



Cambridge
Professional
Development

Substantial Agreement

**Academic Credential Assessment in Canada:
Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and
Preparation for the UNESCO Global Convention**



September 8, 2020

Mr. Nigel Lloyd
CamProf Inc.

Dear Mr. Lloyd,

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) welcomes the report authored by CamProf Inc. and titled *Substantial Agreement – Academic Credential Assessment in Canada: Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and Preparation for the UNESCO Global Convention*.

Using data collected through CICIC-led consultations with assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada in 2018, CamProf Inc. subsequently provided in this report a comprehensive data analysis on Canada's implementation of the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention. The report was produced, as well, in preparation for the newly adopted 2019 Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education. Although this analysis does not necessarily reflect the official policies, positions, or views of CICIC, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), provincial and territorial governments in Canada, or assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada, it does provide useful insight into the implementation of conventions related to qualification recognition in Canada.

You will recall that assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada maintain broad autonomy with respect to the implementation of conventions related to qualification recognition. Postsecondary institutions in Canada determine what qualifications they will accept for typical entry to various programs of study. Legislation also confers some autonomy on professional governing bodies in setting the content of regulations under which earned credentials, competencies, and training are recognized. Professional governing bodies therefore enjoy broad autonomy in recognizing credentials, whether obtained in Canada or abroad, for the purposes of registration or permission to practise a profession in Canada.

Given the above and as per CICIC's mandate as Canada's National Information Centre, the information contained in this report will be transmitted to assessment services, competent recognition bodies, as well as provincial and territorial governments for their respective consideration. CICIC will continue to encourage assessment services and competent recognition bodies to apply principles of the conventions while also improving the implementation of these principles. The aim of such continued

improvement is to maintain a quality assurance process and to promote qualification recognition policies and procedures that are fair, transparent, timely and consistent in Canada.

We thank you for your collaboration throughout the data analysis process and the resulting work.

Sincerely,

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Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)

Authors

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Disclaimer

The opinions, interpretations, findings, and recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect the official policy, positions, or views of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), provincial and territorial governments in Canada, or assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada.

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This report has undergone a peer-review process with key stakeholders from all six assessment services as well as from recognition bodies in Canada, mainly the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) and the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF) Steering Committee. We wish to thank the following committee members and their organizations for their contributions:

- Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC)
- Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation (CNAR)
- Comparative Education Service (CES)
- International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS)
- International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES)
- International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS)
- Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Francisation et Intégration du Québec (MIFI)
- Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner
- Université de Montréal
- World Education Services (WES) Canada

Ce document est également disponible en français sous le titre :

Entente substantielle

Évaluation des diplômes au Canada : Mise en œuvre de la Convention de Lisbonne sur la reconnaissance et préparation à la Convention mondiale de l'UNESCO

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Abbreviations

ACDME	Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education
ACESC	Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada
ARUCC	Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada
BCCAT	British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer
CanPESC	Canadian Post-Secondary Electronic Standards Council
CAPLA	Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment
CES	Comparative Education Service
CFTA	Canadian Free Trade Agreement
CHESICC	Chinese Higher Education Student Information and Career Centre
CICIC	Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials
CMEC	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada
CNAR	Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation
CRM	customer relationship management
CUCCIO	Canadian University Council on Chief Information Officers
EAR	European Area of Recognition
ECA	Education Credential Assessment
EHEA	European Higher Education Area
ELCORE	Electronic Communication for Recognition
ENIC	European Network of Information Centres
EQF	European Qualifications Framework
EQPR	European Qualifications Passport for Refugees
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
FCR	Foreign Credential Recognition
FCRO	Foreign Credentials Referral Office
FLMM	Forum of Labour Market Ministers
FRPA	Fair Registration Practices Act (Nova Scotia)
GAC	Global Affairs Canada
HEI	Higher Education Institutions
IAS	International Application Service
IAU	International Association of Universities

ICAS	International Credential Assessment Service of Canada
ICES	International Credential Evaluation Service
IET	internationally educated teacher
IHU	International Handbook of Universities
IQAS	International Qualifications Assessment Service
LO	learning outcome
LRC	Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997 (Lisbon Recognition Convention)
LRCC	Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee)
MIDI	Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec
MQRWG	Mobility and Qualification Recognition Working Group
NARIC	National Academic Recognition Information Centres
NOKUT	Norway Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
NSCAT	Nova Scotia Council on Admission and Transfer
OCAS	Ontario College Application Service
OFC	Office of the Fairness Commissioner (Ontario)
OUAC	Ontario Universities' Application Centre
PAC	Provincial Assessment Committee
PCCAT	Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer
QAF	Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials
RTCC	Registrars for Teacher Certification Canada
SQUARE	System of Quality Assurance for the Recognition Networks
SRAM	Service régional d'admission du Montréal métropolitain
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WES Canada	World Education Services Canada
WHED	World Higher Education Database
WUSC	World University Service of Canada

Executive Summary

The purpose of this report is:

- to provide information related to monitoring Canada's implementation of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997 (the Lisbon Recognition Convention, LRC), ratified by Canada on June 13, 2018, including its subsidiary text on the recognition of refugees' qualifications. This report complements the LRC Committee's *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (February 2016), which describes the implementation levels achieved by 50 other signatories;
- to inform the decision-making process of provincial and territorial governments in Canada with respect to the possibility of Canada signing the proposed UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications; and

The report describes Canada's constitutional framework as it applies to education, the roles of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) and CICIC, and the interpretation and implementation of the provisions of the LRC. It describes rapid changes in the nature and process of, and expertise related to, the assessment and recognition of academic credentials. Information was gathered through a literature review and interviews as well as a survey sent to the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community.

As a whole, Canada is compliant with the LRC to a leading extent among signatories, particularly in the practices of the six assessment services that constitute the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) and that perform over half of all assessments in Canada. However, there is still scope for significant improvements in terms of the following:

- the absence of an overarching pan-Canadian qualifications framework
- the absence of a Canadian digital diploma supplement
- the slow adoption of learning outcomes in the academic credential assessment process
- the slow implementation of the recognition of prior learning
- the limited detailed knowledge of the LRC and its subsidiary texts among many postsecondary educational institutions and professional regulators.

There appears to be a general support for the proposed UNESCO Global Convention within the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community, although it is clear that the community requires additional information about its impact. Canada appears to be ready for the Global Convention, as all assessment services and competent recognition authorities already apply the principles of the LRC to internationally educated applicants from all regions of the world.

Together with ACESC members, CICIC deserves credit for Canada's achievements with respect to the LRC. CICIC has fulfilled its role as Canada's national information centre in an exemplary way, playing a leading role in international committees and projects and providing information to the public through its excellent and comprehensive Web site. It has acted as an effective channel of communication between provincial and territorial governments, international ENIC-NARIC Networks, and the academic credential assessment community in Canada. CICIC has worked to support the capacity of this community through the development of standards, tools, and resources, while using innovative technologies to enhance its impact and efficiency.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of report

This report presents the results of a study of the status of academic credential assessment in Canada in light of Canada's implementation of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997 (Lisbon Recognition Convention, LRC)¹ and preparation for the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.

The purpose of this report is to:

- provide information relevant to monitoring Canada's implementation of the LRC;
- inform provincial and territorial governments' decision-making processes with respect to the possibility of Canada signing the proposed Global Convention in 2019; and

The report was prepared by CamProf Inc. for the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), which, within its mandate as Canada's national information centre under the LRC, supports the adoption and monitoring in Canada of international legal instruments related to qualification recognition.

As agreed to by all its provinces and territories, Canada ratified the LRC on June 13, 2018; ratification was followed by its entry-in-force under international law for Canada on August 1, 2018. From 2014 to 2016, the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC),² with the assistance of the LRCC Bureau, led a monitoring exercise to oversee the implementation of the main provisions of the LRC by its signatories.³ The results were published in February 2016 in *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report*⁴ (referred to as the 2016 Monitoring Report in the present report). Because Canada had not yet completed the ratification process of the LRC at the time, it was excluded from that monitoring exercise. This report is intended to serve as a companion to the 2016 Monitoring Report, providing comparable information so that Canada can be compared with other UNESCO Member States that ratified the convention.

On November 14, 2017, members of the LRCC adopted a new subsidiary text, *Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*.⁵ This action was meant to address the limited scope of Section VII of the LRC by offering an alternative qualification-assessment procedure for those without access to verifiable documentation. In fall 2018, the Bureau of the LRCC conducted a monitoring exercise among ratifying states with respect to the implementation of this recommendation. Provincial and territorial governments, through CICIC as Canada's national information centre under the LRC, supported this monitoring exercise.

In 2018, UNESCO consulted with Member States on the preliminary draft of the proposed Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.⁶ In Canada, provincial and territorial governments submitted comments on the text, and Canada's position was transmitted to UNESCO through Global Affairs Canada.⁷ In 2019, the provincial/territorial governments will undertake their respective decision-making processes with respect to the possibility of Canada signing the Global Convention. At the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019, the proposed convention is expected to be open for signature by interested UNESCO Member States. CICIC consulted assessment services⁸ and competent recognition bodies⁹ in Canada in spring 2018 on a draft of the proposed Global Convention, gathering information on practices and methodologies used by these organizations when assessing academic credentials under the framework of the LRC. The information collected from these consultations is summarized in this report and is intended to inform provincial and territorial governments' decision-making processes.

1.2 Context in Canada

1.2.1 Constitutional responsibility for education in Canada

Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and 3 territories (Figure 1). Under the Constitution of Canada, provincial governments have exclusive responsibility for all levels of education. Canada's three territories—Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut—do not have the same constitutional status as the provinces and are subject in many areas to more direct control by the federal government. However, the federal government has delegated responsibility for education to the territorial governments, which in turn cooperate with the provinces.

There is no ministry or department of education at the federal level. In each of the 13 provinces and territories, departments or ministries of education are responsible for the organization, delivery, and assessment of education at the elementary and secondary levels, for technical and vocational education, and for postsecondary education. Some provinces have separate departments or ministries for these levels, one having responsibility for elementary-secondary education and another for postsecondary education.

Figure 1 Canada, a federation of 10 provinces and 3 territories



1.2.2 The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC)

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) was founded in 1967 by the provincial and territorial ministers of education as an intergovernmental body to serve as:

- a forum to discuss policy issues;
- a mechanism through which to undertake activities, projects, and initiatives in areas of mutual interest;
- a means by which to consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government; and
- an instrument to represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally.

CMEC provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education.

CMEC is governed by an Agreed Memorandum approved by all 13 provinces and territories as members, and a chair is elected every two years based on rotation among the provinces and territories. There have been a series of Memoranda of Understanding between CMEC and the federal government confirming CMEC's role as Canada's voice for education on the international stage.

1.2.3 The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)

In 1990, the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) was established by CMEC and the federal government in response to the ratification of a UNESCO Convention. CICIC has served to facilitate the assessment and recognition of international academic and occupational credentials. From 2003 onwards, funding for CICIC has been provided by CMEC. Through its mandate, CICIC:

- provides information and referral services to individuals and organizations on the recognition of academic and occupational credentials for working and studying in Canada and abroad;
- provides information on Canada's education systems and their quality assurance mechanisms to assist in the recognition of Canadian qualifications, in collaboration with provincial and territorial ministries and departments of education;
- contributes to policy dialogue and analysis on the management of academic credential assessment issues in Canada, including building awareness of the impact of developments in related areas such as immigration and labour market policies and of the need to facilitate mobility by reducing barriers to students and workers moving to, across, or outside Canada;
- develops tools and resources to support the community of academic credential assessors in order to improve consistency and capacity for academic credential assessment in Canada; and
- manages labour-mobility projects, focusing on academic credential assessment and the teaching profession.

CICIC is Canada's national information centre under the LRC and fulfills Canada's obligations under UNESCO conventions to facilitate the mobility of talent. As such, it is Canada's representative in the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and it held the presidency or vice-presidency of the ENIC Network from 2004 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2014. CICIC is an integral part of a growing pan-Canadian and international network of people and organizations concerned with the assessment and recognition of academic and professional qualifications.

1.2.4 Canada's approach regarding international legal instruments

In Canada, the federal government has responsibilities for procedures enabling the signature and ratification of international legal instruments, ultimately binding Canada under international law.

The Treaty Law Division of Global Affairs Canada is part of the department's Legal Affairs Bureau. Its principal functions are to provide legal advice to governments in Canada on treaty law and to take care of the actual "nuts and bolts" of Canada's treaty-making activities.¹⁰

For many decades, provincial and territorial governments, through CMEC, have collaborated with Global Affairs Canada to support procedures enabling Canada's ratification of education-related conventions. Currently, two multilateral education-related conventions¹¹ have been ratified through this process:

- the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region 1979
- the UNESCO and the Council of Europe Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997 (the Lisbon Recognition Convention)

1.3 Evolution of UNESCO Regional Conventions and the Global Convention

1.3.1 UNESCO Regional Conventions, including the Lisbon Recognition Convention

In the 1970s and 1980s, UNESCO adopted six legal instruments, one at each of its regional levels, that set forth the principles and norms concerning the recognition of higher education qualifications. This was followed by a recommendation at the inter-regional level in 1993. The major milestones for Canada with respect to such conventions include the following:

- In 1990, Canada ratified the first-generation UNESCO Convention for the European region,¹² upon the agreement of all provinces and territories. Canada provided a declaration, appended to the 1979 convention,¹³ to provide context for implementation in this country.
- Also in 1990, CICIC was established as Canada's national information centre for international academic credentials. Within its mandate, CICIC supports the adoption and monitoring of international legal instruments related to the recognition of qualifications in Canada. CICIC is a unit of CMEC.
- In 1997, upon the agreement of all provinces and territories, Canada became a signatory to the LRC.
- On June 13, 2018, Canada ratified the LRC, and it became legally binding under international law for Canada on August 1, 2018, superseding the 1979 Convention. In the instrument of ratification, Canada included a declaration¹⁴ to provide context on the implementation of the LRC in this country.

Within the context of UNESCO's six regions, Canada belongs to UNESCO's Europe. Consequently, Canada is party only to the convention covering that region, which consists of 55 countries.

1.3.2 Recommendation on the Recognition of Refugees' Qualifications

On November 14, 2017, members of the LRCC adopted a new subsidiary text on refugees' qualifications.¹⁵ This action was meant to address the limited scope of Section VII of the LRC by offering an alternative qualification-assessment procedure for those without access to verifiable documentation. Ratifying states are expected to implement the measures outlined in the subsidiary text within their respective contexts.

1.3.3 UNESCO Global Convention

Since 2012, in collaboration with its Member States, UNESCO has undertaken a project to draft a new Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. This convention would modernize and consolidate the six regional conventions relating to this issue and replace the 1993 Recommendation on the Recognition of Studies and Qualifications in Higher Education, if adopted by

UNESCO Member States in November 2019. The convention would encompass all countries and would support:

- the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, especially as it concerns the enhancement of the quality of higher education;
- growth in student mobility;
- the recognition of academic credentials as a global right;
- international consistency in recognition procedures; and
- increased international cooperation.

The major milestones and expected timelines related to the Global Convention are as follows:

- 2013—At the 37th Session of the UNESCO General Conference, Member States reviewed the preliminary study of the technical and legal aspects relating to the desirability of a global standard-setting instrument on the recognition of higher education qualifications.¹⁶
- 2015—At the 38th Session, Member States reviewed the preliminary report concerning the preparation of a global convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications.¹⁷
- 2017—At the 39th Session, Member States reviewed the progress report on the preparation of a global convention¹⁸ and agreed on timelines. The report of the Canadian delegation is accessible on-line.¹⁹
- March 2018—UNESCO consulted with Member States²⁰ on the preliminary draft of the proposed Global Convention. CICIC invited provincial and territorial governments to submit comments on the text; Global Affairs Canada then transmitted Canada's position to UNESCO.
- Early 2019—Provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education will be asked by CICIC to confirm their intention to sign the proposed convention for Canada.
- November 2019—At the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference, the proposed convention is expected to be open for signature by interested UNESCO Member States.

Given Canada's ratification of UNESCO's 1979 and 1997 recognition-related conventions, the country's provincial and territorial governments already benefit from existing implementation structures established over the past four decades. The Global Convention would extend similar provisions to all the countries that ratify it.

1.3.4 Comparison of the LRC and the Global Convention

A detailed comparison was prepared to highlight similarities between articles of the LRC and the July 7, 2017 preliminary draft of the Global Convention. The results are presented in Appendix I of this report.

It is clear that, while the Global Convention has evolved from the LRC, the two differ in several ways. Notable, the Global Convention includes the following:

- explicit aims (Article II)
- three additional principles for the recognition of higher education qualifications:
 - III.5—Decisions are made with due respect to the cultural, social, political, philosophical, religious, and economic diversity of higher education systems worldwide
 - III.6—Entities undertaking recognition assessments, including, but not limited to, national or subnational competent authorities and higher education institutions, do so in good faith
 - III.7—Applicants seeking recognition of their qualifications do so in good faith and have the right to appeal

- the inclusion of non-traditional learning modes (IV.3, V.3, VI.3)
- the requirement for learning outcomes (VIII.1)
- the requirement for a system of approval, recognition, and quality assurance of higher education institutions (VIII.2)
- the inclusion of “networks of national implementation structures” (XIV.1–4) to encourage the formation of regional networks like the ENIC-NARIC Networks
- the formation of a Global Convention Committee as the Global Convention management structure, with UNESCO providing the secretariat (XV.1–13, XXIII, XXIV, XXV)
- applicability to federal states (XX) to encompass situations such as Canada’s constitutional arrangement where responsibilities for education are at the provincial and territorial level

1.4 Methodology

The findings presented in this report are based on consultations led by CICIC in spring and summer 2018 with assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. The services of CamProf Inc. were retained to assist CICIC with consultations, focusing on data collection and analysis.

A survey with 41 questions was designed and implemented in spring 2018. (The survey is reproduced in Appendix II.) In addition, interviews with key informants were conducted, along with a literature review of relevant Web sites and publications.

More than 350 diverse organizations were invited to take part in the consultation process, including members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC); universities, colleges, cégeps, polytechnics, institutes, and other educational institutions; provincial and territorial professional regulatory bodies and associations of regulated occupations; pan-Canadian alliances of professional regulatory bodies; and other organizations facilitating the assessment process. To invite organizations to respond to the survey, CICIC reached the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community through users registered for CICIC’s toolbox of on-line services, complemented by direct e-mail outreach.

A total of 103 responses were retained for analysis, representing only those organizations that self-identified as conducting international academic credential assessment activities in-house, as shown in Table 1. Responses received from organizations that self-identified as not conducting international academic credential assessment activities in-house were not taken into account in this analysis.

Table 1 Survey responses

	Number of responses
ACESC	6
Postsecondary educational institutions	59
Professional bodies	38
Total	103
Universities	46
Other postsecondary institutions	13
Regulators	26
Other organizations facilitating regulation	4
Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances	8

Appendix III of this report presents the responses to each survey question.

1.5 Structure of report

The rest of this report is organized as follows:

- Chapter 2 provides details on access to assessment in Canada.
- Chapters 3–9 describe how the main provisions of the LRC are being implemented in Canada, and are organized according to the structure of the 2016 Monitoring Report.
- Chapter 10 describes how subsidiary texts to the LRC are being implemented in Canada.
- Chapter 11 presents aspects of academic credential recognition in Canada related to the UNESCO Global Convention that are not covered in the preceding LRC chapters.
- Chapter 12 focuses on the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the digitalization of academic credentials.

For Chapters 3–9, the relevant LRC provision is presented in the introduction of each chapter along with the corresponding chapter in the 2016 Monitoring Report, to facilitate comparison of results.

Throughout the report, examples of best practices have been highlighted as case studies. Material has been drawn freely from the sources noted, which are usually referenced on the CICIC Web site.

2 Access to Assessment

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) states that holders of qualifications shall have adequate access, upon request to the appropriate assessment body, to an assessment of those qualifications. Access to an assessment is crucial. (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 9)

2.1 Lisbon Recognition Convention requirements and interpretation in Canada

In considering access to assessment, it is useful to define the terminology used in the text of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC), its interpretation in Canada, and the implementation structure put in place by provincial and territorial governments in Canada.

2.1.1 Type of procedure

When defining the type of procedure involved, it is important to consider that there are two separate procedures, which in Canada are often not the responsibility of the same organization. The LRC has the following definitions:

Assessment (of individual qualifications): The written appraisal or evaluation of an individual's foreign qualifications by a competent body.

Recognition: A formal acknowledgement by a competent authority of the value of a foreign educational qualification with a view to access to educational and/or employment activities.

Table 2 highlights the interpretation of these provisions in Canada.

Table 2 Type of procedure

Type of procedure	Interpretation in Canada
Assessment ^a	A process by which academic credentials from one country are compared to those of another country. In Canada, it typically involves three main steps: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. confirming the status of the educational institution and/or its academic programs outside Canada;2. authenticating documents; and3. comparing the academic credentials to similar academic credentials issued in a particular provincial or territorial education system in Canada.
Recognition	A process by which an organization recognizes that an individual's academic credentials from one country meet their respective requirements for admission, licensure, immigration, or employment in a province or territory in Canada.

^a See CICIC, "Assess an Academic Credential," retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/1421/assess_an_academic_credential.canada

These two procedures are generally completed in sequence, with the initial assessment followed by the recognition decision, based on the outcome of the assessment procedure.

2.1.2 Type of organization

With respect to the type of organization competent to make decisions regarding international academic credentials, the LRC provides the following definition:

Competent recognition authority: A body officially charged with making binding decisions on the recognition of foreign qualifications.

In addition, the concept of “competent authority” or “competent body” is cited on multiple occasions in the provisions of the LRC.

Table 3 highlights the interpretation in Canada of provisions on types of organizations involved in assessment and recognition procedures.

