Sveučilište u Mostaru  
Visoka Zdravstvena Škola  
Matice Hrvatske bb, BiH 88000 Mostar

Nastavak od izvadak iz indeksa od studenta pod brojom [REDACTED]

Predmet	Ukupno Sati			Ocjena
	Predavanje	Vježbe	Seminara	
Etika u zdravstvu	20	-	-	3
Osnove radne terapije	20	15	-	2
Osnove motorički transformacija	-	15	-	3
Fizioterapija u onkologiji	30	20	-	3
Stručna praksa	-	315	-	4


Potpis Dekana  
dr.sc.Ljubo Šimić

Prolazne su ocjene:

- (5) Odličan
- (4) Vrlo dobar
- (3) Dobar
- (2) Dovoljan

# Sample Fraudulent Document

AUG 19 2009



**THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS**  
(Member of World Confederation for Physical Therapy)

**CERTIFICATE OF MEMBERSHIP**

*This is to certify that*

Dr. [REDACTED]

*is Registered with*

*the Indian Association of Physiotherapists*

*as a LIFE MEMBER.*

His / Her I.A.P. Registration number is.. [REDACTED]

*He / She is a qualified physiotherapist eligible*  
*for the practice of Physiotherapy in Accordance with*  
*the Laws of the States of India*

VALID FOR FOREIGN COUNTRY  
EMBASSY & HIGH COMMISSION

Sushil Kumar Anand Advocate  
Newspaper: Daily Courts, Amritsar (Pb.)

ADVOCATE \*SUSIL KUMAR ANAND\* SATISH KUMAR ANAND

THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

2791

Ref. No. 5398

Dr. 21/5/09

20 JUL 2009

General Secretary, IAP

PARVECH BHAIJI  
Advocate  
36-A Dist Court,  
Amritsar

GENERAL SECRETARY  
THE INDIAN ASSOCIATION OF PHYSIOTHERAPISTS

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# Sample Fraudulent Document

Member Ship Number:

Search

Close Window

## Member Details

MEMBER ID	[REDACTED]
MEMBERSHIP TYPE	[REDACTED]
MEMBER NAME	[REDACTED]
ADDRESS 1	[REDACTED]
ADDRESS 2	[REDACTED]
CITY	[REDACTED]
ZIP CODE	[REDACTED]
Year	[REDACTED]
N Year	[REDACTED]

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Ads by Google

# Signs of Degree Mills



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- Long list of accreditation bodies
- Accreditation is claimed from a fake or unrecognized agency (i.e. accreditation mills) or from another country
- Offers credits for life experience
- Unlikely degree titles
- No contact address or details that differ from the claimed location of the institution
- Membership in real organization – but ones that don't screen members



# Signs of Degree Mills



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- Similar or almost identical names to real schools
- Photographs with prominent people
- Claims of famous alumni
- Focus on payment of credential (“Order by Midnight”)
- Doctored photos of real buildings







Search :



MUST

Google



About MUST

Admissions

Academics

Student Zone

E-Learning

News & Events

### About MUST

- About Us
- Board of Trustees
- Administration
- Administrative Units & Depts.
- Code of Ethics
- University Profile
- Affiliated Institutes

About Us

Board of Trustees

Administration

Administrative Units & Departments

Code of Ethics

University Profile

Affiliated Institutes



## About Us

**Misr University for Science & Technology (MUST)** was established by the presidential decree No.245/1996 in accordance with law No. 101/1992 governing private universities Egypt.

قرار رئيس الجمهورية بإنشاء الجامعة

**MUST** enjoys full legal recognition by all educational authorities In Egypt and is authorized to grant B.A, B.S, M.A, M.S, and Ph.D. Degrees in different fields of study.

All our programs at MUST have been accredited by the Supreme Council of Universities in Egypt.

# Example: MISR University for Science and Technology (MUST)

MUST is an active member of the Association of Arab Universities, the International Association of University Presidents and the Association of African Universities.

**MUST** has been assessed and certified according to the requirements of ISO 9001:2008 for Educational Service management for students after high school.

The certificate is valid from **05 August 2010** until **05 August 2013**.



## Facts about MUST University



As the world's largest online university and one of the top 5 fastest growing online educational institutions, MUST University's self-paced and self-study programs are superior to others in terms of ease & flexibility, affordability, and quality of education.