Table 3 Type of organization involved in assessment and recognition procedures

Type of organization	Interpretation in Canada
Competent authority or body	Defined as provincial and territorial governments in Canada and, more specifically, their ministries/ departments responsible for education, ^a which are responsible for putting in place the implementation structure of the LRC in Canada and for ensuring that international obligations are met
Competent <i>recognition</i> authority or body	Defined as educational institutions, ^b professional regulatory bodies or associations, ^c immigration authorities, ^d and employers

^a CICIC, “Ministries/Departments Responsible for Education in Canada,” retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/1301/ministries_departments_responsible_for_education_in_canada.canada

^b CICIC, “Directory of Educational Institutions in Canada,” retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/868/search_the_directory_of_educational_institutions_in_canada.canada

^c CICIC, “Directory of Occupational Profiles,” retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/934/search_the_directory_of_occupational_profiles.canada

^d CICIC, “Determine Your Eligibility to Work in Canada,” retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/939/determine_your_eligibility_to_work_in_canada.canada

To assist with defining the concept of competent authority in this country, Canada included the following declaration in the instrument of ratification of the LRC:

Canada’s Constitution provides for a federal system in which legislative powers are allocated between the federal Parliament and the provincial legislatures. In compliance with the exclusive legislative powers in the field of education granted to the provinces by the Canadian Constitution and with the similar responsibilities given to the territories by delegation from the federal government, the implementation of the Convention in Canada will be ensured by the provinces and territories.²¹

The principle of institutional autonomy is recognized in Article II.1 of the LRC:

Where the competence to make decisions in recognition matters lies with individual higher education institutions or other entities, each Party according to its constitutional situation or structure shall transmit the text of this Convention to these institutions or entities and shall take all possible steps to encourage the favourable consideration and application of its provisions.

To assist with defining “competent recognition authorities” and the associated concept of institutional autonomy in Canada, the instrument of ratification contains the following declaration by Canada:

Each postsecondary institution in Canada determines what qualifications it will accept for admission to various levels of study. Legislation also confers some autonomy on professional governing bodies in setting the content of regulations under which credentials and training are recognised. Professions therefore enjoy broad autonomy in recognising credentials, whether obtained in Canada or abroad, for the purposes of registration or permission to practise a profession in Canada.²²

Therefore, although there are no legal obligations in this context for educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies or associations, immigration authorities, and employers, the good faith implied by ratification compels competent recognition bodies in Canada to apply the LRC principles.

To support competent recognition bodies in Canada with an implementation structure, provincial and territorial governments have established:

- a national information centre (see Section 2.3 below), and
- assessment services (see Section 2.4 below).

Furthermore, some competent recognition bodies have established their own support mechanisms, which include the following:

- Pan-Canadian alliances of professional regulatory bodies: These may serve to support a centralized process at the pan-Canadian or regional level for the assessment of internationally educated applicants. Such an alliance would usually perform the assessment and issue non-binding expert advice. In turn, a professional regulatory body would inform its recognition decisions with this expert advice.
- Regional or provincial alliances of postsecondary educational institutions: To assist with the intake of student applications, these alliances may provide support for a centralized application process at the regional or provincial level and/or conduct an initial assessment.
- Designated organizations charged with providing non-binding assessments to support immigration authorities, especially for immigration programs for skilled workers such as the federal Express Entry immigration program and its Educational Credential Assessment (ECA).

2.1.3 Type of document

Within the text of the LRC, the term “qualification” is defined as follows:

Higher education qualification: Any degree, diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of a higher education programme.

Qualification giving access to higher education: Any diploma or other certificate issued by a competent authority attesting the successful completion of an education programme and giving the holder of the qualification the right to be considered for admission to higher education.

In both cases, the relevant documents are issued by an educational institution belonging to the education system of a given country.²³ In Canada, the term “academic credential,” rather than “qualification,” is used to define this type of document.

Table 4 highlights the interpretation in Canada of LRC provisions on this matter.

Table 4 Type of document subject to assessment and recognition procedures

Type of document	Interpretation	Issuing organization
Academic credential	<p>A document provided as evidence of learning based on completion of a recognized program of study at an educational institution. Academic credentials usually include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a diploma or degree certificate • a transcript, mark sheets, and/or index • a detailed course outline 	<p>An educational institution belonging to the education system of a given country</p>
Qualification	<p>A broader term that encompasses academic credentials as well as other required documents for admission to postsecondary studies or to regulated occupations. Qualifications may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a statement of professional standing • a certificate of competency or qualification • a professional qualification certificate or licence to practise • the results of a language test • a criminal record check • academic credentials (as defined above) 	<p>Various organizations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • an educational institution belonging to the education system • a professional regulatory authority or association in a regulated or non-regulated occupation • an organization responsible for benchmarking language competencies, such as French and English • a public authority responsible for ensuring public safety

It is important to underscore that only academic credentials are bound by the legal provisions of the LRC. All other documents related to qualification in Table 4, except academic credentials, are outside the scope of the LRC. While the mandate of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) focuses on supporting the implementation of policies and best practices in the assessment and recognition of academic credentials, the broader term “qualification” is sometimes used to reflect the reality that many organizations and government policies focus on qualifications and not simply credentials. Furthermore, some of the best practices in assessing and recognizing academic credentials can be applied to a broader range of qualifications.

2.1.4 Type of purpose

The purpose of an assessment plays a significant role in its implementation structure and in subsequent recognition decisions taken by competent recognition bodies. With respect to purposes for qualifications assessment, the LRC notes the following:

VI.4 An assessment in a Party of a higher education qualification issued in another Party may take the form of:

- a) advice for general employment purposes;
- b) advice to an educational institution for the purpose of admission into its programmes;
- c) advice to any other competent recognition authority.

Table 5 highlights the interpretation in Canada of provisions related to purposes of assessments.

Table 5 Purpose of assessment and recognition procedures

Purpose	Interpretation in Canada
Employment in the labour market	An employer has the ability to determine minimum employment requirements for a specific occupation, which may include the level of education and completed academic credentials.
Professional access to a <i>regulated</i> occupation	A professional regulatory body or association has the ability to determine minimum requirements for a specific regulated occupation, in accordance with provincial or territorial legislation in Canada. These requirements usually have an educational component, where certain learning outcomes are expected of the applicant to be able to perform an occupation. In most cases, these requirements are in place to ensure public health and safety. Applicants meeting these requirements are issued a certification, licence, or registration enabling them to use a reserved title and/or exclusive right to practise in a specific jurisdiction in Canada.
Professional access to a <i>non-regulated</i> occupation	An association has the ability to determine minimum requirements for a specific non-regulated occupation where voluntary certification, licence, or registration is available but not required under provincial or territorial legislation in Canada.
Admission to further studies	An educational institution sets its own admission requirements for students undertaking further studies. Some requirements are general while others are program-specific. Requirements are usually in place to favour academic success as an end result. Applicants meeting these requirements may be considered for admission to the study program.
Immigration to Canada	Immigration authorities in Canada set their own immigration requirements for newcomers who intend to settle in Canada. For some immigration programs, especially programs for skilled workers, an applicant may need to demonstrate the attainment of a certain level of education. Applicants meeting these requirements would be considered for admission to Canada as newcomers but would still be subject to any quotas and other rules of the program.
General purpose	The six members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) issue reports that outline non-binding expert advice for any internationally educated applicant requesting an assessment. In some cases, competent recognition bodies have established bilateral agreements to provide other bodies with reports for specific purposes and to assist their recognition decisions.

2.2 Assessment and recognition responsibilities in a decentralized system

As discussed in Chapter 1, Canada is unusual compared to most of the other parties to the LRC in that legislative powers with respect to education lie solely with the country's 10 provinces and 3 territories. There is no ministry of education at the federal level. Furthermore, the decentralized approach to assessment and recognition means that different organizations are responsible for these procedures depending on the intended purpose.

In this context, competent recognition bodies may conduct their own assessments, or they may choose to use an assessment report issued by a member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) or another pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial body to inform their recognition decision.

Table 6 highlights the roles and responsibilities of various participants in assessment and recognition processes in Canada.

Table 6 Organizations involved in assessment and recognition procedures in relation to purpose

Organization	Purpose	Procedure	
		Assessment	Recognition decision
Employers	Employment in the labour market	In some cases	Yes
Professional regulatory bodies or associations of regulated occupations	Professional access in regulated occupations	In most cases	Yes
Professional associations	Professional access in non-regulated occupations	In many cases	Yes
Educational institutions	Admission to further studies	In most cases	Yes
Immigration authorities	Immigration purposes	In some cases	Yes
Pan-Canadian alliances of professional regulatory bodies (regional, provincial, territorial)	To support recognition decisions of professional regulatory bodies or associations of a regulated occupation	Yes	No
Alliances of postsecondary educational institutions	To support recognition decisions of postsecondary educational institutions	Yes	No
Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) members	Multiple purposes to support recognition decisions of any competent recognition body	Yes	No
Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)	Functions as Canada's national information centre on academic credentials; does not receive or process individual applications for assessment, nor does it make recommendations or decisions on such applications	No	No

2.3 Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC)

As described in Section 1.2, the provinces and territories have a pan-Canadian coordinating mechanism, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). CMEC has established a small unit, the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), to serve as Canada's national information centre (like members of ENIC, the European Network of Information Centres) to support the implementation of the LRC in Canada. Among its services, CICIC provides information and referrals for individuals and organizations with respect to the recognition of academic credentials and occupational qualifications for working and studying in or outside Canada.

CICIC operates a comprehensive Web site in both English and French (the two official languages of Canada), providing information and resources on Canada's education systems and their quality assurance mechanisms, with a range of on-line directories to assist with international academic credential recognition. These directories include powerful search features to assist users to find the educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and academic credential assessment services to support their settlement in Canada.

In some countries, the national information centre is responsible for providing academic credential assessment reports to individuals and thus for making recognition decisions. However, in Canada, CICIC does not receive or process individual applications for assessment, nor does it make recommendations or decisions on such applications.

One very important resource, available on the CICIC Web site, is the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF).²⁴ This is a pan-Canadian guide to the quality considerations involved in policies and procedures for international academic credential assessment, fully embracing the LRC concepts, with which all competent recognition authorities are encouraged to comply. The QAF is discussed in more detail in Section 3.1.

The declaration contained in the instrument of ratification of the LRC by Canada notes that, “In accordance with article IX.2, provincial and territorial governments have jointly determined that the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) will serve as the national information centre.”²⁵

2.4 Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)

A key feature of the recognition landscape in Canada is that many competent recognition bodies, particularly the smaller ones, delegate the assessment (but not recognition) of international academic credentials to one of the six members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC).²⁶

The six members of ACESC are:

- Comparative Education Service (CES);
- International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS);
- International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES);
- International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS);
- Ministère de l’Immigration, de la Diversité et de l’Inclusion du Québec (MIDI); and
- World Education Services (WES) Canada.

It should be emphasized that the assessment reports of these organizations are non-binding advisory opinions only—they do not guarantee recognition. But all six ACESC members abide by the QAF, and, thus, their recommendations generally do carry weight.

It is not possible to segregate the work of ACESC between assessments for immigration, employment, professional licensure and registration, and further education. Its members serve all these markets. They operate in both the public and private sectors in four provinces (see Case Study 1); however, they provide their services to applicants and competent recognition bodies across all provinces and territories of Canada. All have comprehensive Web sites setting out their application processes.

Case Study 1 Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)²⁷

ACESC is a pan-Canadian organization composed of six members operating in the public and private sectors in the provinces of Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. In close collaboration with CICIC, ACESC was established in the 1990s to ensure compliance with UNESCO conventions related to the recognition of qualifications, following the ratification of those conventions in Canada. Because Canada’s national information centre, CICIC, does not itself provide assessment or recognition decisions, provincial and territorial governments set up alternative structures to perform those tasks. These structures and the creation of ACESC enable Canada to ensure access to assessments.

Creation and development of ACESC

The precursor to ACESC was the Provincial Assessment Committee (PAC), a committee of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), under the responsibility of CICIC. PAC was formed in the mid-1990s, in response to the first generation recognition convention, “for the purpose of sharing information on assessment methodologies used in each province [and territory] and to establish codes of good practices and to identify common assessment principles.” In particular, PAC recognized:

- the need for fair, credible, and standardized methods in the assessment of international academic credentials;
- the need for consistency among the provinces in the assessment of international academic credentials;

- the importance of portability of academic credential assessments from one province to another;
- the importance of articulating a conceptual framework for the assessment of international academic credentials to promote consistency; and
- the advantages of working collaboratively to address issues related to the assessment of international academic credentials.

The first meeting of PAC, held in Montebello, Quebec, on March 1–2, 1996, focused on areas of collaboration and was designed to “build the trust and confidence necessary to begin discussions on portability of assessments among provincial services.” It identified 12 principles common to existing provincial services that could form the basis of a common methodology. These were developed into the General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials, which incorporated many elements from the Draft LRC.

By 1999, PAC became ACESC. Two more services joined in 2003, with a further two in 2012. Over the years, CICIC and ACESC have expanded outreach activities, with their Web sites and strong communications and collaboration efforts. CICIC functions as ACESC’s secretariat.

Criteria for membership

ACESC has published Terms of Reference formally setting out its role, application and annual renewal processes, and governance arrangements, including the duties of the secretariat, election rules, and members’ rights and responsibilities. Members must:

- demonstrate compliance with the QAF, including its Code of Good Practice;
- serve a broad-based clientele not limited to individuals applying for admission or professional membership/certification with only one type of competent recognition body;
- provide multi-purposed assessments (e.g., for general employment) and cover a full range of countries of origin, disciplines, and levels of credentials;
- have complied with the above criteria for at least one year and issued a significant number of assessment reports (at least 1,500 during this time).

Annual renewal involves a peer-review process where continued compliance with the terms of membership and the QAF must be explicitly demonstrated.

2.5 Volume of assessments

Canada receives very high numbers of newcomers every year. These are mostly economic newcomers and international students, generally with high levels of academic education. But in recent years, there has been a significant influx of refugees and their families, often with lower education attainment levels or with challenges in accessing documentation of their academic background (see Chapter 7 for detailed information on considerations related to refugees).

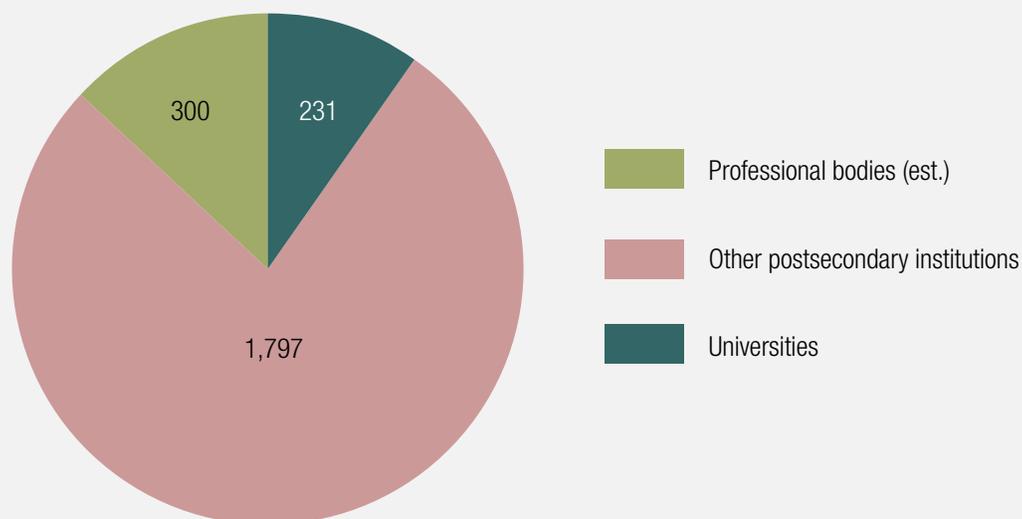
Canada has a high degree of professional occupational regulation. Such regulation occurs by sector or occupation, generally at the provincial or territorial level. In addition, many sectors/occupations have established a pan-Canadian mechanism to support this process, at least in part.

Canada has become a study destination for international students. Postsecondary educational institutions welcome a growing number of international students into their programs, with many transitioning to permanent residency in Canada. In Canada, postsecondary educational institutions are responsible for setting their admission requirements for specific academic programs. When a student seeks admission to one of these institutions and holds an academic credential issued outside Canada, the institution has the authority to make admission decisions based on the recognition of international academic credentials for further studies.

In recent years, competent authorities responsible for immigration in Canada have reformed specific immigration programs. Some of these programs have eligibility requirements associated with the applicants' education level and completed academic credentials. That would be the case in the immigration of skilled workers through the Express Entry program, where applicants may be required to provide an Educational Credential Assessment as part of the initial immigration application process.

All these factors combine to generate a high number of applications, assessments, assessment services, and competent recognition bodies in Canada (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Number of competent recognition bodies



CICIC's Directory of Occupational Profiles²⁸ lists about 500 occupational profiles. Approximately half of these occupations are regulated or have some form of voluntary certification, licensing, or registration, or are subject to a mutual recognition agreement. The number of professional occupational regulators in the provinces and territories is not clear but is likely to be several hundred, estimated here at approximately 300.

Related to the number of regulators is Canada's well-established assessment and recognition sector. The total number of individual academic credential and professional qualification assessors working for these bodies is estimated at close to 2,000,²⁹ and they perform approximately half a million assessments per year. (These numbers may not be entirely accurate. It is challenging to arrive at more precise figures because of the many overlapping roles involved in the assessment process, as described in more detail later in this section. In addition, the estimate of the number of assessments conducted between 2015 and 2017 is based on survey responses and therefore represents only a sample of the actual assessments conducted by the whole pan-Canadian community, especially by organizations other than the six ACESC members.)

In the survey that constituted one of the bases for this report, respondents provided data on their staffing levels and the volume of assessments they had conducted over the previous three years (Question 4 in the survey). The results are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7 Staffing levels and volume of assessments

Type of organization (93 respondents)	Average number of staff		Total number of assessments		
	Full time	Part time	2015	2016	2017
Professional regulatory body/association of regulators	1.8	1.0	11,245	12,433	12,486
College	4.2	1.3	45,500	56,880	68,100
University	4.3	1.1	95,629	99,030	125,837
ACESC member	18.3	0.5	174,269	172,374	260,415
Other organization acting for the above	1.0	3.5	4,066	4,415	4,785
Pan-Canadian alliance of professional regulatory bodies	2.1	25.3	14,015	12,390	11,660
Cégep, polytechnic, institute, or other educational institution	2.0	0.7	3,324	2,846	3,050
Total number of assessments			348,048	360,368	486,333

As can be seen, the typical number of assessment staff in those organizations is small, with just a handful of full- and part-time staff. The exceptions are the six ACESC members (all of whom responded), each with an average of over 18 full-time staff, and one professional alliance that reported 12 full-time and 160 part-time staff. The numbers of full- and part-time staff involved in assessment and recognition of academic credentials are necessarily imprecise, as the organizations all have additional roles, and staff may also be involved in performing them: this is particularly true of postsecondary education and professional bodies. In contrast, the core mandate of ACESC members is to issue assessment reports.

The recently published study *International Transfer Credit Practices*, authored by Joanne Duklas and funded by the British Columbia Council on Admissions and Transfer (BCCAT), confirmed the complexity of validating the exact number of staff involved in assessment and recognition procedures related to international academic credentials for transfer credit:

Often, the interviewees indicated that the same people who deal with domestic transfers also handle international transfer credit processing and equivalency review, making it difficult to separately articulate resources. While those interviewed identified specific departmental positions that support these processes (e.g., transfer coordinator, program chair), providing specifics proved challenging (e.g., number of faculty or staff involved). Without exception, those interviewed indicated that their institution did not track resources and costs to this level of specificity, i.e., for international document assessments related to exchange and transfer. This finding remained true across all interviews and subsequently impeded the goal of identifying specific resources and costs involved beyond those detailed below.³⁰

According to this study, staff members include:

data entry staff in the central registry/admissions areas who update the student record; advisors who guide students throughout the transfer process from beginning to end; assessors who examine the credentials for both admissions and transfer; coordinators who manage the overall student experience and the faculty/staff connections and communications; and faculty members in program areas who assess individual course equivalencies.³¹

The study provides more specific examples:

Interviewees from larger institutions reported that several faculty members support the course equivalency process. For example, one indicated “approximately 60 faculty are involved in adjudicating individual course equivalency decisions.” Interviewees, particularly those representing larger schools, reported that the individual designated to adjudicate a course equivalency decision within a program area is not always apparent; in contrast, some spoke about having a formal roster of faculty who perform this work. Another

institutional interviewee spoke about the formal and primary role of the chairs who lead on evaluating equivalencies and draw in others only when subject matter expertise is needed.³²

Given such limitations, data collected through CICIC-led consultations can offer only a glimpse into a more complex picture: it would require additional research to be able to identify more accurately all staff involved in the assessment and recognition procedures from beginning to end, with different types of responsibilities and in relation to the purpose (e.g., admission, professional licensure). A step-by-step guide³³ on the CICIC Web site highlights six main steps where different resources and levels of expertise would be required to support the whole process, with expert academic credential assessors being involved mainly in only three or four of these steps.

As noted in Table 7, a total of 93 respondents answered the question on volume of assessments, reporting almost 500,000 assessments in 2017. One respondent alone provided half of those. Scaling up for non-respondents and those not invited, it is clear that Canada produced well over half a million assessments in 2017.

The data somewhat exaggerate the growth in volume over the previous two years, as not all respondents provided data for the earlier years. But, looking at the numbers in detail for those organizations that provided data for all three years, it is clear that there was modest growth from 2015 to 2016, followed by enormous growth in 2017. Apart from the general attractions of Canada for newcomers and international students, and the social and economic disruptions elsewhere in the world, the introduction of the Express Entry immigration pathway appears to have generated this acceleration.

Again, our data offer a glimpse into a more complex picture. For ACESC members, the trend is easier to track, given CICIC's role as its secretariat and the compulsory annual peer-review process. However, for the other types of organizations, it becomes more challenging to provide accurate figures over time, as CICIC does not currently have a monitoring mechanism in place.

In 2012, CICIC published *A Feasibility Study for a Distance Education Program for Canadian Academic Credential Assessors*.³⁴ Using its data sample, that report attempted to estimate the size of the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community. However, CICIC encountered the same challenges as those discussed above, which substantiates the need to have more accurate surveying methods to capture a more reliable picture of resources needed to process the volume of assessments.

2.6 Fairness legislation and commissioners

Five provinces in Canada, including the two largest (Ontario and Quebec), have established legislation on fair registration by regulating bodies. Ontario³⁵ and Manitoba³⁶ have both appointed Fairness Commissioners, while Alberta³⁷ and Nova Scotia³⁸ appointed a Fair Registration Review Officer. In 2009, Quebec appointed a Commissioner for Complaints Concerning the Recognition of Professional Competence (now known as the Commissioner for Admission to Professions), whose role is similar to the commissioners in these other provinces.³⁹ For Alberta, the Fair Registration Practices Act and the Fair Registration Practices Regulation came into force March 1, 2020. The Fairness for Newcomers Office officially opened March 2, 2020, and its purpose, intent and future planned work is similar to the other commissioners in these other provinces, but may not be exactly as generally stated in this section. Additional contextual information is accessible on the Alberta Fairness for Newcomers Office website.⁴⁰ In this report, the term "Fairness Commissioner" will be used to refer to all five offices.

These offices provide advice and guidance to regulatory authorities (and, to a certain extent, to individuals) to ensure transparent, objective, impartial, and fair access to regulated occupations. Principles outlined in their guiding legislation are based largely on those of the LRC. These bodies conduct audits and receive and assess complaints. Specifically, they require that holders of qualifications issued outside Canada have fair access to regulated professions in their respective provinces.

These offices have comprehensive Web sites, which provide access to a range of information and published reports. Among the reports available on each office's Web site is an annual report that documents progress on the issue of regulation. These annual reports give an account of the audits conducted, the complaints received, and the commission's outreach activities for the year. Such public reporting helps encourage compliance.

Clearly, these are powerful bodies, exerting influence well beyond their statutory and geographic limits. Their work continues to generate changes in professional regulators' processes across Canada.

Case Study 2 provides more details on Ontario's Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

Case Study 2 Office of the Fairness Commissioner, Ontario⁴¹

Established by provincial legislation (the *Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, 2006*), the Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) assesses the registration practices of 40 regulated professions to make sure that they are transparent, objective, and impartial, and are fair for anyone applying to practise his or her profession in Ontario.

The OFC requires the bodies that regulate the professions to review their own registration processes, submit reports about them, and undergo compliance audits. With these audits, the OFC ensures that the regulatory bodies are meeting their legislated obligations.

The functions of the OFC include the following:

- assessing the regulated professions' and compulsory trades' registration process
- initiating audits of registration processes
- advising regulatory bodies about their registration process and other issues
- setting guidelines for the regulatory bodies' reports that are to be provided to the Fairness Commissioner
- advising Ontario government ministries about issues relating to the professions and trades that fall within their portfolio
- issuing compliance orders to the non-health professions and to the trades, if necessary
- advising the Ontario Minister of Health and Long-Term Care about a health profession's non-compliance, if necessary
- reporting to the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities about the OFC's work
- conducting research to explore issues relating to fairness and to identify solutions to those issues

Education and promotion

As well as its Web site, which includes over 40 published reports and papers, the Ontario OFC undertakes a wealth of advisory work, generally aimed at providing a range of information for regulators and some background for potential applicants.

Compliance audits

The regulatory bodies in Ontario are required to conduct a self-review of their regulatory processes, submit reports about these reviews, and undergo a compliance audit. The focus of these activities is specified by the OFC. They provide the OFC with a detailed understanding of the challenges facing applicants for licensing in Ontario.

Results

The changes introduced by the OFC have removed unnecessary hurdles for applicants, streamlined processes, improved communications, and enhanced support. Examples of improvements include the following:

- Qualified internationally educated lawyers no longer have to do compulsory articling in Ontario.
- The regulatory body for dentistry has streamlined its assessment of internationally educated dentists.
- The regulatory body for medical radiation technologists re-evaluated its language requirements to make sure that they actually correspond to the language level needed by such professionals.

2.7 Fees to undertake an assessment

Fees are an important consideration related to access to an assessment for internationally educated applicants. The fee depends on the purpose for which an assessment is required. The 2016 Monitoring Report outlined that, in some countries, fees charged to obtain an assessment are regulated by legislation, with a number of national information centres providing a free or partly subsidized service. In Canada, access to an assessment is generally not a free public service, and fees are not regulated in national legislation.

For the six ACESC members, information on fees is easily accessible on their respective Web sites. Typically, an individual would need to pay \$90 to \$120 to obtain a basic assessment report for one academic credential. Also available, for additional fees ranging from \$120 to \$300, are other types of reports that may be needed for a specific purpose (e.g., Educational Credential Assessment under the Express Entry immigration program or comprehensive course-by-course assessment for professional regulatory bodies or associations).

The six ACESC members operate mainly on a cost-recovery model. Similar to ENIC/NARIC, for which issuing assessment reports to applicants is part of their mandate, this cost-recovery model is used to fund research, training, and engagement. In the province of Alberta, fees for Educational Credential Assessments from IQAS for immigration are based on cost recovery, but assessments for employment, professional licensing, and further education are subsidized by the Government of Alberta.

As noted above, CICIC, Canada's national information centre, does not have a mandate to provide assessment/recognition in Canada. It does not charge fees to applicants for its information and referral services. (For further information, see Chapter 9 on the functions of the national information centre and resources to support its functions.)

In the case of competent recognition bodies, it is difficult to determine what proportion of applicants' fees is specifically for the assessment and recognition of their international academic credential within the broader process.

For access to a regulated occupation, professional regulatory bodies and associations require an individual to submit an application package to obtain a licence to practise. The application fee generally covers the whole application process and cannot be broken down by components (e.g., competency-based exam, academic credential assessment, language skills testing). Typically, professional regulatory bodies charge several hundred dollars for the full application package.

Similarly, for admission to postsecondary educational institutions, an individual usually submits an application package to the registrar's office to seek admission into a specific program. Again, the fee for an assessment is included in the cost of application and is difficult to isolate.

It is important to note that, in addition to application fees, applicants usually incur additional costs in the assessment and recognition procedure, which can impact access. Applicants may incur additional costs for items such as:

- document translation to French or English;
- document authentication processing by the issuing educational institution; and/or
- courier services to transmit documents to the organization processing the application.

To facilitate access to regulated occupations, internationally educated professionals may have access to financial assistance to complete the assessment process in Canada.⁴² Micro-loan programs are offered to citizens or permanent residents of Canada who were trained outside Canada and do not have sufficient credit history to borrow from a Canadian financial institution.

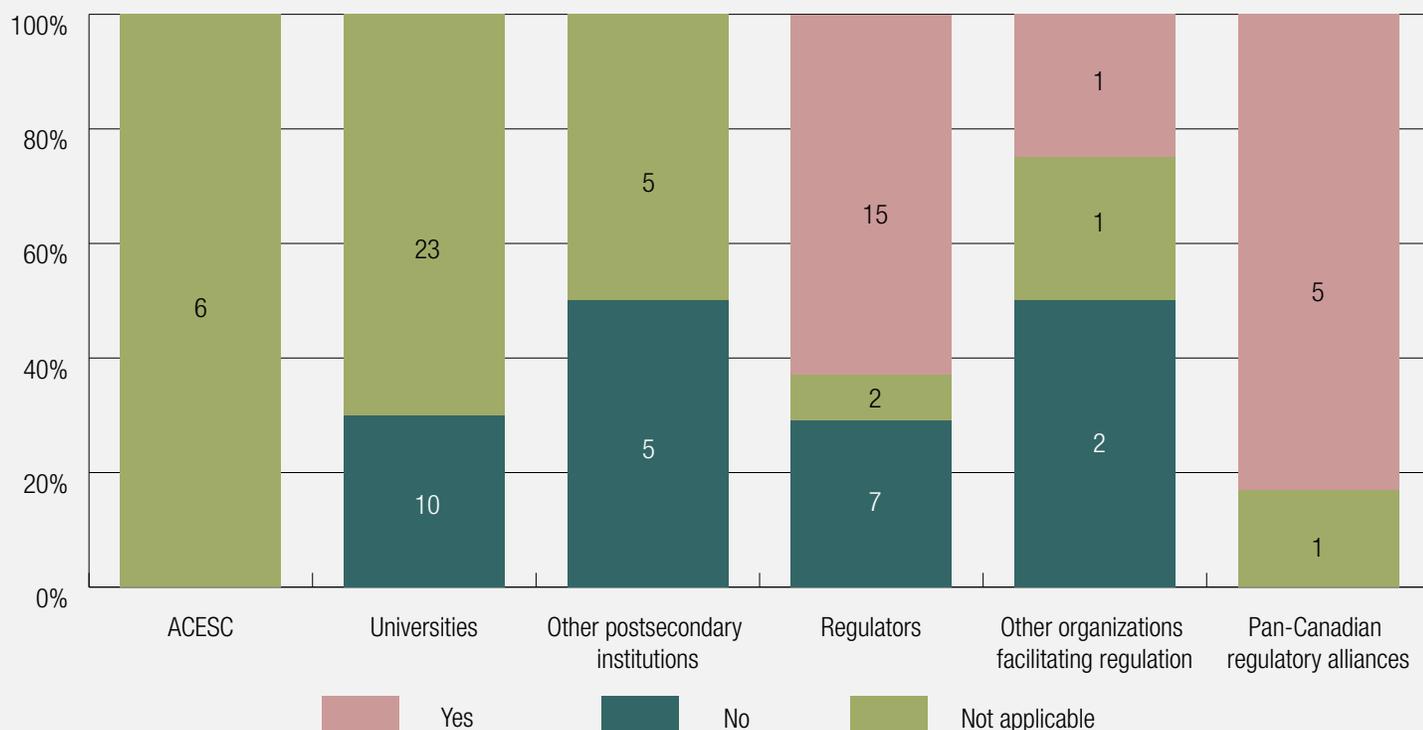
2.8 Access to information

Question 14 in the survey sent to the pan-Canadian assessment community asked: *Is information on the applicant’s assessment procedure for the profession you regulate available on-line?*

Clearly, the question applied only to professional regulatory authorities, so all educational institution and ACESC members responded with a “no” or “not applicable” (Figure 3). Another 20 respondents did not answer this question. The majority of professional bodies (but still not all) replied positively, and provided links to their Web sites.

Figure 3 Availability of on-line information

Survey Q14 — All respondent categories (n = 83)



It is unfortunate that this question did not address types of organizations other than professional regulatory authorities, so we cannot learn more from the responses. But it is well established from the other sources discussed above that applicants seeking access to an assessment in Canada can easily obtain comprehensive information and guidance on how to obtain an assessment by consulting the Web sites of CICIC, competent recognition bodies, and/or members of ACESC.

Further details on actual criteria and procedures are discussed in the following chapters of this report.

2.9 Conclusions

As explained above, access to assessment is not regulated by a specific legal act or regulation in Canada. Nevertheless, with the leadership provided by CICIC, especially regarding information, quality assurance, training, and guidance, the strong market position of the six ACESC members providing academic credential assessment services, and the powerful role and influence of the Fairness Commissioners, it has been apparent for many years that most competent recognition authorities in Canada consider themselves bound by the provisions of the LRC, and are indeed compliant with it. With Canada's recent ratification of the LRC, that position is reinforced.

Although access to assessment and recognition is more complex than in other countries, in part because of the geographic size of Canada, the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education, and the decentralized implementation structure for the LRC, we conclude that applicants have excellent access to information and to assessment and recognition.

The collection of data for this study has demonstrated that there is no permanent and consistent mechanism for collecting and reporting on the volume of assessment and recognition applications, decisions, results, appeals, and so on. Rather, such information is collected through a variety of initiatives and groups. For example, the Pan-Canadian Mobility and Qualification Recognition Working Group (MQRWG) surveys provincial/territorial and national bodies asking about numbers of applications, licensure rates, the number of applicants who withdraw from the process, and so on.

The question of fees is complex, as they depend on the purpose and the package of assessment services requested. Generally, assessment and recognition is not a free public service in Canada, and fees are charged on a cost-recovery basis. Fees can be substantial, although financial assistance is sometimes available.

3 Criteria and Procedures

Each Party shall ensure that the procedures and criteria used in the assessment and recognition of qualifications are transparent, coherent and reliable (Article III.2).

This article underlines the importance of instituting proper procedures for the handling of applications for the recognition of qualifications. These procedures apply to the assessment of qualifications, regardless of whether the qualifications are ultimately recognised or not. The assessment should be based on adequate expertise and transparent procedures and criteria, and it should be available at reasonable cost and within a reasonable time (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 19)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 1, “Criteria and Procedures,” of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

3.1 Quality Assurance Framework (QAF)

For reasons discussed in previous chapters, neither criteria nor procedures for assessment and recognition are formally regulated at the pan-Canadian level. However, under the leadership of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community (i.e., postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, and the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada—ACESC) has developed the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF).⁴³ The principles in that document fully reflect the provisions of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). Principles are provided in each of the following areas:

- fundamental principles
- assessment procedures
- processing times
- information requirements
- fees
- translations
- document requirements
- status of institutions and programs
- purpose/outcome of the assessment
- level of study
- assessment criteria
- duration of the program of study
- requests for review or appeals

At the end of June 2018 (immediately after completion of the survey used in the analysis for this report), ACESC members agreed to a significant update of the QAF, including a new section on alternative assessment procedures for applicants without access to verifiable documentation. Case Study 3 provides more details on the QAF.

Case Study 3 Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)⁴⁴

The inception of the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF) dates back to 1996. At the time, the Provincial Assessment Committee (PAC), a committee of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) under the responsibility of CICIC, was tasked with developing the General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials. That document incorporated many elements from the *Recommendation on the General Procedures and Criteria for the Evaluation of Foreign Qualifications* developed under the framework of the LRC.

All members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) committed to comply with the code of good practice within their terms of membership.

Respecting the diversity of organizations involved in recognition

Given the decentralized system in Canada, there was a need to ensure that the roles and situation of educational institutions and professional regulatory authorities, which differed from those of assessment services, were reflected in the initial code of good practice. Then, between 2010 and 2012, CICIC led consultations with all these bodies. These consultations were funded through the Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) Foreign Credential Recognition Program. Many of the elements from the initial guiding principles have persisted and were incorporated into CICIC's QAF, published in 2012. The QAF respects the autonomy of the various organizations involved in academic credential assessment in Canada.

Objectives of the QAF

The principal objective of the QAF is to promote the continuous improvement of practices and methodology related to academic credential assessment services in Canada. More specifically, the QAF encourages and assists organizations with the development of their quality assurance practices. These practices, in turn, enable two specific results to be achieved:

- greater consistency of assessments within a particular organization; and
- greater consistency at the pan-Canadian level, enhancing the portability of academic credential assessments.

Management of the QAF

CICIC has established the QAF Steering Committee to support the objectives of the QAF and to ensure ongoing improvements to processes over time. Membership on this committee is:

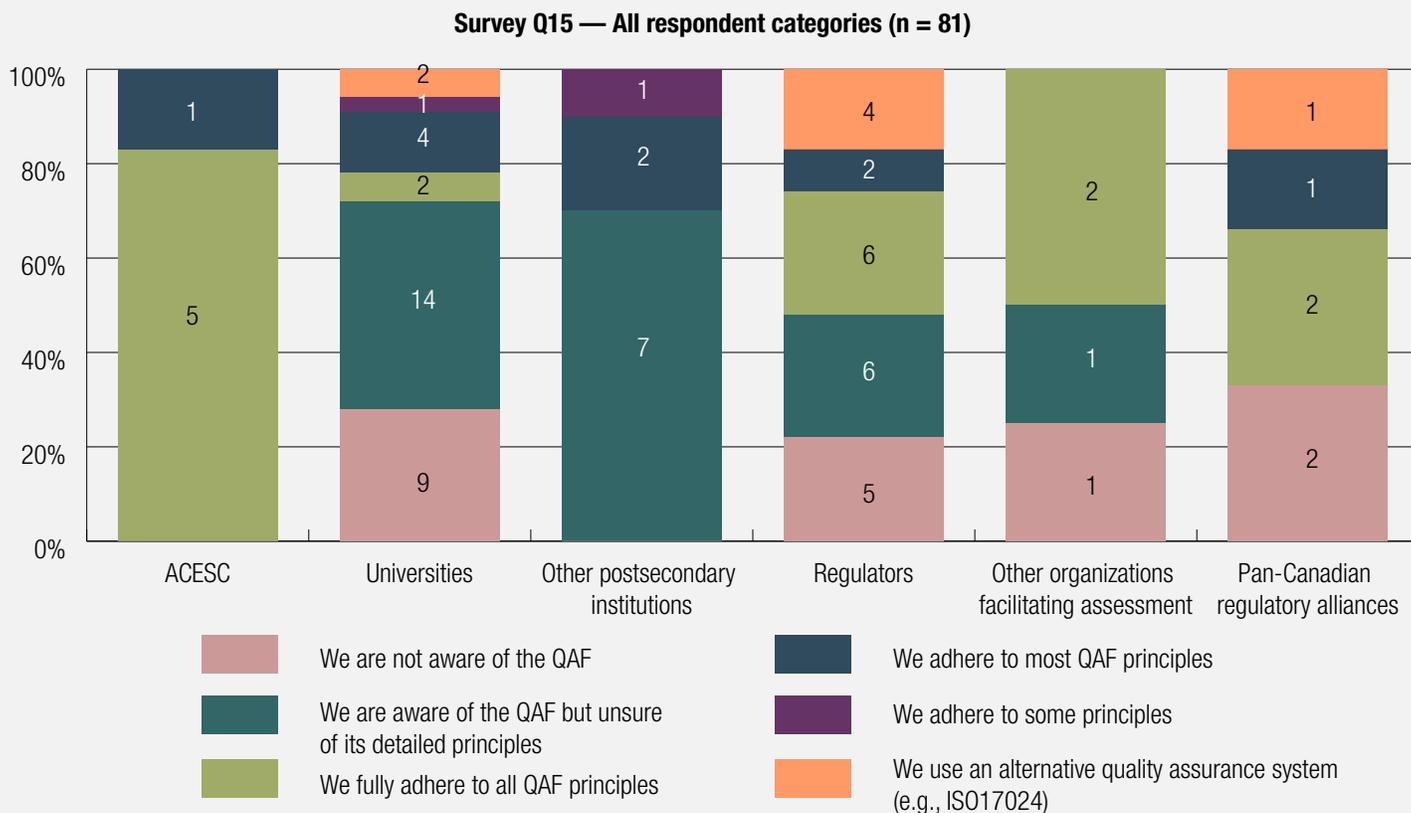
- a representative from ACESC;
- a representative from the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC);
- a representative from the Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation (CNAR);
- up to four members-at-large with experience in credential assessment and/or immigrant integration; and
- a representative of CICIC as a non-voting member.

The survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community asked about compliance with the QAF.

Q15 To what extent, if any, do you adhere to CICIC's Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)?

The responses are presented in Figure 4.

Figure 4 Adherence to the QAF



It is clear that all members of ACESC are required to comply with the QAF as a condition of membership, although one responded that it adheres only to *most* of the QAF principles (but gave no indication of where it is not compliant). Overall:

- 21 per cent of respondents adhere *fully* (26 per cent of professional bodies, but only 5 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions)
- a further 12 per cent adhere to *most* of the principles (9 per cent professional bodies, 15 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions)
- 9 per cent *use another quality assurance system* (17 per cent of professional bodies, 5 per cent of universities)
- 21 per cent responded that they were *unaware* of the QAF (22 per cent of professional bodies, 28 per cent of universities), and a further 35 per cent were unaware of the detailed principles of the QAF (22 per cent for both professional bodies and postsecondary educational institutions)

The results here with respect to adherence to the QAF are not as strong as those from the national survey that supported the findings from another recent study, titled *International Transfer Credit Practices*,⁴⁵ on the adoption

of the QAF by postsecondary educational institutions in Canada.⁴⁶ Although the survey questions for that study were worded differently and the sample was different and larger, when asked if they adhere to the QAF, respondents answered as follows:

- For transfer credit purposes, 42 per cent (29 of 69) of respondents indicated “yes,” 20 per cent (14) responded “no,” and 38 per cent (26) indicated they did not know.
- For exchange credit assessment purposes, 32 per cent (17 of 53) responded “yes,” 34 per cent indicated “no,” and 34 per cent were unsure.

CICIC appears to have additional work to do to inform organizations about the QAF and to encourage its adoption, and compliance to its principles, by educational institutions and professional regulators. This is particularly true since the actual proportion needing to learn about the QAF is likely higher than our sample indicates, as it is reasonable to assume that the smaller and less formal/systematic organizations that did not respond to the consultation survey are less likely to be aware of the QAF.

That said, the overall impact of these organizations’ non-compliance with the QAF will be minimal because the overwhelming proportion of credential assessments are performed by the largest and most organized assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. We may conclude, therefore, that the QAF is applied in the vast majority of academic credential assessments in Canada.