### Few key facts about MUST University

- ➔ So far, about 90,000+ students have applied to MUST University for a variety of online degree, diploma and certificate programs
- ➔ To date, students from nearly 214 countries have studied at MUST University
- ➔ MUST University has a global presence; it has campuses in almost 85 countries of the world
- ➔ Almost 50 campus-based universities are now offering MUST University's online education through MUST's Learning Management System
- ➔ The educational system at MUST University allows students to study anytime and anywhere, using the Internet and a web browser
- ➔ MUST University offers more than 1,100 degree programs to students through its 16 schools that offer 71 majors

### Exclusive Scholarships for Students in **Canada!**

Grants are limited- so sign up now!

Full Name

Email Address

Select Country

Area Code + Phone No.

**Continue**

**16 Schools & 71 Majors**  
*allows you to specialize in any field*

*MUST at a Glance*

### See also

Mission and Values

Example: MUST University



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# How easy is it to obtain fraudulent documents?

- Very easy!
- Photoshop
- Fake e-mail address and website spoofs, ordering of fake stamps
- Degree mills
- Novelty/phony diploma sites

**Verified University**

Sheesha Mister School of Physical Education



**Shereen Mir-Jabbar**

*having completed the necessary courses of study  
and having satisfied all other requirements is hereby declared a*

**Doctor of Medicine**

**Physical Therapy  
summa cum laude**

*and is awarded this diploma*

*with all the honors and privileges pertaining thereto.*

*In testimony whereof the signatures of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees  
and the President of Verified University  
have been affixed this day, 2008.*

*Les N. Toomy, Jr.*  
President

*L. CURRY FAVOR*  
Created using [MagicMill.com](http://MagicMill.com)  
Chairman of the Board of Trustees





# Best Practices for Combatting Fraud

Best Practices	Best Practices
Have good documentation practices and check documents thoroughly to ensure details make sense	Keep samples of fraud (i.e. Fraudulent Documents library)
Verify documents directly with the institution if unusual	Glossary of terms in foreign languages
Make use of online verification tools and resources	Checklist of warning signs for credential evaluators
Do not rely solely on translations	Refresher training on countries/Building good knowledge base of educational systems for various countries



## Fraudulent Sample Checklist

- Poor quality print
- Wrong font
- Pixelated seals
- Pixelated background
- Pixelated signature
- Digital scan appearance
- Forced, clumsy handwriting/signature
- Wrong numbering
- Poor quality hologram
- Poor quality seals
- Bad symmetry
- Language mistake (spelling, grammar etc.)
- Computer-generated appearance
- Date stamp printed instead ink
- Document number should be letterpress (digitally printed instead)
- Alterations (grades, credits or other)
- Signature doesn't match our records
- Looks home-made
- Missing signature
- Missing seal
- Missing security features





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# Best Practices for Combatting Degree Mills

- All of the practices mentioned for fraud
- Maintain lists of degree mills/fake institutions
- **Always check the recognition/accreditation of an institution**
- Review forums such as [degreeinfo.com](http://degreeinfo.com) and [degreediscussion.com](http://degreediscussion.com)
- Share knowledge or ask questions from the credential assessment community



Photo taken from: [RealScam.com](http://RealScam.com)



# What to do when you come across a fraudulent document?

- Keep detailed records of your investigation and findings in the file
- Inform your Manager/Director and follow your organizational policy
- Provide applicant with an opportunity to appeal findings
- Consider informing members of credential assessor community, or regulatory body
- When informing applicant, try to stay away from accusatory language



# Summary of Key Points



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- Be aware of various types of fraud and degree mills
- Be familiar with the warning signs of fraud and degree mills
- Build good knowledge, resources, verification tools, and maintain good documentation practices
- Share learning and findings with others



# Keep in Mind...



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- Fraudulent credentials are harmful to society
- We should try to implement policies and procedures that show serious consequences for committing fraud





# 10 commandments for credential evaluators

Copyrighted by CIMEA

## The 10 Commandments for credential evaluators on detecting documents fraud

1. Be curious. If something is dubious to you, investigate further.
2. Consider the media to be your allies.
3. Don't trust paper. Digital verification first.
4. Cooperate with other organisations. Share information.
5. Verify authenticity when possible.
6. Keep archives of verified documents and common authenticity features.
7. Keep archives of fake qualifications as well.
8. Always work on documents in original language.
9. Fake qualifications rarely come unaccompanied. If you received one, look for siblings.
10. No half measures. Fake qualifications damage the whole society.



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# Meet Asha



- Applying for a job as a physiotherapist at a hospital in India
- Employer is reaching out to you to determine if credential is authentic and sends you a copy of degree and transcripts
- What would you advise them?

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# References



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