3.2 Sources of criteria and procedures

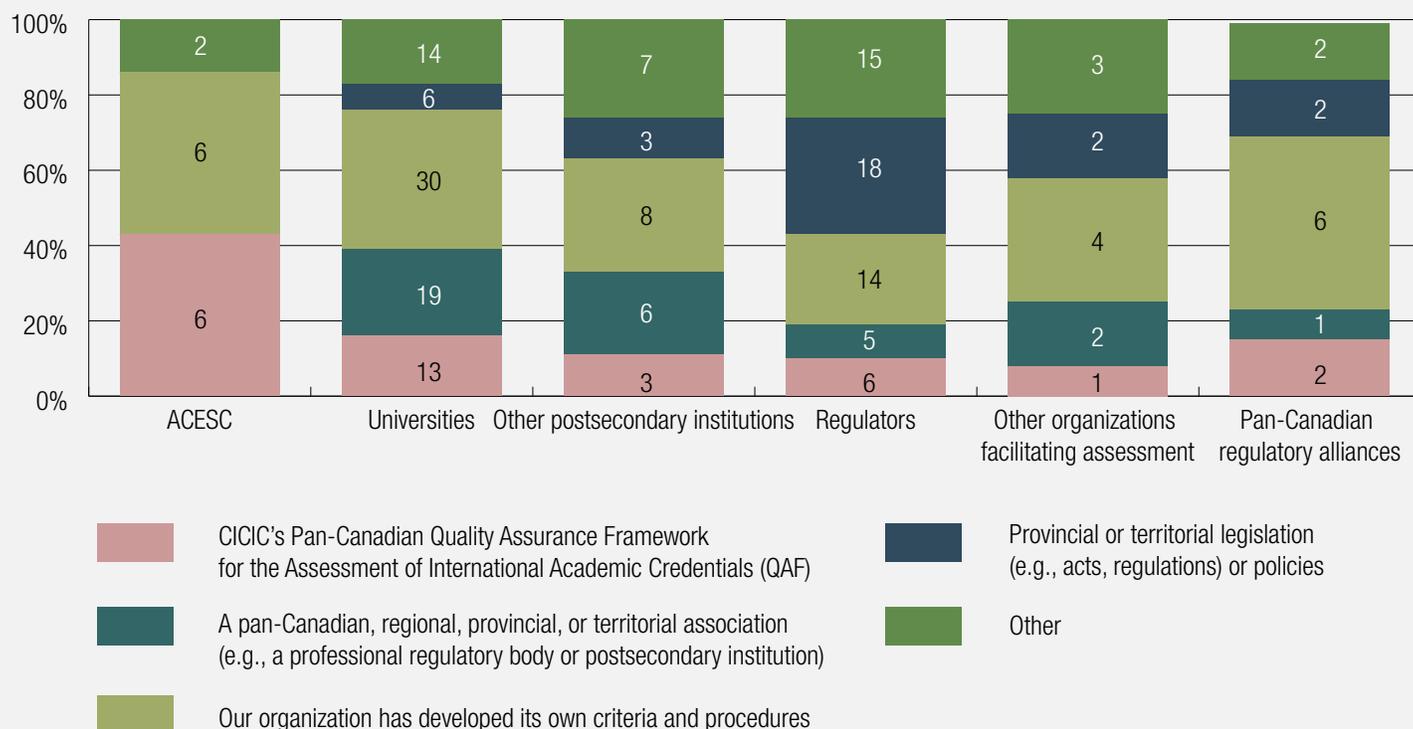
Survey data provide information on the sources of criteria and procedures in Canada.

Q5. What are the sources of the assessment criteria and procedures you use to assess international academic credentials?

The responses are presented in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Sources of assessment criteria and procedures

Survey Q5 — All respondent categories (n = 85)



Eighty-five respondents answered Question 5. They were offered five options, including “other.” Respondents could select more than one response, and most did so. The vast majority of respondents (80 per cent) indicated that they use *their own criteria and procedures*. The other three options (besides “other”) were selected by 36 to 39 per cent of respondents.

Almost all respondents from the postsecondary sector favour *their own criteria and procedures*, as do all ACESC members, although the latter also indicated that they abide by the QAF.

Half of respondents included “other” in their answers. Of these, the vast majority of sources referenced were ACESC members, UK NARIC and other ENIC/NARIC, or UNESCO and the Council of Europe (and therefore indirectly the LRC).

Although the picture is complex, it does appear that most respondents source at least part of their criteria and procedures from the LRC, if often indirectly. One standard that aligns with the LRC is the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications, which is used within the context of regulated professions in Canada (see Case Study 4). Finally, it is also important to note, within the context of the ENIC-NARIC Networks and the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the existence of standards and guidelines published in the 2012 *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual* and subsequently in the 2014 *European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions (EAR HEI Manual)* (see Case Study 6).

Case Study 4 Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications⁴⁷

In 2009, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) introduced the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications. The framework is not prescriptive but rather represents a public commitment to improve qualification assessment and recognition practices, with a focus on regulated occupations in Canada.

It should be noted that Quebec has not endorsed the framework. However, it recognizes its principles and collaborates with its implementation within the exercise of the province’s exclusive jurisdiction over the integration of newcomers according to the Canada-Quebec Accord Relating to Immigration and Temporary Admission of Aliens.

Principles of the framework

The framework is based on four main guiding principles—fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency—in addition to the responsibility to ensure public safety. It is intended to help ensure a fair and competitive labour market environment where newcomers have the opportunity to fully use their education, skills, and work experience for their benefit and for Canada’s collective prosperity.

Implementation of the framework

To support the implementation of the framework in Canada, both the federal and provincial/territorial governments have committed significant investments for the development of relevant initiatives by organizations, mainly competent recognition bodies associated with regulated professions. One of those funding program is the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program of Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), launched in the mid-2000s. CICIC’s QAF was funded through this initiative, among many others developed over the past 10 years.

Collaboration between both orders of government

The FLMM is an intergovernmental forum composed of federal, provincial, and territorial ministers responsible for labour market policies and programs in Canada. It was created in 1983 to promote discussion and cooperation on common labour market matters.

To oversee the implementation of the framework and its monitoring, the FLMM established the Mobility and Qualification Recognition Working Group (MQRWG), formerly known as the Foreign Qualification

Recognition Working Group. The MQRWG also oversees implementation and monitoring of the Labour Mobility Chapter of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), to ensure skilled professionals mobility among provinces and territories.

The FLMM and its MQRWG have Web sites and have funded a number of studies to monitor implementation.

3.3 Criteria for assessment and recognition

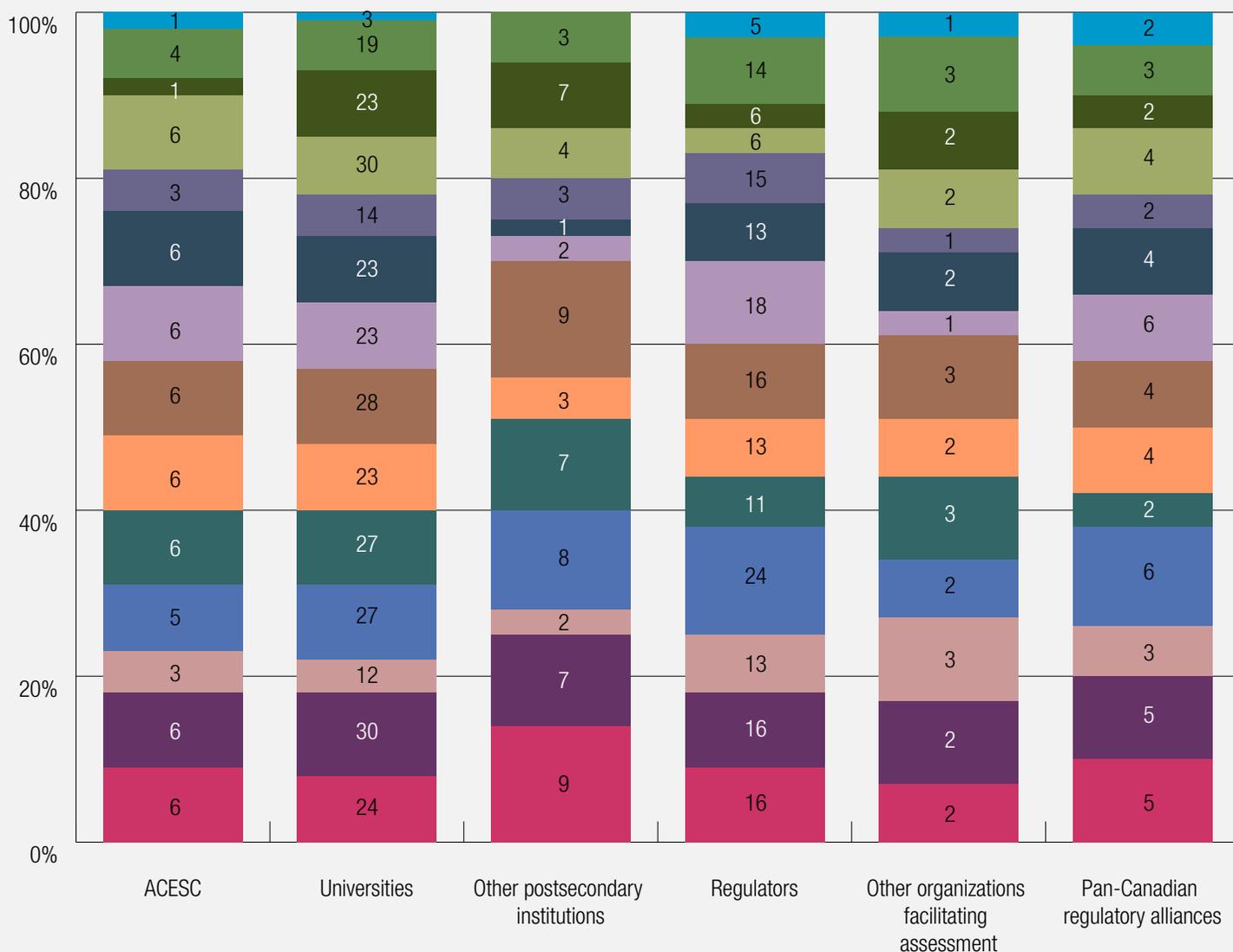
Survey responses provide information on criteria used for assessment and recognition.

Q6. What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials?

The responses are presented in Figure 6.

Figure 6 Criteria for assessment and recognition

Survey Q6 — All respondent categories (n = 85)



	Recognition status of the awarding institution with a confirmation by the competent authority used to substantiate its legal operation within the education system of the issuing country		Level in the qualifications framework and/or type of credential
	Type of awarding institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating		Workload as a quantitative measure of learning activities (e.g., hours, years, credits)
	Learning outcomes highlighting what the credential holder is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate		Course profile
	List of courses and content completed		Nominal duration
	Quality assurance and/or accreditation of institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating		Admission requirements
	Formal rights or function of the qualification in the home country (e.g., access to further studies, access to a regulated occupation)		Language of study
			Program recognition by a professional regulatory body
			Other

Eighty-five respondents, including 44 postsecondary educational institutions, answered Question 6, selecting from 14 options with respect to criteria, including “other.” Among noteworthy findings are the following:

- The most popular criteria, each selected by over two-thirds of respondents, were *courses and content*; *type and status of the awarding body*; *qualifications level*; and *quality assurance*.
- *Learning outcomes* was selected by only 36 respondents, the lowest of the options.
- The 11 “other” responses included two that cited the importance of “mode of study.”

Half the respondents were postsecondary educational institutions; their responses are not significantly different from those of other respondents.

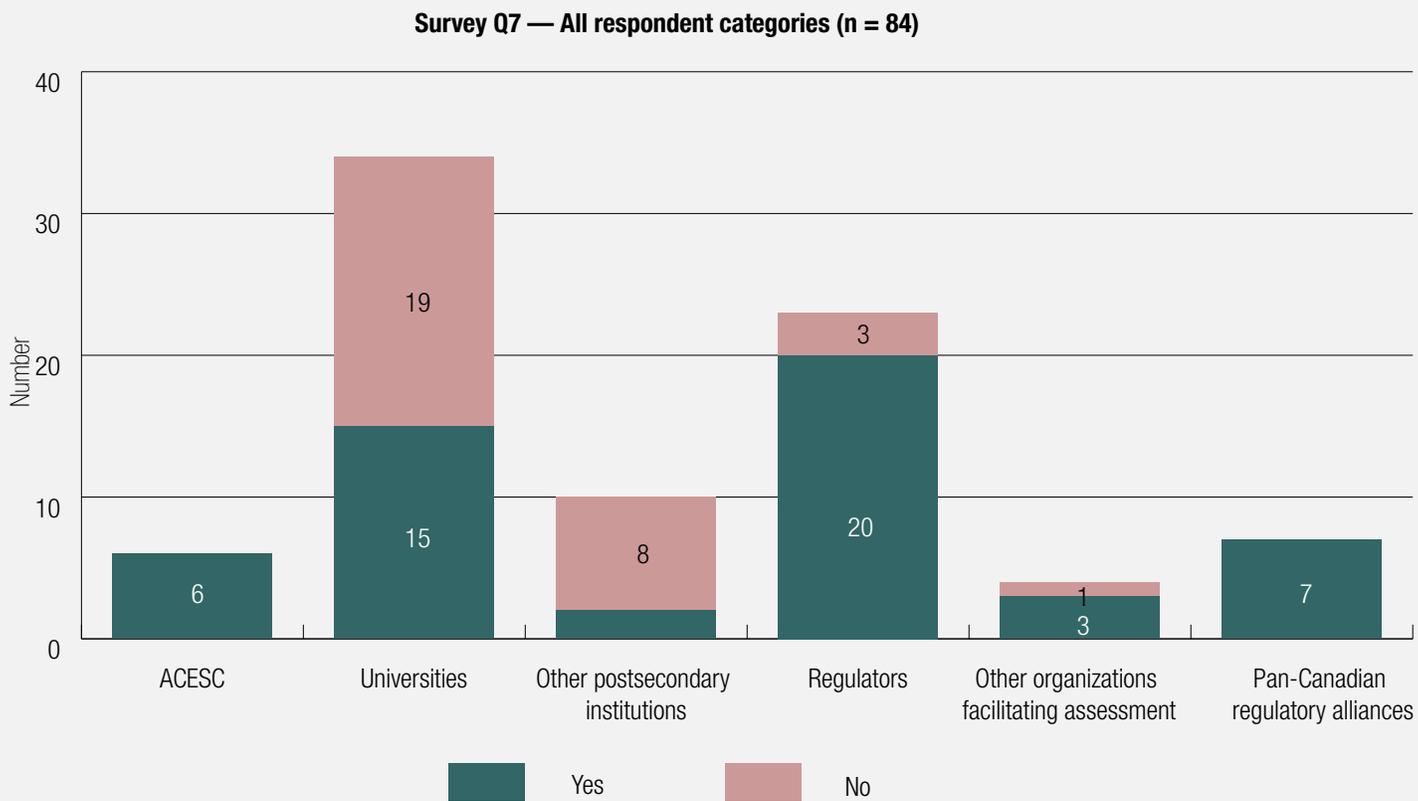
3.4 Elements of assessment procedures

In the survey, Questions 7, 8, and 9 focused on assessment procedures.

Q7 Are the elements of your organization's credential assessment procedure explicit?

The responses to Question 7 are presented in Figure 7.

Figure 7 Existence of explicit assessment procedures



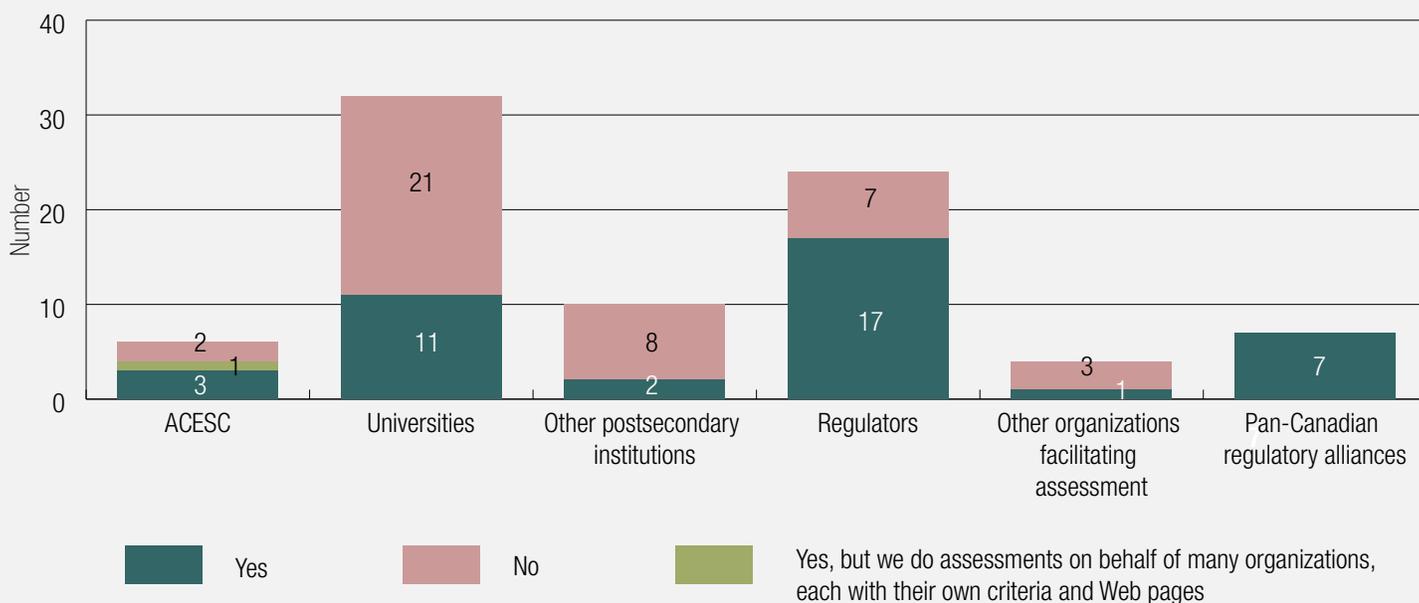
This question was answered by 84 respondents (Figure 7). Almost two-thirds of respondents answered positively, including all ACESC members and almost all professional bodies. Responses from postsecondary educational institutions should be highlighted, with less than half the universities and a quarter of the colleges responding positively. However, these results are still higher than the norm in the 2016 Monitoring Report.

Q9. Are the recognition criteria and procedures published on-line?

The responses to Question 9 are presented in Figure 8.

Figure 8 On-line publication of criteria and procedures

Survey Q9 — All respondent categories (n = 83)



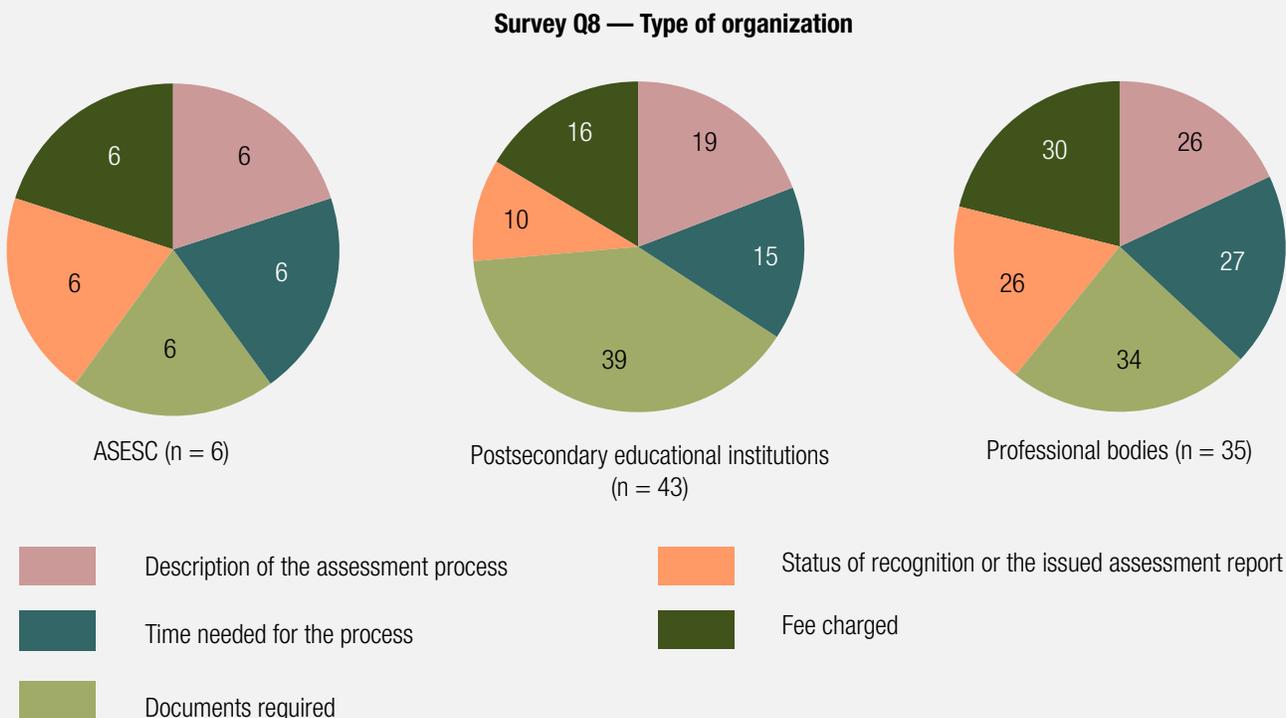
This question generated 83 answers, as shown in Figure 8. These results are significant, with half the respondents, and only one-third of postsecondary educational institutions, answering positively. One ACESC member pointed out that they conduct assessments for many organizations, each with their own Web site.

Respondents were asked to provide the relevant Web site hyperlink, and almost all did so. Others gave their general organization's Web domain name.

Q8 Which of the following elements are included in your organization’s credential assessment procedure?

The responses to Question 8 are presented in Figure 9.

Figure 9 Elements of assessment procedure



There were 84 responses to this question (Figure 9). Almost every respondent (including all but four postsecondary educational institution) specified the documentation required. Around 60 per cent described their process, fees, and timescale. Only half (and a much smaller proportion of the postsecondary educational institutions) clarified the status of their results.

Responses also included 17 “other” items, which were mostly comments about processes, but there were two comments that the question was unclear.

It might be considered curious that the fees were not specified in every case. However, the reasons for this have been explained in Section 2.7. The question is complex, depending on the purpose and the package of assessment services requested. Generally, as noted earlier, assessment and recognition are not free public services in Canada, and fees are charged on a cost-recovery basis.

3.5 Conclusions

Although the picture is complicated, it does appear that most respondents source at least part of their criteria and procedures from the LRC, but often indirectly. Furthermore, 33 per cent of respondents adhere fully or mostly to the QAF, and therefore to the LRC. But 56 per cent were unaware or unsure of the QAF’s details.

ACESC members (providing half the assessments in Canada) score very high on both sourcing and adherence to the QAF, with explicit procedures published on-line.

The powerful influence of the five Fairness Commissions across Canada was discussed in Chapter 2, but it

should be emphasized here too, with respect to criteria and procedures, as the guiding legislation requires that criteria must be “transparent, objective, impartial and fair.”

The responses from postsecondary educational institutions to Question 7 on explicit criteria are noteworthy, with only half of universities and a quarter of colleges noting that their assessment procedures were explicit. Almost all of these institutions are likely to have their own Web sites, and these should outline their admission requirements for academic programs and detail the process for submitting a complete application package.

Finally, most organizations include information on most of the elements of assessment procedures. However, the status of the result is explained in only half the cases, and it is surprising that the required fees are not always specified.

4 Time Limit

Decisions on recognition shall be made within a reasonable time limit specified beforehand by the competent recognition authority and calculated from the time all necessary information in the case has been provided. If recognition is withheld, the reason for the refusal to grant recognition shall be stated (Article III.5). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 33)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 2, “Time Limit,” of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

4.1 Reasonable time limit

The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) does not prescribe a time limit for processing applications; however, the 2010 *Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications*,⁴⁸ in Paragraph 16, instructs competent recognition authorities to:

- specify their normal time limits for processing recognition applications;
- keep to these limits;
- inform applicants in case of delay; and
- complete processing within four months or faster to avoid delaying applicants’ further study, or their gainful employment, or obliging them to undertake additional studies to meet requirements that the assessment may subsequently find have already been satisfied through their foreign qualifications.

It is clear from the 2016 Monitoring Report that four months is considered a reasonable time limit for assessment.

4.2 Regulation at the provincial and national level

For regulated professions, legislation that addresses academic credential recognition within the context of fair registration practices exists in five provinces (Alberta⁴⁹, Manitoba,⁵⁰ Ontario,⁵¹ Quebec,⁵² and Nova Scotia⁵³). The respective legislative acts state the importance of timeliness and indicate reasonable timelines for providing decisions, responses, or explanations to applicants, but they do not expressly prescribe an actual time limit.

Despite the lack of formal time limits, the five offices that monitor fair registration practices in the respective provinces (see Section 2.6) do monitor time limits as a critical aspect of fair registration practice. For example, in the first four years of its existence, the Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC) in Ontario persistently encouraged regulators to review and improve their registration timelines and commented frequently on efforts and results. In its 2013 Report, it noted:

During its first four years, the OFC focused on research and education. It gathered baseline information about regulatory bodies’ registration practices, informed them of their legislative responsibilities, and encouraged them to improve their practices. All regulatory bodies underwent compliance audits between 2008 and 2010 and then submitted Entry-to-Practice Reviews in 2011. In these reviews, regulators had to critically examine three key facets of the licensing process: practical-training or work-experience requirements; timeliness of decision-making; and fees.⁵⁴

Progress with respect to timelines was apparent from data in its 2013–14 assessment summary:⁵⁵ the second review cycle of fair access practices of 34 regulatory bodies required no recommendations for improvement within the criterion “timely decisions, responses and reasons.”

The Fair Registration Practices Act (FRPA) Review Office of Nova Scotia reports in its 2016–17 Annual Report⁵⁶ that the average processing time for an internationally educated professional seeking recognition from a regulatory body and becoming licensed was 70 days; 67 per cent of applications were processed within 1 month, 24 per cent took between 1 and 6 months, and 6 per cent took between 6 and 12 months.

Manitoba’s *Fairness Standard and Guide*⁵⁷ calls for professions to meet a one-year timeliness standard (i.e., providing the applicant with the opportunity to practise in some capacity in under one year). Registration data suggest that timely licensure opportunities are occurring only for a small group of qualified applicants across the professions. During its 2016–17 review, the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner made recommendations to improve timeliness for a number of professions, although delays may result from steps in the process that depend on bodies outside the province (e.g., pan-Canadian regulatory exams).

Building on these strong provincial efforts, the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA; previously the Agreement on Internal Trade)⁵⁸ focuses on reducing barriers to internal labour mobility and trade. Article 308(2) of the CFTA on licensing and qualification requirements and procedures seems relevant.⁵⁹ Specifically, it stipulates that, in an application process related to qualifying or licensing, each party is to ensure that:

- (a) the processing of an application is:
 - (i) initiated without undue delay; and
 - (ii) completed within a reasonable timeframe from the submission of a complete application, including the time to reach a final decision.

In addition, in a 2016 press release,⁶⁰ the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) announced a specific goal of a six-month time limit for initial qualifications recognitions.

For postsecondary educational institutions, registration policies are usually governed by academic regulations or policies adopted by the institution itself, especially in the context of institutional autonomy. These institutions may not explicitly state specific time limits for issuing a decision on admission for all applicants. However, the institution’s academic calendar would detail clear deadlines for submitting an application for admission to a specific academic program as well as specifying the beginning of the academic term.

A recently published study, *International Transfer Credit Practices*,⁶¹ provides insight into some challenges faced by postsecondary educational institutions with respect to international assessment. Among other things, the study describes the difficulties postsecondary educational institutions face in collecting all documentation to complete an application. Given the postsecondary context, this ultimately impacts the timeliness of the institutions’ decisions:

Regardless of the size or type of their institution, interviewees routinely indicated the amount of time and complexity involved increases significantly with international as compared against domestic document assessments. Several indicated it represents good practice to front-end credit assignment decisions to help students with their admissions decisions, subsequent course selections, and overall program completion. However, they noted delays do occur at times up to and beyond the start of classes. Reported reasons include students not providing official documents in a timely manner; the breadth and depth of course documentation required to support equivalency evaluations; the time needed to conduct an assessment; the amount of information faculty need to conduct a review; and the time of year when the largest bulk of decisions are required, which reportedly coincides with periods of low faculty availability (typically late spring, early summer). Respondents identified these same challenges for exchange credit in situations where students take courses beyond those for which preapproval exists. Those interviewed for this project reported that they routinely ask students to arrange to submit official documents direct from former institutions to mitigate fraud prevention; however, 82% of the survey respondents indicated that obtaining this information remains challenging for students.

Only those institutions with databases of prior decisions or transfer agreements, long histories and expertise in the field within central registry offices, and large volumes of international or exchange students provided scalable examples of time efficiencies. These include relying on prior equivalency decisions and conducting course-level reviews of only new courses; assessing a student for admission separately from evaluating a course equivalency; providing detailed protocols to guide faculty in the equivalency review; and automating the processes and communications by integrating and leveraging systems and databases. Often, those interviewed spoke of relying on external resources and/or service providers to expedite decision-making and to ensure quality. When utilizing these practices and supports, institutions reported that students often receive indications of assigned credit simultaneous with their admission offer, or soon after or, for exchanges, prior to leaving for study abroad.

Several interviewees indicated that the breadth and depth of course information required to conduct a review present challenges and cause delays for internationally educated students who are not always able to satisfy document expectations. Reportedly, institutions conduct course-by-course reviews and examine inputs such as texts used, contact hours, credit weight, and more to determine the degree of overlap. To support this process, institutions expect students to provide course syllabi that include detailed course descriptions complete with articulated objectives and/or learning outcomes; credits awarded; weekly meeting times and instruction contact hours; type of learning experience (e.g., tutorial, lecture, lab); evaluation approach; and assignments, grading information, and texts and resources used. To further complicate the international assessment process, some institutions reported expecting students to submit “official” course outlines (i.e., those created by the home institution) and translations compiled by *certified* translators—the latter stipulating the consequence of poor quality translations having introduced challenges, such as different course titles for the same courses.⁶²

Given the increasing proportion of international students enrolled in postsecondary educational institutions in Canada, admission staff have an added incentive to ensure that applications from internationally educated applicants are treated within a reasonable time frame in order to allow enough time for students to obtain a study permit from immigration authorities in Canada, make international travel arrangements, and be physically present on campus at the beginning of the academic term. With these constraints, it is common for admission staff to accept temporary photocopies or electronic scans of documents, under the condition that original documents be provided within a reasonable time frame to enable the students to remain enrolled in the academic program after documents have been authenticated.

Members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) abide by the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)⁶³ (see Case Study 3 in Chapter 3). One principle of the QAF clearly states that processing time must be specified, and applicants must be informed of the reasons for delays when they occur. Processing times are usually not fixed within a policy, and they can vary depending on staff workload and whether applications fall within peak periods. However, processing times specific to the type of assessment report offered are usually indicated on members’ Web sites and updated as the situation evolves.

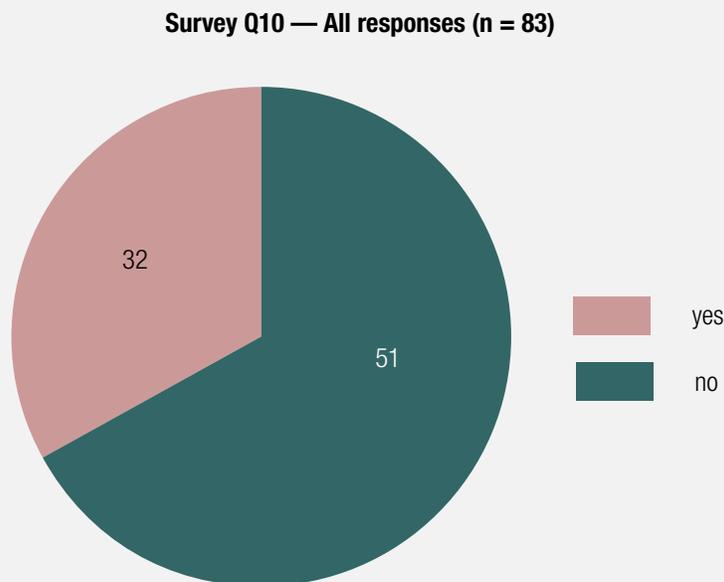
4.3 Policies on time limits

The survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community asked two questions regarding time limits.

Q10 Do you have a policy that specifies the time limit (from the time a complete application is received) within which you need to provide academic credential recognition decisions to applicants?

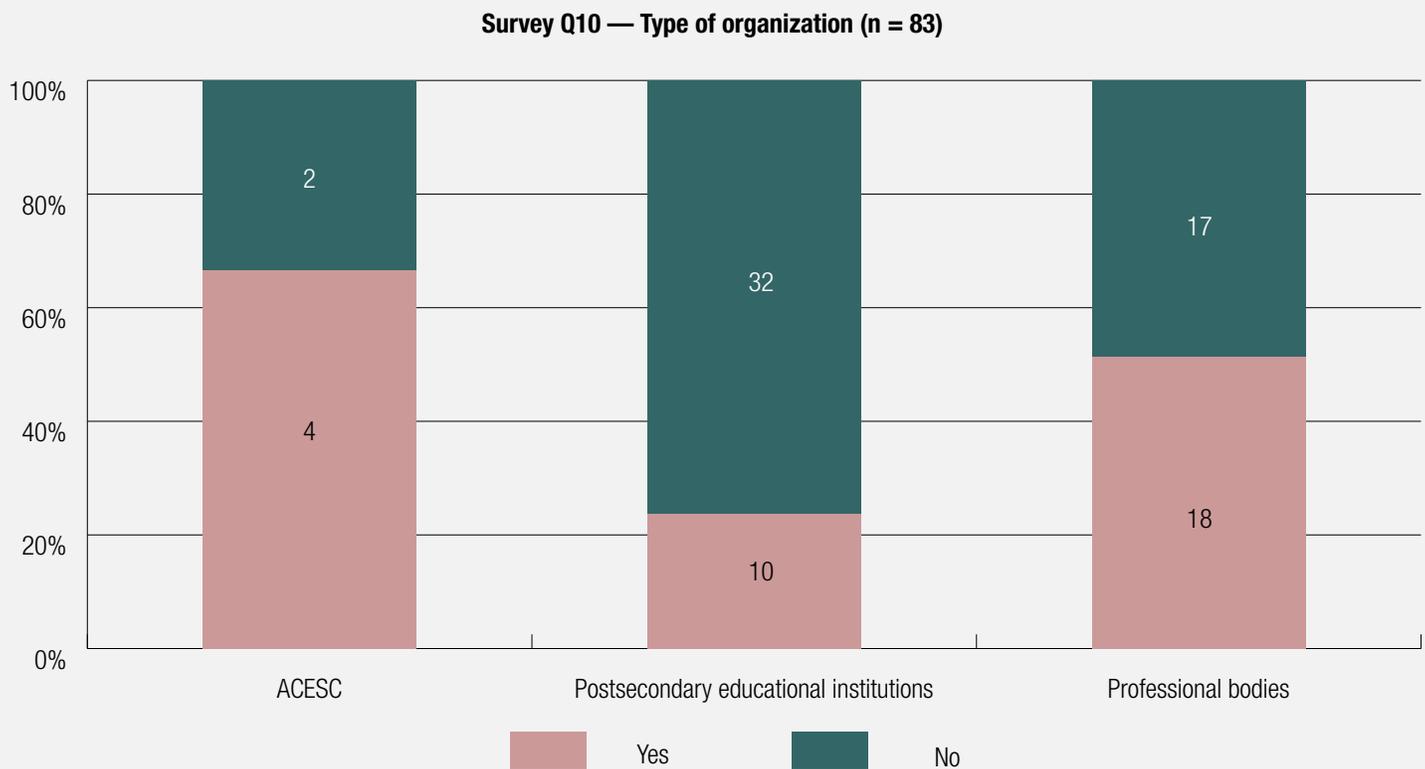
The responses to Question 10 are presented in Figures 10 and 11.

Figure 10 Existence of policies on time limits (all responses)



As shown in Figure 10, 32 of 83 respondents (39 per cent) report having a policy that specifies a reasonable time limit. The majority of those that have a policy (81 per cent) are instructed to provide a decision in less than three months; the remaining 19 per cent of organizations cite time limits of up to seven months.

Figure 11 Existence of policies on time limits (by type of organization)



A closer look at the responses puts these surprising results into context. Universities, the largest respondent group, are the least likely to have a policy on reasonable time limit in place (Figure 11). Overall, only 24 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions report having a policy on time limits, compared to two-thirds of ACESC members and about half of professional bodies.

Q11 What specifies the time limit you use?

Most respondents (66 per cent) indicated that time limits are specified in internal policies that are guided by necessity, reasonableness, regulations, and other agreements (e.g., the CFTA; Section 2(5) of Ontario Regulation 271/09, Fair Registration Practices, under the *Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1996*). Other factors influencing time limits or actual processing times include volume of applications, staffing levels, and knowledge about the educational institution outside Canada that issued the academic documents.

4.4 Conclusions

The issue of reasonable time limits for academic credential recognition decisions appears strongly influenced by the context within which a respondent organization makes recognition decisions. Professional bodies make academic credential recognition decisions as only one of several steps toward granting or denying access to practise a regulated occupation (other steps could include, for example, assessment of language competency and work experience). Similarly, admission processes for postsecondary educational institutions often include prior learning assessments to determine applicable transfer credits and language competency assessment.

It is possible that many respondents interpreted the survey questions on time limits as applying only to recognition decisions. The survey results are therefore only partially helpful in accurately gauging common practice. Factors that may affect the reliability of the data may include the following:

- Time limits or processing times exist and are published for all steps of the process, not only for the recognition decision.
- Higher-order policies are in place that apply to departments, units, or staff that make recognition decisions.
- Timelines are published in academic calendars of postsecondary educational institutions.
- Informal standards (subject to the availability of resources) are commonly adhered to.

For practical reasons, time limits can be difficult to maintain due to limited staff or unusually high volumes of applicants.

5 Right to Appeal

If recognition is withheld, or if no decision is taken, the applicant shall be able to make an appeal within a reasonable time limit. (Article III.5)

The provision that it is up to the authority evaluating the application to show that the applicant does not fulfil the requirements for recognition is closely linked to the applicant's right to appeal. Arrangements and procedures for such appeals are subject to the legislation in force in the party concerned, even though the handling of the appeal should be subject to the same requirements of transparency, coherence and reliability as those imposed on the original assessment of the application. Information should be given on the ways in which an appeal could be made, and on the time limits for such an appeal (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 37)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 3, "Right to Appeal," of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

5.1 Legislation, policies, and availability of information

With respect to professional regulatory bodies, legislation regarding right to appeal exists in the five provinces that have established Fairness Commissioners: Alberta⁶⁴, Manitoba,⁶⁵ Ontario,⁶⁶ Quebec,⁶⁷ and Nova Scotia⁶⁸ (see Section 2.6 above). The legislation requires that the applicant be provided the right to a review or appeal. Other provinces and territories may have similar legislation specific to particular regulated professions.

The offices of the Fairness Commissioners in the five provinces publish guiding documents that summarize applicable legislation, describe and make available examples of good practices, and identify related criteria to measure and track progress, including with regard to the right to appeal decisions. For example, the Office of the Manitoba Fairness Commissioner published the *Fairness Standard and Guide*,⁶⁹ which requires that fair appeal or review processes be available and devotes a section to spelling out their characteristics.

In the five provinces, at regular intervals, professional regulatory bodies must self-assess (or be externally assessed—for example, by the Fairness Commissioner) and provide a report on identified criteria for measuring and tracing progress, to show that they have implemented recommendations and maintained good practices. The offices of the Fairness Commissioners conduct audits, identifying trends related to improvement and persisting issues. The self-reports and audits (as applicable) then trigger additional recommendations and action items to be implemented by professional regulatory bodies to improve practices in order to ensure fair access.

Between 2012 and 2014, professional regulatory bodies in Ontario implemented hundreds of recommendations made by the Ontario Office of the Fairness Commissioner (OFC); over the same period, 80 per cent of these bodies received further recommendations for improvement.⁷⁰ Progress is apparent in the data from the OFC's 2013–14 assessment summary from the second review cycle of fair access practices of 34 regulatory bodies. In that review, only three areas required no recommendations for improvement, and two of them were related to appeals: the provision of reviews/appeals, and information on appeal rights.⁷¹

At a pan-Canadian level, Article 308(3) on licensing and qualification requirements and procedures in the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA)⁷² is relevant. It stipulates that, in case of rejected applications for a licence or authorization, each party shall ensure:

- that the applicant is, on request, informed of the reasons for the rejection and of the time frame for an appeal or review of the rejection, and

- that the review or appeal is conducted objectively and impartially.

Included among the “benchmarks of success” in *A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*, published by the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM),⁷³ are the availability of and information about internal reviews or appeals.

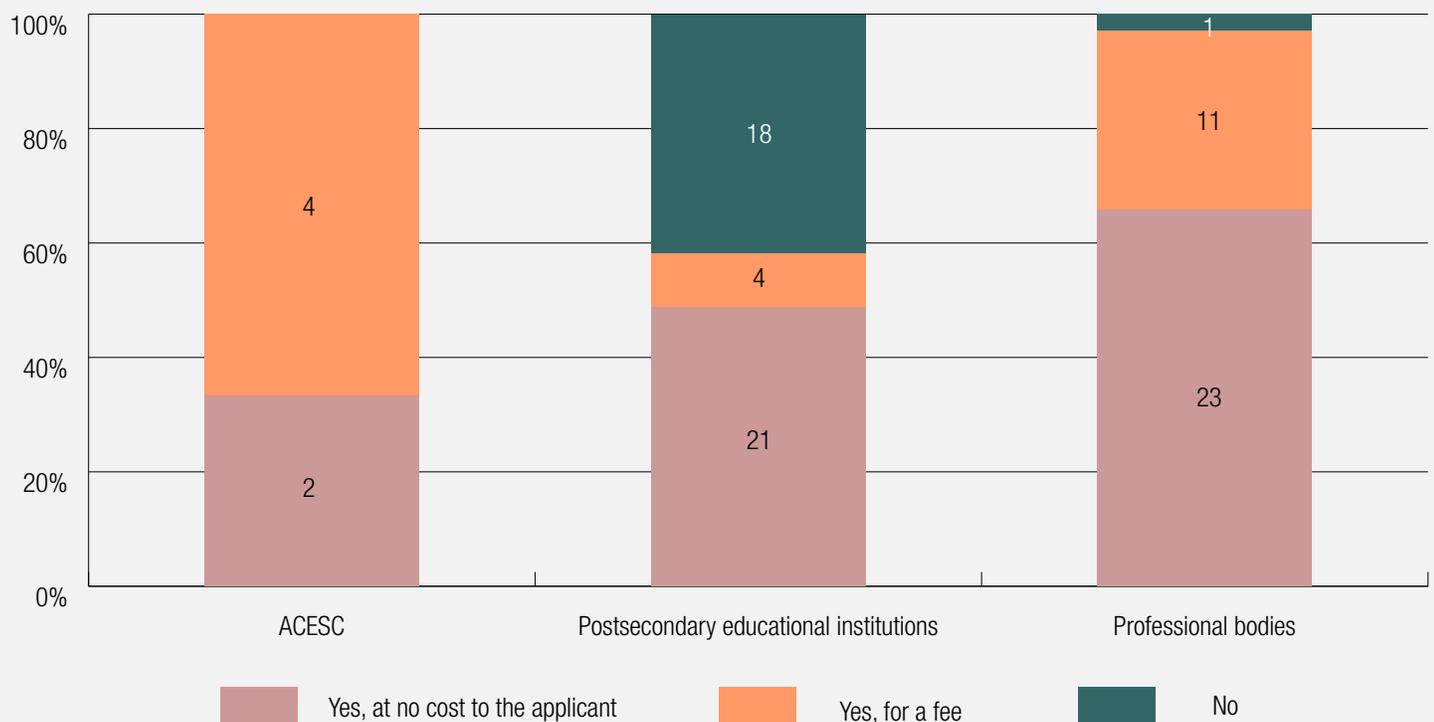
In postsecondary educational institutions, registration policies are usually governed by academic regulations or policies adopted by the institution itself. For universities, the senate of the institution will often have an appeals committee in place, where a student can request a review of an unfavourable admission decision. For colleges, appeals may be made through the registrar’s office, and review committee members will be associated with the applicable academic program. For both universities and colleges, these mechanisms and processes, and/or admissions policies, set out applicants’ right to appeal.

As noted earlier, members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) abide by the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF), which is published by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC).⁷⁴ One principle of the QAF clearly states that a procedure for appeal has to be made available to applicants when there is disagreement on the outcome of the assessment process.

Clearly, the right to appeal is well enshrined in federal agreements, provincial and territorial legislation, and the policies applied by assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. Survey results provide supporting evidence for this statement. Question 12 of the survey asked: *Do you provide applicants with the right to appeal the recognition decision?* Sixty-five of the 84 respondents (78 per cent) report providing the right to appeal. All ASECS members and all but one professional body provide the right to appeal (Figure 12); in contrast, 18 (41 per cent) postsecondary educational institutions responded “no.”

Figure 12 Providing applicants with the right to appeal the recognition decision

Survey Q12 — Type of organization (n = 84)



A look at the responses by type of organization shows some interesting differences and similarities. All respondent groups except postsecondary educational institutions (and an individual body related to regulators) report offering a right to appeal 100 per cent of the time (see Figure 12). While ACESC members are most likely to do so for a fee (67 per cent), only a small number (5) of postsecondary educational institutions charge a fee.

As described earlier in this section, regulations and policies within colleges and universities clearly outline the right to appeal and related processes. So, it was a surprise to find a relatively high number of postsecondary educational institutions responding “no” to the question about whether they provide a right to appeal.

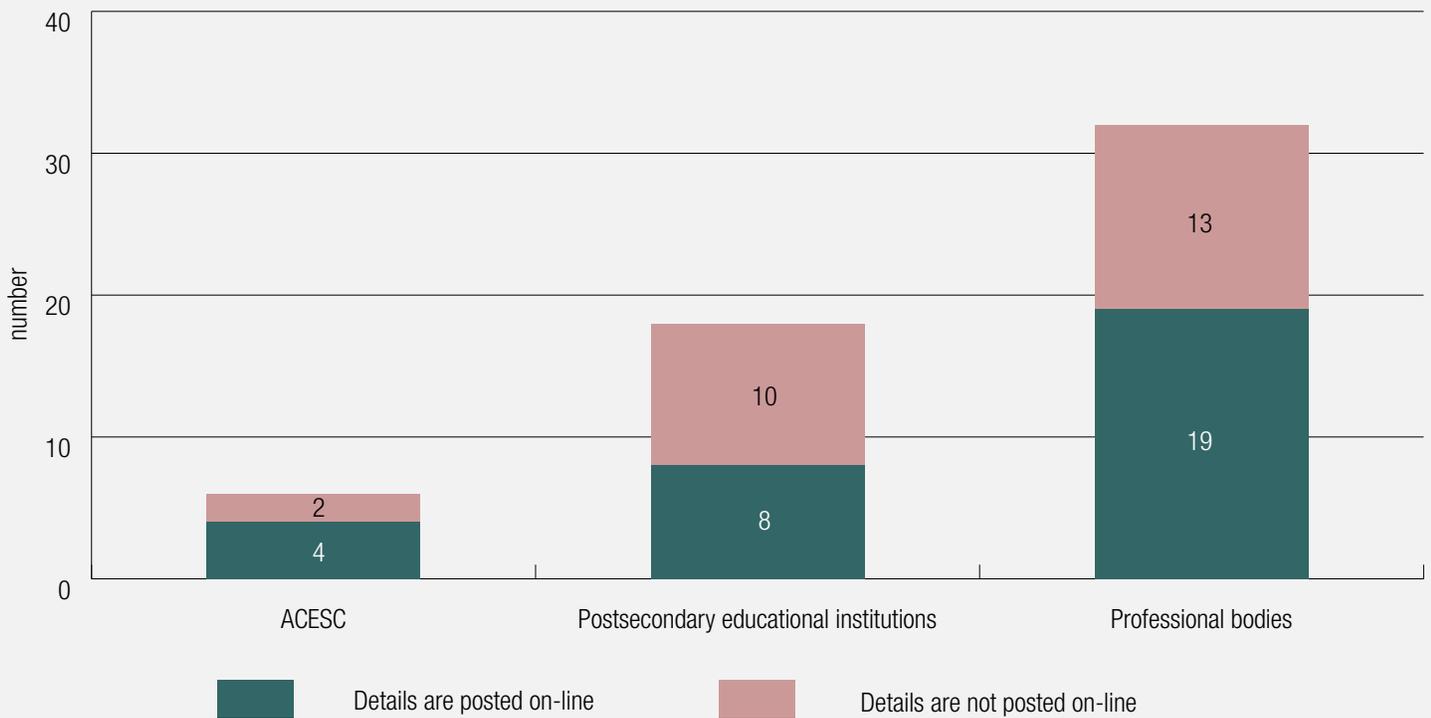
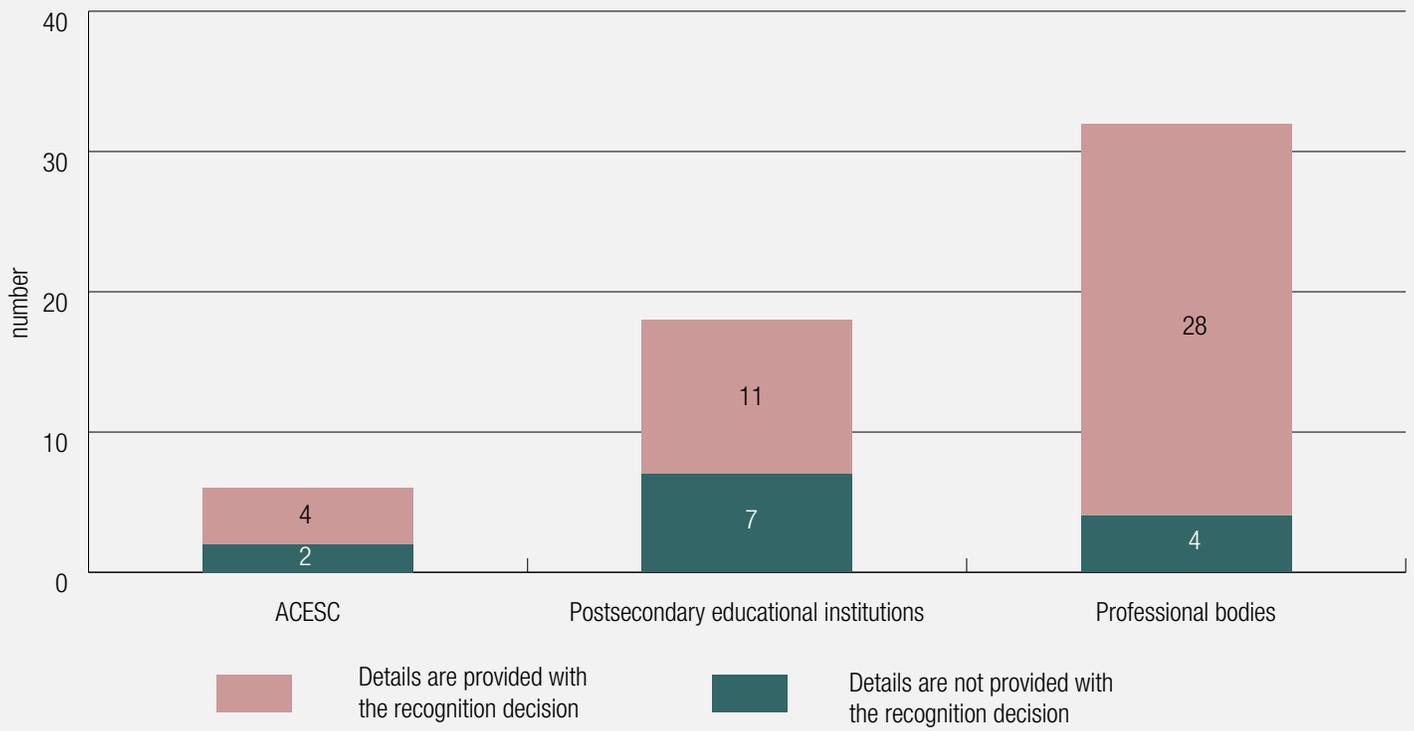
To investigate if the question’s focus on “recognition decisions” had in fact misled respondents, causing them to provide erroneous answers, we examined the Web site of 13 of the institutions providing a negative response to this question. We found information on 8 of the 13 Web sites that clearly stated that applicants were provided with the right to appeal an admissions decision (which includes academic credential recognition). It was very difficult to find any information for the remaining five institutions; therefore, the veracity of their responses remains undetermined.

Question 13 asked: *How and when do you inform applicants about the appeal process?* Fifty-six respondents answered this question (see Figure 13). Of this group, respondents are less likely to post the information on-line and more likely to provide the information at the time of the decision.

Overall, 43 respondents (77 per cent) reported providing pertinent information with the assessment or recognition decision. Thirty-one respondents (55 per cent) reported providing this information for anyone on their Web site (most provided a hyperlink to this information). These numbers indicate that several organizations provide the information through both avenues.

Figure 13 Mode of informing applicants of their right to appeal

Survey Q13 — All respondent categories (n = 56)



5.2 Conclusions

The right to appeal is a pervasive principle in Canadian society that is reflected in legislation, policies, and guidelines. The unanimous offer of a right to appeal by ACESC members and professional bodies is perhaps a reflection of the effectiveness of the CFTA and the “benchmarks of success” of the FLMM as well as of the QAF.

Information on how to appeal a decision seems to be generally available. However, provision of information could be improved to conform with the best practice of providing the applicant with this information as part of the package announcing the outcome of the assessment or recognition procedure. Furthermore, information could be made more easily accessible in plain language on the Web site of the organization, alongside information on the initial application process.

It is unfortunate that some organizations impose an additional fee for an appeal, although some assessment services and competent recognition bodies may be privately run and/or operate on a cost-recovery model where additional costs for the extra work involved need to be accounted for.

We have not encountered any concerns about appeal processes, and so the existing arrangements would appear satisfactory.

The fact that 42 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions reported that they do not provide the right to appeal to internationally educated applicants is puzzling, as our Web site review shows that this is not the case. Interestingly, that review revealed that the grounds for consideration of appeals of admission decisions (not specifically academic credential recognition) can vary.

6 Substantial Differences

Each Party shall recognise the higher education qualifications, periods of study and qualifications giving access to higher education conferred in another Party, unless a substantial difference can be shown between the qualification or period of study for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification or period of study in the Party in which recognition is sought (Articles IV.1, V.1, and VI.1). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 41)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 4, “Substantial Differences,” of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

6.1 What are “substantial differences”?

The concept of “substantial difference” is not defined in the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) or in the English Terminology Guide to Academic Credential Assessment in Canada, published by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC).⁷⁵ The CICIC guide simply states: “The Lisbon Convention requires signatories to recognize periods of study completed in another country ‘unless substantial differences can be shown between the periods of study completed in another Party and the part of the higher education programme which they would replace in the Party in which recognition is sought.’”

CICIC’s step-by-step guide to academic credential assessment does provide some guidance on internal procedures that should be followed as well as additional resources when comparing academic credentials.⁷⁶ Of particular significance in the present context is step 4.5, which directs assessors to determine whether there are any substantial differences, based on the four preceding steps.

Case Study 5 highlights the movement toward adoption of the concept of substantial difference.

Case Study 5 Mutual recognition: The move from nostrification to substantial difference

There are two parallel movements in the comparability or assessment of academic and occupational credentials of internationally educated individuals:

- the detailed comparability of requirements of the academic credential issued within one education system to those of the receiving education system where the individual seeks an assessment, in order to ensure that everything is adequately covered and, thus, to help ensure the success of the individual in the desired activity (e.g., further studies, employment). This “nostrification” is the basis for much recognition of prior learning
- the acceptance of demonstrated practice (learning outcomes) as evidence of competence, and the implicit assumption that detailed differences of practice are negligible or can be learned by the individual (e.g., continuing professional development by further study or under supervision). This is the absence of substantial difference

Although Europe followed the former route for decades, the experience in that region is that this approach is problematic. It is impractical, in that it takes so long that the basis for comparisons is constantly shifting.

Moreover, it is unhelpful: it merely delays the undertaking of further studies or right to practise a profession in another jurisdiction; it blocks the creation of a single labour market and hinders student mobility; and it ignores other issues such as inadequate assessment and quality assurance of education.

Consequently, there has been a movement toward the second approach, most notably under the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). This route is supported by a helpful publication by E. Stephen Hunt and Sjur Bergan, *Developing Attitudes to Recognition: Substantial Differences in an Age of Globalisation*, which discusses and illustrates the concept of substantial differences, although it does not contain a definition of that term.⁷⁷

The concept is also discussed in the EAR Manual, produced by the European Area of Recognition (EAR) project of the ENIC-NARIC Networks. That manual states:

The concept of substantial differences is one of the key features of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and is described as follows: “Foreign qualifications shall be recognised unless there is a substantial difference between the foreign qualification for which recognition is sought and the corresponding qualification of the host country.” By focusing on the five key elements that together make up a qualification (level, workload, quality, profile and learning outcomes) and by taking substantial differences into account, competent recognition authorities have transformed their approach from expecting foreign qualifications to be almost exactly the same as those offered in their own countries, to focusing on “Recognition” by accepting non-substantial differences.⁷⁸

The European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual has the status of an official guide for the community of academic credential assessors and is “a practical manual containing the standards and guidelines on all aspects of the international recognition of qualifications ... a bridge from theory (the LRC criteria) to practice, making use of the LRC criteria, recommendations and studies on recognition from the last decades.”⁷⁹ (For more information on the EAR Manual, see Case Study 6.)

According to the EAR Manual, “Substantial differences are differences between the foreign qualification and the national qualification that are so significant, that they would most likely prevent the applicant from succeeding in the desired activity such as further study, research activities or employment.”⁸⁰

As this definition implies, a substantial difference may depend on the purpose of the credential assessment: the needs for further study will likely differ from those for research or for employment.

The EAR Manual notes that any recognition decision should be based on learning outcomes (LOs):

Differences in attitudes to recognition and to the interpretation of substantial differences persist.... The interpretation of substantial differences is very much linked to the overall [learning] outcome of a qualification, programme and/or programme components, since this determines whether the applicant has been prepared sufficiently for the desired activity. A difference that is only related to input criteria (such as workload and structure of the programme) is not likely to have a direct effect on the abilities of the applicant, and should therefore not be considered automatically as a substantial difference.⁸¹

Case Study 6 EAR Manual and EAR HEI Manual⁸²

EAR Manual

The *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual* contains standards and guidelines on all aspects of the recognition of foreign qualifications. It was developed under a project funded by the European Commission in 2010–12.

At the beginning of the manual, a schematic outline clearly lays out seven main steps of a typical recognition procedure. Within these seven steps, the EAR Manual delves into 16 specific topics that are relevant to

the recognition procedure. The presentation of these topics follows a similar structure, with a summary, a flowchart of typical steps and decisions involved, an introduction to the topic, recommendations, some examples in practice, and sources and references that can be consulted (e.g., relevant articles of the LRC). The EAR Manual also includes a glossary and a general list of sources.

The EAR Manual aims to serve as a practical tool to assist assessors in their daily recognition work. It should be noted, however, that, although the manual was initially intended for academic credential assessors within the ENIC-NARIC Networks, it promotes the use of transparent recognition procedures to all stakeholders, whether directly or indirectly involved in recognition (e.g., assessors, educational institutions, policy officers, and students).

Within the scope of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), the EAR Manual is also intended to create more clarity regarding recognition practices in all European countries in order to facilitate student mobility through the use of similar policies and practices in the field of recognition. The EAR Manual was cited in the 2012 EHEA Bologna Bucharest Communiqué as containing best practices for the recognition of foreign qualification within the context of the implementation of the Bologna Process.

EAR HEI Manual

The European Recognition Manual for Higher Education Institutions: Practical Guidelines for Credential Evaluators and Admissions Officers to Provide Fair and Flexible Recognition of Foreign Degrees and Studies Abroad (the EAR HEI Manual) was initially published in 2014, funded by the European Commission.

It is based largely on the 2012 EAR Manual, with similar topics covered in 23 chapters, arranged in six parts. These chapters follow a similar structure, with a summary, a flowchart of typical steps and decisions involved, an introduction to the topic, recommendations, some examples in practice, and sources and references that can be consulted (e.g., relevant articles of the LRC).

The EAR HEI Manual is aimed specifically at higher education institutions, to be used by admissions officers as well as policy-makers, with added content specifically for the recognition purpose of admission to further studies. It encourages institutions to include recognition procedures in the scope of their internal and external quality assurance mechanisms. The manual can also be used as a quick reference guide for fundamental concepts of recognition procedures and as a training tool for those in the field.

Similarly to the EAR Manual, the EAR HEI Manual is ultimately aimed at supporting the use of fair and transparent recognition procedures, through quality enhancement in accordance with LRC principles.

A second edition of the manual was published in 2016. It includes minor updates, with an added focus on best practices for the recognition of qualifications for applicants unable to provide documentation. This addition was in response to the Syrian refugee crisis affecting the EHEA and the development of a new subsidiary text on this topic, under the framework of the LRC.

6.2 Adoption of learning outcomes and substantial differences in Canada

We note that the concept of learning outcomes has not yet been universally adopted in Canada. Indeed, many academic programs and resulting credentials in this country do not yet specify their LOs (see Section 11.3 below).

We also note that a credential may be “substantially different” in the context of an application for postsecondary education but not in the context of employment and professional bodies. Although members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) do evaluations for further study and professional licensure, such evaluations are just the first step in the process; in contrast, educational institutions and professional bodies are considering the entire process and reaching a decision.

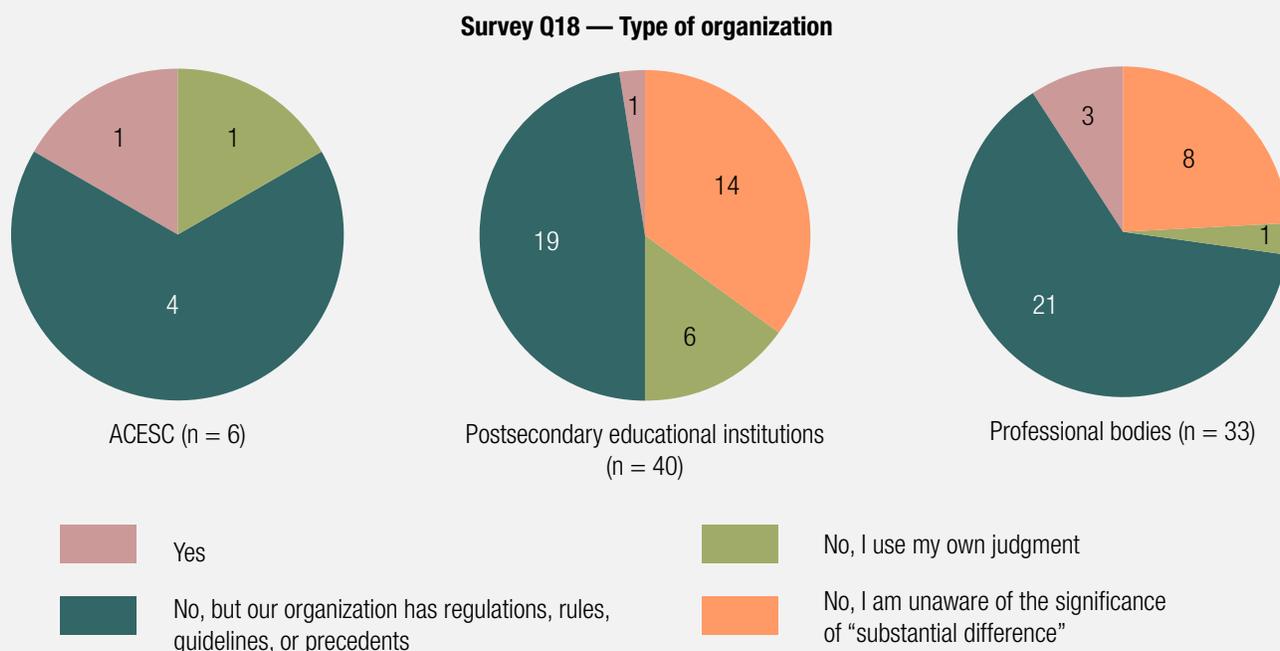
The results of the survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community show that assessment services and

competent recognition bodies in Canada recognize the significance of accepting an academic credential as comparable in the absence of substantial differences.

Q18 Do you use a definition of “substantial difference”?

The responses are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14 Recognition of “substantial difference”



The survey results show that the concept of substantial difference is widely recognized, though this is far from universal (Figure 14). It is worth noting that none of the respondents quoted the EAR Manual. Clearly, there remains considerable work for CICIC with respect to educating the significant proportion of both postsecondary educational institutions (35 per cent) and regulatory bodies (24 per cent) that are unfamiliar with the concept.

The survey findings include the following:

- Most organizations (56 per cent) use their own rules, and another 10 per cent use their own judgment.
- Surprisingly, 28 per cent of all responding organizations were unaware of the significance of “substantial difference.”
- All ACESC members were aware of the concept.
- Only 9 per cent of regulators were unaware of the concept. However, over half of the pan-Canadian alliances of regulatory bodies and other pan-Canadian bodies supporting the regulators were not aware of the concept, which perhaps reflects their absence from assessing international academic credentials.
- Compared to the other types of organizations, a higher proportion (35 per cent) of postsecondary educational institutions were unaware of the significance of the concept (the proportion was slightly higher among universities, slightly lower among the other postsecondary educational institutions).

Q19 What do you consider to be the substantial differences between an academic credential issued outside Canada and the comparable credential issued in Canada?

The responses are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Criteria used for findings of substantial difference

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Access requirements	100%	51%	35%	48%	61%	13%	30%	50%	43%
	6	20	12	38	19	1	7	2	3
>1 year shorter	50%	62%	56%	58%	65%	50%	57%	75%	43%
	3	24	19	46	20	4	13	3	3
Not accredited	100%	72%	59%	68%	74%	63%	74%	25%	29%
	6	28	20	54	23	5	17	1	2
No final thesis	33%	23%	24%	24%	29%	0%	35%	0%	0%
	2	9	8	19	9	0	8	0	0
Thesis less demanding	17%	15%	24%	19%	19%	0%	35%	0%	0%
	1	6	8	15	6	0	8	0	0
Content differs	33%	74%	76%	72%	77%	63%	87%	75%	43%
	2	29	26	57	24	5	20	3	3
Mode of study (e.g., on-line)	50%	28%	44%	37%	32%	13%	52%	0%	43%
	3	11	15	29	10	1	12	0	3
Part time	33%	5%	6%	8%	6%	0%	4%	0%	14%
	2	2	2	6	2	0	1	0	1
Private institution	0%	44%	24%	32%	52%	13%	26%	25%	14%
	0	17	8	25	16	1	6	1	1
No program in Canada	0%	28%	9%	18%	32%	13%	13%	0%	0%
	0	11	3	14	10	1	3	0	0
Not in international database	0%	41%	29%	33%	42%	38%	30%	25%	29%
	0	16	10	26	13	3	7	1	2
Staff qualifications	0%	31%	12%	20%	39%	0%	17%	0%	0%
	0	12	4	16	12	0	4	0	0
Language of study	0%	49%	41%	42%	55%	25%	43%	50%	29%
	0	19	14	33	17	2	10	2	2
Other	50%	26%	38%	33%	32%	0%	35%	0%	71%
	3	10	13	26	10	0	8	0	5
Total	8%	49%	43%	100%	39%	10%	29%	5%	9%
	6	39	34	79	31	8	23	4	7

Responses to Question 19 expose the widespread lack of adoption of the concept of learning outcomes, especially in the university sector (Table 8). A finding of substantial difference should occur only if the learning outcomes are substantially different, irrespective of how the competencies were acquired. Input criteria can only be indicative of substantial differences, not conclusive on their own. Therefore, criteria are inappropriate if they reject programs simply on the basis of the following factors:

- different access requirements (a rejection criterion for 48 per cent of respondents, including all ACESC members)
- the nominal duration of study being at least one year shorter than for a comparable academic credential issued in Canada (a rejection criterion for 50 per cent of ACESC members, 62 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions, and 56 per cent of professional bodies)
- mode of study (e.g., on-line studies) (a rejection criterion for 50 per cent of ACESC members, 28 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions, and 44 per cent of professional bodies, although part-time study is rejected by only 8 per cent of respondents)
- the qualification is awarded by a private educational institution (a rejection criterion for none of the ACESC members, 44 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions, and 24 per cent of professional bodies)
- the program is not provided in Canada (a rejection criterion for 32 per cent of universities)
- teaching staff do not have the same qualifications as those required in Canada (e.g., fewer instructors have a PhD-level degree) (a rejection criterion for 39 per cent of universities)
- language of study (a rejection criterion for none of the ACESC members, but 49 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions and 41 per cent of professional bodies)

It is reassuring that, in general, ACESC members confirm the acceptable criteria, although half of them consider program length and study mode as a substantial difference. Of course, all the above can be *indicative* of a substantial difference, and so the responses may be less in conflict with the substantial difference criterion than they may appear to be. Nonetheless, it is worth emphasizing that these criteria alone should not be a cause for non-acceptance in comparability procedures.

In our opinion, of the criteria listed in the survey, only three would appear to be valid with respect to establishing substantial difference:

- the institution or program is not accredited or quality assured (a rejection criterion for all ACESC members, 72 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions, and 59 per cent of professional bodies)
- a lack of relevant assessment methods (e.g., a final thesis, project, or practicum) (although, interestingly, a great majority of respondents did not accept this as a rejection criterion)
- differences in program content or courses (accepted as a rejection criterion by the vast majority of respondents overall, but only 33 per cent of ACESC members)

It is interesting to compare the results of this question with those of Question 6, *What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials?* (see Section 3.3, Figure 6). Some of the options are the same, enabling direct comparisons and conclusions about the consistency of correspondents' replies:

- "Different admission requirements": Overall, 61 per cent of respondents use admission requirements as a criterion for assessment/recognition, while only 48 per cent regard it as a substantial difference. All ACESC members cite this criterion in answers to both questions, as do almost all universities; however, relatively few other postsecondary educational institutions and only a third of professional bodies do so.
- "Nominal duration" of study": Overall, only 58 per cent of respondents use duration as a criterion for assessment/recognition. Similarly, 58 per cent regard the criterion "the nominal duration of study is at least one year shorter than for a comparable academic credential issued in Canada" as a substantial

difference. All ACESC members cite this criterion in answer to Question 6, but only half regard it as a substantial difference. The same is true of the majority of universities, a minority of other postsecondary educational institutions, and about 60 per cent of professional bodies.

- “Quality assurance and/or accreditation of institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating” (Question 6) and “institution or program is not accredited or quality assured” (Question 19): For both of these questions, a similar proportion of respondents—66 per cent and 68 per cent, respectively—indicated that these factors are a criterion for assessment/recognition and indicative of substantial difference. Such responses were higher among postsecondary educational institutions, at around 75 per cent, and significantly lower among professional bodies, at around half.
- “Language of study” is not a rejection criterion for virtually all ACESC members or for professional bodies; however, most postsecondary educational institutions see it as a criterion for both assessment/recognition and substantial difference.
- Differences in program content or courses are not recognized as a substantial difference (Question 19) by two-thirds of ACESC members, although they are by 74 per cent of postsecondary educational institutions and 76 per cent of professional bodies. From the responses to Question 6, it can be seen that the list of courses and content completed is overwhelmingly used as a criterion for assessment/recognition by all types of organization (85 per cent), including ACESC members.

Q20 Outside of the factors listed in question 19, please list any other reason(s) why an international academic credential is not recognized by your organization or why it is not recommended that it be recognized.

The additional rejection criteria are related to several themes:

- the academic credential not being acceptable for practice of the occupation even in the country of issue (8 responses)
- a different qualification level (6 responses)
- the credential not being covered by mutual recognition agreements (5 responses)
- course content (5 responses)
- course length or credit hours (4 responses)
- mode of teaching (3 responses)
- inadequate marks (3 responses)
- fraud (11 responses)

One of the six thematic options in the recently published study *International Transfer Credit Practices*⁸³ makes the following recommendation with respect to postsecondary educational institutions in Canada:

6. Explore alternative assessment approaches where possible and appropriate for establishing equivalencies that acknowledge “substantial difference” versus “substantial equivalence.” Consider embedding explicit references to the newly ratified LRC and the supporting Canadian Quality Assurance Framework into local policy documents and public messaging.⁸⁴

That study goes on to explain:

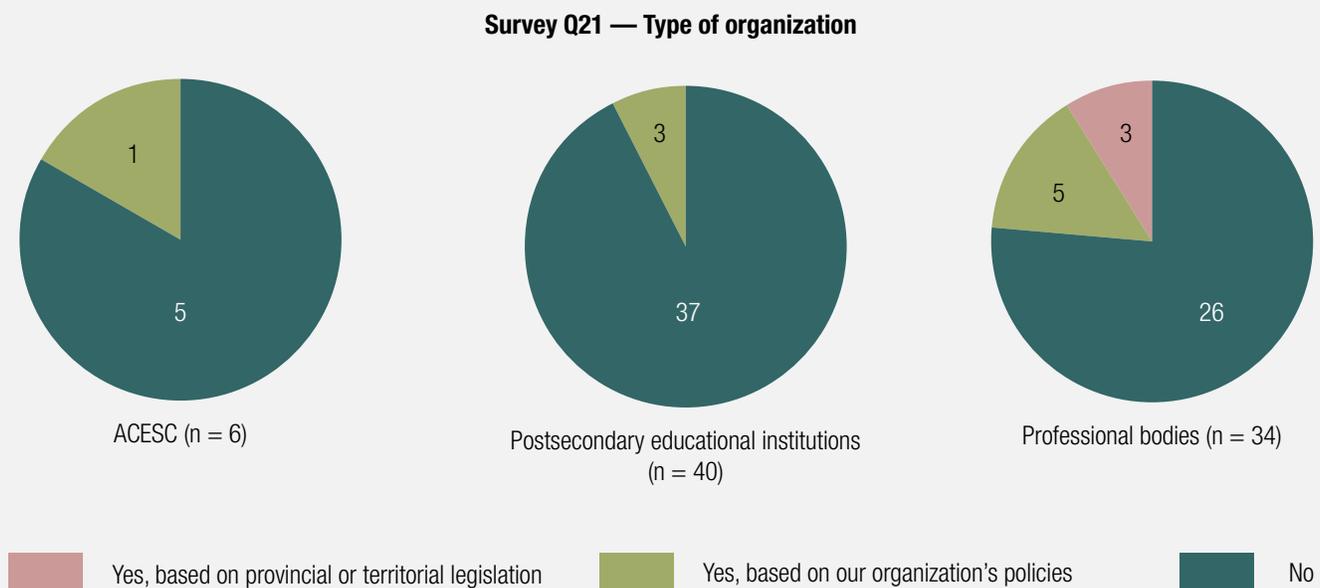
Establishing course equivalency by looking for substantial equivalence requires highly detailed assessments of inputs, such as credits, weighting, and text used, with the intent of establishing maximum comparability in program content. Emphasizing substantial difference instead encourages a focus on outcomes of learning, to look for “differences between the foreign qualification and the national qualification” that are sufficiently significant as to impede a student’s subsequent success in further study [ENIC-NARIC Networks, *Substantial Differences*] ..., and encourages the granting of credit recognition when such significant gaps are not found. The LRC and best practice guides encourage the adoption of

quality assurance and access practices informed by concepts such as substantial difference and a focus on learning outcomes. Considering the promotion of these concepts, further research into the traditional heavy reliance on detailed course syllabi may be warranted. This research should address the question, “Is it reasonable and efficacious to continue such reliance?” While relying on substantial equivalence may be a practical reality for regulated professions, an opportunity exists to explore and adopt principles-based, best practice approaches that lean towards establishing substantial difference.⁸⁵

Q21 Do you take the awarding body’s external rankings into account as one of the criteria when assessing international academic credentials?

As shown in Figure 15, the overwhelming response to this question was “no” from each category of organization, with results ranging from 76 to 93 per cent). However, three regulators do take such rankings into account, as required by provincial legislation. This finding may indicate a potential conflict between provincial legislation and the LRC (and the forthcoming Global Convention). A few (nine) organizations indicated that they take such rankings into account as a result of their organization’s policies; this number included a member of ACESC, three universities, and five professional bodies.

Figure 15 Use of the awarding body’s external rankings as an assessment criterion



6.3 Conclusions

Most assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada recognize the significance of accepting an academic credential as comparable in the absence of substantial differences. However, a quarter of all responding organizations were unaware of the significance of the concept of substantial difference, and the actual proportion is likely higher, as we may assume that the smaller and less formal/systematic organizations did not respond to the survey. Furthermore, there is evidence that some professions are still interpreting the concept in terms of substantial comparability, rather than the absence of substantial difference. However, the overall impact will be minimal, as the greatest proportion of academic credential assessment is performed by the largest organizations and those with dedicated credential assessors.

We may conclude that the concept of substantial difference is applied in the vast majority of academic credential assessments in Canada. Nevertheless, a substantial task facing CICIC is to bring the academic credential assessment community up to standard with respect to this concept and, in particular, with its definition in the

EAR Manual. The publishing of CICIC's step-by-step guide, and particularly its steps 4.1 to 4.5 on comparing the academic credential, is a good effort in this area. However, it could be further reinforced through professional development activities in the community (see Section 9.6).

Our conclusion that the concept of substantial differences is applied in the vast majority of credential assessments is borne out when the detailed responses to Questions 19 and 20 are compared with the responses in the 2016 Monitoring Report. That report shows major variations in the application of the concept of substantial differences among participating countries. This finding suggests that organizations in Canada are more likely than several of these countries to apply the concept.

7 Qualifications Held by Refugees

Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence. (Article VII)

This article [Article VII] underlines the importance of instituting proper procedures for the handling of applications for the recognition of qualifications. These procedures apply to the assessment of qualifications, regardless of whether the qualifications are ultimately recognised or not. The assessment should be based on adequate expertise and transparent procedures and criteria, and it should be available at reasonable cost and within a reasonable time (Explanatory report).

Article VII commits the Parties to showing flexibility in the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation, within the limits of each Party's constitutional, legal and regulatory provisions (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 57)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 5, “Refugees’ Qualifications,” of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

7.1 History of developments

In 2016, Canada had the second-highest rate of refugee resettlement in the world, admitting 46,700 refugees, the largest number it has admitted in a single year in nearly four decades.⁸⁶ Canada welcomed 40,081 refugees from Syria alone in the 15 months prior to January 29, 2017.⁸⁷ While initial efforts focused on the selection, transport, and immediate settlement needs of the refugees, such as housing and education for children, a key issue for many refugees is the recognition of their qualifications, to facilitate their finding appropriate employment, gaining admission to further studies, and settling into their new lives in Canada.

While some organizations in Canada have established practices and clear policies regarding the assessment and recognition of qualifications held by refugees, many have not. This is a reality faced not only in Canada. It is also an issue elsewhere, particularly in Europe, where, in 2017 there were 728,470 applications for international protection (a decrease of 44 per cent compared to 2016, when there were almost 1.3 million applications) and more than 538,000 people were granted protection (down by almost 25 per cent from 2016). Almost one in three of these people were from Syria, while Afghanistan and Iraq rounded out the top three.⁸⁸

There is an international consensus that refugees and those in refugee-like situations should have access to alternative assessment procedures for their qualifications. The legal framework for flexibility and alternative practices is included in the 1951 United Nations’ Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) and UNESCO’s revised regional recognition conventions. The 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol, which Canada acceded to on June 4, 1969, contain several provisions that serve as a legal basis for the recognition of qualifications held by refugees:⁸⁹

- Article 19 of the Refugee Convention provides that refugees who hold diplomas recognized by competent authorities and wish to practise a “liberal profession”⁹⁰ should be granted “treatment as favourable as

possible, and ... not less favourable than” other immigrants.

- Article 22 on public education stipulates that refugees should be treated as favourably as other immigrants “as regards access to studies, the recognition of foreign school certificates, diplomas and degrees.”
- Both Articles 19 and 22 state that refugees should be treated at least as well as immigrants “generally in the same circumstances,” which Article 6 defines to mean that refugees should fulfill the same requirements as other groups, “with the exception of requirements which by their nature a refugee is incapable of fulfilling.”
- Article 25 makes provisions for cases where a refugee does not have recourse to the assistance of authorities in the country he or she has fled. It requires that:

[w]hen the exercise of a right by a refugee would normally require the assistance of authorities of a foreign country to whom he cannot have recourse, the Contracting States ... shall arrange that such assistance be afforded to him by their own authorities or by an international authority.... [T]hey shall deliver ... to refugees such documents or certifications as would normally be delivered to aliens by or through their national authorities. Documents or certifications so delivered shall stand in the stead of the official instruments ... and shall be given credence in the absence of proof to the contrary.

Taken together, these articles can be interpreted to mean that if refugees, by virtue of being refugees, do not have access to verifiable documentation, then the host country and its organizations must find alternatives.

In addition to Canada’s legal obligations under the 1951 Refugee Convention, the revised UNESCO recognition conventions also include provisions for refugees. On the recommendation of provincial and territorial governments, Canada ratified the 1997 Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) on June 13, 2018; as a consequence, that convention became legally binding for Canada under international law.

Article VII of the LRC states:

Each Party shall take all feasible and reasonable steps within the framework of its education system and in conformity with its constitutional, legal, and regulatory provisions to develop procedures designed to assess fairly and expeditiously whether refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation fulfil the relevant requirements for access to higher education, to further higher education programmes or to employment activities, even in cases in which the qualifications obtained in one of the Parties cannot be proven through documentary evidence.⁹¹

The Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF), developed in 2012 by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), initially contained Principle and Recommendation 23, which stated that “[i]n some exceptional cases, such as those involving refugees and others who are unable to document their qualifications for good reasons, sworn statements before a legal authority may be accepted in lieu of full documentation.”⁹² The QAF was updated in fall 2018 with a new section on alternative procedures. As a consequence, Principle and Recommendation 23 has been deleted, but 14 new principles and recommendations expand on its point.

The Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee (LRCC) has recognized that very few ratifying states have fully implemented the provisions of Article VII.⁹³ In addition, while the 1951 Refugee Convention, the 1997 LRC, and the QAF indicate support for alternate procedures for assessing refugees’ qualifications, until recently there has been limited guidance on how an organization might develop policies to help address some of the challenges faced by refugees in entering the labour market or pursuing further studies. To help fill this gap, the LRCC has developed a new subsidiary text on this issue, *Recommendation on the Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*,⁹⁴ which members of the LRCC adopted on November 14, 2017. This action was meant to address the limited scope of Section VII of the LRC by offering an alternative qualification-assessment procedure when the applicant has no access to verifiable documentation. Ratifying states are expected to implement the measures outlined in the subsidiary text within their respective contexts.

7.2 Initiatives in Canada

In Canada, some postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities, and academic credential assessment services have developed policies and practices in this area.

The survey findings from the recently published study titled *International Transfer Credit Practices* provide insight on policies at postsecondary educational institutions in Canada regarding cases in which documentation cannot be provided by students.

- 79 participants provided a response to indicate whether alternate transfer credit practices are available to support international students who are unable to provide academic documentation. 47% (37) responded in the negative, 48% (38) responded “yes,” and 5% (4) indicated they did not know. Of those that responded “yes,” 87% (33) reported publishing these protocols.
- 84 participants were asked if they rely on any other resources or tools to support the transfer credit processing of international credentials. Of the 79 respondents: 51% (40) indicated “yes,” 41% (32) indicated “no,” and 9% (7) indicated “I don’t know” in response to this question.
- For credit assessment of exchange students, when asked if they offered alternate practices to support students who returned from international institutions without documents, 21% (11) of 53 respondents indicated “yes,” 75% (40), indicated “no,” and 4% (2) indicated they did not know. Of those 11 who responded “yes,” only 3 publish these alternative practices.⁹⁵

Since 1978, the World University Service of Canada (WUSC) has worked with universities and colleges across Canada to admit refugee students. As well, since 2002, the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) has had an alternative documentation process available to refugees and others who cannot obtain official documents sent directly from the issuing institutions.

In 2015, the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS) commissioned research to assess documentation challenges, quality assurance issues, and accreditation practices, as well as the impact of war on the education and quality assurance systems in Afghanistan. As a result, a document verification procedure that was developed in collaboration with the Embassy of Afghanistan in Ottawa has been implemented and will be used for assessing education credentials from Afghanistan (see Case Study 7).

Case Study 7 Assessment of education credentials from Afghanistan by the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS)

In 2014, ICAS suspended the assessment of academic credentials awarded in Afghanistan. The ICAS Management Committee had found that the existing verification procedures were flawed. In addition, concerns were raised about the quality of the education delivered in that country, given the years of disruption to the education system.

In 2015, ICAS commissioned a research report on both the quality assurance mechanisms in place in Afghanistan as well as best practices in the authentication of Afghan academic documents. The research investigated practices in Canada and internationally. Information was collected from academic credential assessment services, professional regulatory bodies, Afghan government officials, and officials at educational institutions and regulatory associations in Afghanistan. The research also included on-site visits in Afghanistan.

The report highlighted the challenges faced by individuals and organizations that require authentication of documents issued in Afghanistan. Organizations that were providing assessments of education in Afghanistan used a variety of methods to authenticate documents, mostly with limited success. The research also documented decades of disruption to and instability of the education system in Afghanistan. Organizations faced significant challenges obtaining consistent and accurate factual information about the system and quality of education through extended periods of disruption.

The provision of an assessment of an academic credential depends on the ability to both obtain reliable information about the education and to authenticate the documents submitted. To address the issue of document authentication, the report recommended a document-verification procedure developed in collaboration with the Embassy of Afghanistan in Canada.

To address the lack of information is, perhaps, a more challenging issue. An informed assessment is possible only when reliable information is consistently available. Acknowledging this issue, the report provided recommendations addressing the time periods and the types of institutions for which ICAS should consider providing assessments.

ICAS has recently implemented the recommended procedures with the Embassy of Afghanistan. It has not yet received documents authenticated by the embassy and, as a result, has not yet issued an assessment report under the new process. ICAS will continue to monitor the effectiveness of this process and whether it will be of benefit to those educated in Afghanistan.

In 2016, Engineers and Geoscientists British Columbia (formerly known as the Association of Professional Engineers and Geoscientists of British Columbia) established a policy to guide its assessment of refugee qualifications. In February 2016, Engineers Canada released its policy statement on convention refugees.⁹⁶ In May 2016, World Education Services (WES) Research published an excellent research report on recognizing refugee qualifications and has since completed its own pilot project focused on Syrian refugees, which is described in Case Study 8.⁹⁷

Case Study 8 WES Canada Refugee Pilot

Between November 2015 and June 2017, the Government of Canada settled more than 47,000 refugees, many with only partial documentation of their academic achievements. Responding to a real need, in 2016, World Education Services (WES) Canada launched the WES Refugee Pilot Project.

The six-month pilot processed 337 academic credential assessment applications from eligible refugees (a figure that was 169 per cent of the number specified in the original plan) and sought to determine if they could be corroborated by verified documents in the WES database and by other information available to the assessors. The pilot focused on:

- testing methods of reconstructing an individual's academic credentials;
- establishing a sufficiently rigorous assessment methodology;
- providing a reliable "first opinion" assessment; and
- determine the usefulness of such a credential assessment.

WES Canada determined that at least one credible native language document could be corroborated with evidence in WES's substantial archives. Using this methodology, examiners could establish a list of courses likely taken. Then course credit or advanced standing could be granted or, alternatively, a challenge exam could be administered.

The pilot was administered in community-based agencies serving refugees, providing participants with access to service in familiar environments and through trusted employment/settlement caseworker intermediaries. Eight partners in Ontario and Alberta served as designated referral partners. Handoff of documents and the final report was seamless between all involved, including colleges, universities, and professional regulators.

Within the pilot project, the WES alternative credential assessment report provided to applicants included:

- a guide to the nature of the academic credential assessed and its comparability in Canada;
- a discussion of evidence and methods used to complete the assessment;
- course analysis and access to the information and documents submitted by the applicant (with English translation);
- contextual information on the educational system in Syria;
- an explanation of the methodology WES Canada used in the pilot; and
- an overview of best practices in refugee academic credential recognition.

The pilot program was a success, as assessed by the following indicators:

- no evidence was found of fraudulent documents
- 95 per cent of applicant submitted at least one credible piece of evidence and were successfully assessed
- 28 per cent of applications required “reconstruction” of at least part of the credential because of missing or incomplete documentation
- 73 per cent of stakeholders surveyed after seeing a sample report indicated that the methods used gave them confidence in the results
- almost half of the stakeholders surveyed indicated their organizations would use or consider using the assessment reports for recognition

The pilot also shows that the screening protocols are effective: much time is devoted to reaching out to clients for missing or incomplete information (as informed by WES Canada’s pre-screening and quality assurance protocols). It is apparent that the basic WES assessment (document verification) is sufficient for most purposes.

The pilot provided the insights needed to expand the program, with new, standardized approaches available to a broader set of displaced persons since fall 2018.

On November 24–25, 2016, CICIC hosted a two-day practical workshop on assessing the qualifications of refugees. Discussions at the workshop and additional consultations with key sectors led to the identification and development of best practices and guidelines that can be used by organizations to put in place an alternative qualification-assessment procedure without access to verifiable documentation. The best practices and guidelines were published by CICIC in October 2017⁹⁸ and were widely disseminated to the assessment and recognition sector in Canada and the ENIC-NARIC Networks (see Case Study 9).

Case Study 9 Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees

CICIC held a two-day workshop, “Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees,” on November 24 and 25, 2016, in Mississauga, Ontario. The workshop was attended by 93 participants working in key sectors. They represented the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC); professional regulatory bodies and apprenticeship authorities; postsecondary educational institutions; and government departments and agencies. The workshop was designed to assist refugees in entering the labour market and gaining admission to further studies by building knowledge within the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community of alternative approaches to assessment and recognition for refugees and persons in refugee-like situations.

Discussions at the workshop, including presentations by guest speakers from Canada and Europe, and

additional consultations led to the identification of best practices and development of guidelines that organizations can use to put in place an alternative qualification-assessment procedure when they do not have access to verifiable documentation. A final report, published in 2017, includes the following best practices/recommendations:

- five different approaches that may be used, depending on the situation and type of organization: country profile plus comparability statement; background paper; some documentation; some verifiable documentation; or testing of skills and competencies
- 13 recommended best practices and guidelines that are consistent with the Lisbon Recognition Convention in the context of international best practices. These are related to: governance; building awareness; eligibility; minimum documentation requirements; translation requirements; use of background papers and sworn affidavits; use of competency-based assessments; use of prior learning assessment and recognition; sharing documentation; contacting institutions; transparency and public communications; transparency in the assessment report; and fees
- a practical worksheet developed to support organizations that are thinking of developing new policies or refining existing ones. It is a companion to the 13 recommended best practices and guidelines

As noted in section 7.1, a significant update to CICIC's QAF was approved in fall 2018. A new section was added to the QAF to outline policies on alternative assessment procedures for applicants without access to verifiable documentation, along with an additional 14 Principles and Recommendations. These were based on the legal framework of the LRC but also on *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees: Best Practices and Guidelines—Final Report*, published by CICIC in 2017.

7.3 International collaboration through ENIC-NARIC Networks

The 2017 best practices and guidelines published by CICIC are also being used by other national information centres in the ENIC-NARIC Networks to assist in the development of policies in their respective countries.

In 2016–18, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) implemented the Toolkit for Recognition of Higher Education for Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation (REACT) project. CICIC plays an important role in the second phase of this project (see Case Study 10).

Case Study 10 ENIC-NARIC Networks' REACT project⁹⁹

In 2016–18, the Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NOKUT) led the first phase of the Toolkit for Recognition of Higher Education for Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation (REACT) project. The initial consortium consisted of ENIC/NARIC Armenia, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom. The project focused on the ways in which ENIC/NARIC assess credentials in their respective countries. The results led to the publication of country briefings for Afghanistan, Eritrea, Iraq, Libya, and Syria. A toolkit offering guidelines on assessment was also published and disseminated through webinars to ENIC/NARIC.

The second phase of the project aims at testing and adapting the initial toolkit, with an expanded focus on pathways to admission for further studies at postsecondary educational institutions. An additional set of briefings is to be developed for five new countries, with webinars created to disseminate the outcomes to admissions staff at postsecondary educational institutions.

Phase II was launched in spring 2018 and will be completed in early 2020. It builds on best practices and guidelines published by CICIC. That organization was provided with an opportunity to further international collaboration on the issue through the ENIC-NARIC Networks. This collaboration is in line with recommendations on possible next steps from a report from CICIC, *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees: Best Practices and Guidelines*.¹⁰⁰

NOKUT is coordinating the REACT project. CICIC was invited to sit on the project's steering group as an expert, along with ENIC/NARIC Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, and Norway, as well as the European University Association, the European Students' Union, KIRON Open Higher Education, and the ENIC Network president.

The main expected outcome is to offer best practices and guidelines to postsecondary educational institutions for an alternative procedure for academic credential assessment for refugees facing hardship.

In June 2018, ACESC agreed to collaboration with the second phase of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) project led by the Council of Europe. ACESC agreed in principle to accept EQPR documentation issued to an applicant to support the preparation of a new assessment report for that applicant, thus ensuring acceptance of such documentation by competent recognition bodies in Canada. As part of this collaboration, selected senior academic credential assessors among ACESC members are participating in training and assessment sessions on the EQPR methodology (see Case Study 11).

Case Study 11 European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR)¹⁰¹

In the hopes of alleviating hardship faced by refugees seeking academic credential recognition in Canada, ACESC has agreed to collaborate in the second phase of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) project, which was launched in 2018.

Members of ACESC have agreed in principle to accept EQPR documentation issued to an applicant, if and when such documentation is presented to any of their organizations in Canada for their review. The EQPR documentation will be used to support the preparation of a new assessment report for the applicant. This agreement ensures acceptance of such documentation by competent recognition bodies in Canada, including educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities and associations, immigration authorities, and employers. In addition, selected senior academic credential assessors employed by some members of ACESC are participating in training sessions on the EQPR methodology alongside their ENIC-NARIC Networks colleagues and subsequently will take part in assessment sessions with refugees seeking an EQPR.

The Council of Europe is the co-secretariat of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and is coordinating the EQPR project. CICIC was invited to contribute to the project's coordination group as an expert, along with ENIC/NARIC Armenia, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United Kingdom; the Hellenic Ministry of Education, Research and Religious Affairs; the Italian Ministry of Education, Universities and Research; the Conference of University Rectors of Italy; and the Norwegian Ministry of Education and Research.

The EQPR methodology, which is based on a structured interview, enables the assessment of qualifications held by refugees in cases where the qualifications cannot be fully documented and verified with the issuing authorities. The EQPR provides a format aimed at facilitating the use of the assessment both within and beyond the refugee's initial host country. The passport should facilitate the future mobility of a refugee, as it should eliminate unnecessary and repeated assessments of the same qualifications. The assessment outcome outlined in the refugee's EQPR remains expert advice only and does not constitute a legally binding recognition decision. The use of the EQPR to inform recognition decisions remains at the discretion of competent recognition bodies.

The EQPR was cited as best practice in the recently adopted subsidiary text on assessing and recognizing academic credentials held by refugees, displaced persons, and persons in a refugee-like situation under the framework of the LRC.¹⁰² It was also cited in the recently published best practices and guidelines from CICIC's Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees initiative.¹⁰³

By furthering international collaboration, CICIC will ensure that expertise developed in Europe can be shared as best practice with assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. This action will serve to inform the policies and procedures of such organizations and thus ensure pan-Canadian implementation of the LRC.

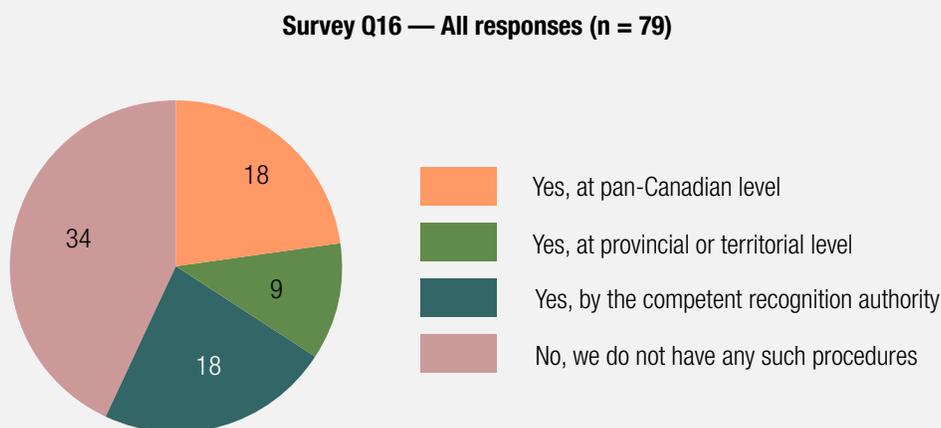
7.4 Procedures and alternative pathways in Canada

The survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community asked assessment services and competent recognition bodies two questions about their procedures and alternative pathways for refugees.

Q16 Do you have procedures or an alternative pathway for applicants who have limited or no documentary evidence of their qualifications (e.g., refugees)? If so, please indicate at which level this framework is found.

The responses to Question 16 are presented in Figures 16 and 17.

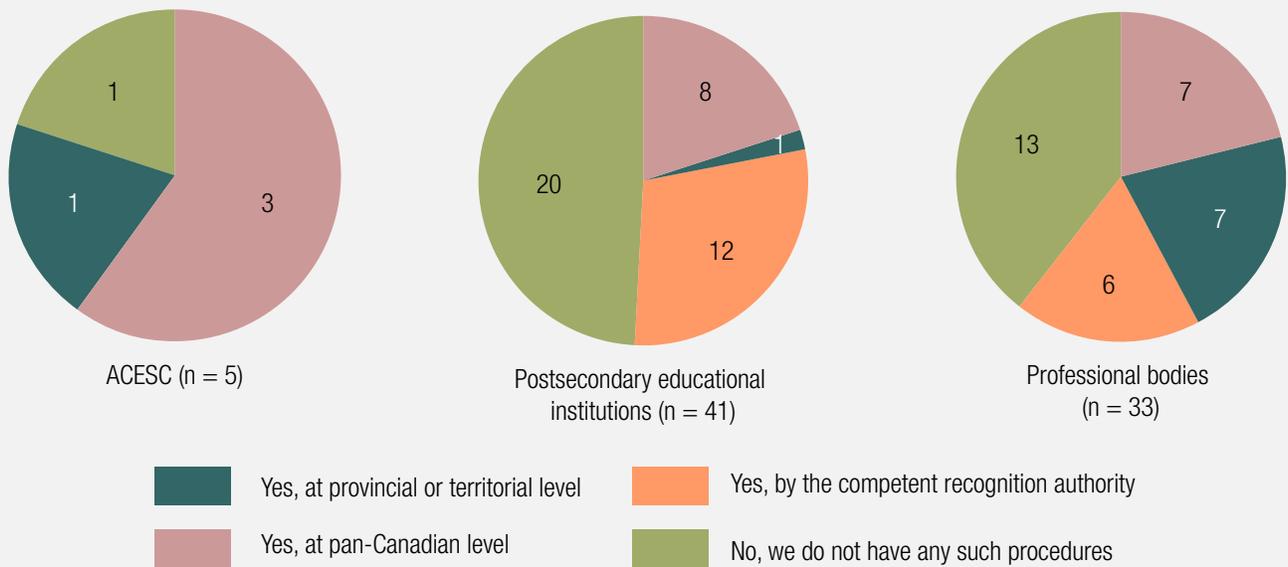
Figure 16 Organizations with procedures or alternative pathway for applicants with limited or no documentary evidence of qualifications (all responses)



The majority of respondents (45 of 79 organizations, or 57 per cent) indicate some procedures or an alternative pathway for applicants who have limited or no documentary evidence of their qualifications. Of these positive responses, 18 organizations reported procedures or an alternate pathway at the pan-Canadian level, and 9 organizations reported such approaches at the provincial/territorial level. Eighteen organizations report procedures or an alternate pathway “by the competent recognition authority,” but it is not clear if this is at the pan-Canadian or provincial/territorial level.

Figure 17 Organizations with procedures or alternative pathway for applicants with limited or no documentary evidence of qualifications (by category of respondent)

Survey Q16 — Type of organization



As seen in Figure 17, five of the six members of ACESC responded to this question, with three indicating they had procedures or an alternative pathway at the pan-Canadian level, and one indicating procedures at the provincial/territorial level. One member indicated not having any such procedures.

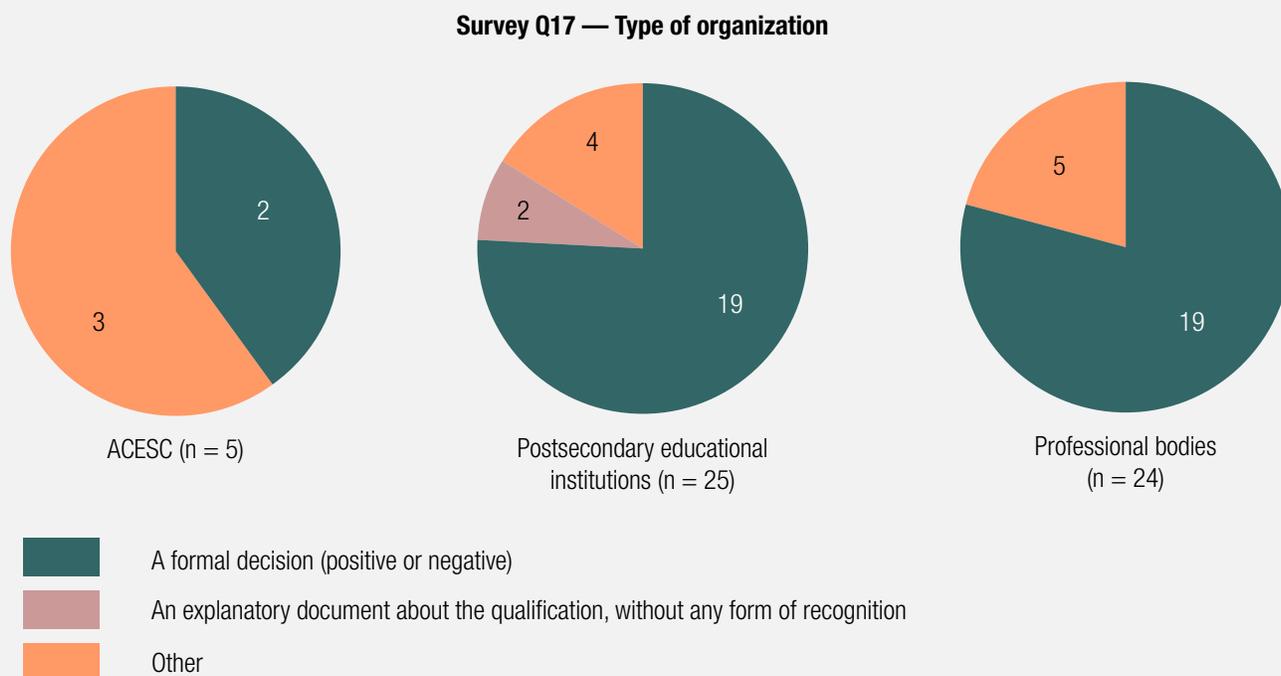
Among postsecondary educational institutions, of the 41 institutions that responded, 20 did not have any such procedures or pathways. Eight indicated procedures at the pan-Canadian level, 1 at the provincial/territorial level, and 12 by the competent recognition authority. Nineteen institutions provided further information on their procedures or alternative pathways. Of these, 7 noted that they consider cases on an individual basis, and 4 noted procedures or protocols specific to the institution. Others made reference to WES, the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS), CICIC, International Students Overcoming War (ISOW), WUSC, the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), ACCUPLACER, and mature student testing.

Twenty of 33 professional bodies indicated existing procedures or an alternative pathway, with approximately a third each at the pan-Canadian level, the provincial/territorial level, and by the competent recognition authority.

Q17 If you answered question 16 in the affirmative, what are the possible outcomes of the procedures or alternative pathway?

Figure 18 shows that formal decisions are the most likely outcomes of the procedures or alternative pathways.

Figure 18 Possible outcomes of procedures or alternative pathway for applicants with limited or no documentary evidence of qualifications



Some respondents elaborated as follows:

- Two ACESC members indicated that a formal decision or an explanatory document without any form of recognition is possible, depending on the documentation available. Another noted that an evaluation (accompanying a sworn affidavit to the applicant’s credentials earned) of qualifications might be possible.
- A handful of postsecondary educational institutions noted that possible outcomes might include admission to a program, the opportunity to take challenge exams, or prior learning assessment and recognition.
- One university noted that applicants who are unable to provide the required documents/transcripts for admission purposes may submit an “Applicant Declaration” form outlining the circumstances preventing them from obtaining documents. If the declaration is approved, documents may be waived, although admission requirements are not waived. The pathways of open studies and academic upgrading are available so the applicant can begin studies. This practice is similar to the “background paper” noted in Case Study 9, in which the institution tries to reconstruct the applicant’s educational background (the individual signs a statement regarding his or her background through an Applicant Declaration). This practice has been well established in the main postsecondary educational institutions in Canada for a long time.

7.5 Conclusions

Like 70 per cent of countries noted in the 2016 LRCC Monitoring Report,¹⁰⁴ Canada has no regulations at any level concerning the recognition of refugees' and displaced persons' qualifications. However, the lack of regulations in Canada is not an indication of inactivity in this area but instead reflects the country's constitutional structure regarding education and its unique qualifications recognition environment. Compliance with the LRC is achieved and evident in voluntary development and collaboration instead of through regulation or pan-Canadian, provincial, and/or territorial enforcement.

Initiatives in Canada regarding the recognition of refugees' and displaced persons' qualifications (described in Section 7.2) stand out as examples of voluntary developments that have had wide impact both within and outside the country. CICIC has played an important role in facilitating the sharing and exchange of information and the development of best practices. Its 2016 workshop, which gathered important stakeholders in qualifications recognition, resulted in the publication in 2017 of best practices and guidelines that can be used by organizations in different situations to put in place an alternative qualification-assessment procedure when there is no access to verifiable documentation.

These best practice and guidelines have also been disseminated in the ENIC-NARIC Networks and are followed in other countries. The high level of trust and reciprocity within the ENIC-NARIC Networks on the issue of refugees and recognition is notable, and CICIC's international participation and collaboration supports the aim of having alternative recognition procedures in place to help reduce the hardships on refugees. Such collaboration is highlighted by NOKUT's Toolkit for Recognition of Higher Education for Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation (REACT) project, and CICIC continues to play an active role in that project's steering group. It is also reflected in ACESC's recent agreement to accept EQPR documentation issued to an applicant, if and when such documentation is presented to any of its organizations in Canada for their review, as well as in EQPR-related training of selected senior academic credential assessors employed by some members of ACESC.

8 Information on Education Systems and on Higher Education Institutions

Each Party shall ensure, in order to facilitate the recognition of qualifications, that adequate and clear information on its educational system is provided. (Article III.4)

This article [Article III.4] underlines the importance of making higher education systems, as well as the education giving access to higher education, clear to the academic community, and especially to academic recognition experts and credentials evaluators in other parties. The article underlines the responsibility of the parties for giving adequate information on their own education systems (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 63)

Each Party shall provide adequate information on any institution belonging to its higher education system, and on any programme operated by these institutions ... (Article VIII.1)

This article [Article VIII.1] requires the parties to provide adequate information on any higher education institution (HEI) belonging to their higher education system, and on the programmes operated by these institutions, in order to give other parties the necessary background knowledge to decide whether any given qualification should be recognised (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 67)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 6, “Information on Education Systems,” and Chapter 7, “Information on Higher Education Institutions,” of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

8.1 Overview

The 21 provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education in Canada¹⁰⁵ already publish comprehensive public information on their respective education systems, including listing the educational institutions belonging to their systems. The Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) requires that such information be facilitated through the establishment of a national information centre. In addition, the 2004 *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*¹⁰⁶ specifies the recommended format of the information that should be provided. This recommendation was accompanied by the 2004 *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition*,¹⁰⁷ which provided additional guidance for national information centres within the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) is the body mandated as Canada’s national information centre, providing a one-stop shop for information and referral services, especially for international audiences seeking information about Canada. CICIC provides information in English and French on Canada’s education systems, institutions, programs, and academic credentials, in collaboration with the competent authorities responsible for education in the provinces and territories of Canada. Case Study 12 provides more details about this collaboration.

Case Study 12 Provincial and territorial collaboration on information provision

To assist the provinces and territories in carrying out their obligations related to the information provision of the LRC, the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) established the CICIC Committee. Members are senior provincial and territorial government officials with responsibility for education, including quality assurance, international education, and the recognition of qualifications.

The mandate of the committee is to work with CICIC staff to ensure the accuracy of the information that CICIC provides on provincial and territorial education systems, institutions, and quality-assurance mechanisms. The committee also responds to specific enquiries from CICIC staff about academic credential assessment and recognition in members' respective provinces and territories. More generally, the committee provides advice to CICIC and the Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education (ACDME), as requested, on these issues. The CICIC Committee is an official committee of CMEC and reports to the ACDME.

On an annual basis, CICIC conducts a comprehensive review of published information on its Web site with the assistance of CICIC Committee members. In addition, CICIC staff will frequently require the assistance of committee members to perform research and validate information, often associated with a public inquiry received by CICIC. This highlights the importance of provincial and territorial collaboration in the provision of information and in ensuring timely responses to public inquiries related to recognition.

8.2 CICIC on-line information

Given the increasing use of on-line tools to disseminate information to the public, CICIC has, over the years, firmly established an on-line presence through its main Web site but also social media channels. The information is used mainly by students, internationally educated individuals, and organizations tasked with making recognition decisions in and outside Canada.

8.2.1 National education system

The 2016 Monitoring Report¹⁰⁸ asked whether information on the national education system is available on-line and, if so, whether it includes information on the following areas:

- the school education system (including description of qualifications giving access to higher education)
- the legal framework and administration of higher education
- access qualifications
- types of higher education institutions
- higher education qualifications
- a national qualifications framework
- credit and grading systems
- a quality assurance system or accreditation
- examples of educational credentials

On all the above, clear and precise information is indeed provided by CICIC.

More specifically, information on the 13 provincial and territorial education systems in Canada is provided mainly through CICIC's Education Web portal¹⁰⁹ in both English and French. The Web site is smart-phone and tablet friendly. The information is provided at two different levels:

- comprehensive information on the particularities of each provincial and territorial system presented in a clear and straightforward way, using a uniform approach for all provinces and territories. Those province- and territory-specific sections are especially useful for CICIC's audience, including academic credential assessors trying to recognize credentials issued by those education systems
- a general overview of all provincial and territorial education systems, which highlights common elements

Published information also refers users to provincial and territorial Web sites, where more detailed and specific information can be accessed. CICIC's approach is to not duplicate existing information but rather facilitate the process for users to locate relevant information.

For the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community, CICIC also provides access to the Directory of Comparability Assessment Outcomes¹¹⁰ to facilitate their work. Registered users can access:

- detailed profiles on the education systems and academic credentials of 12 countries;
- information on the provincial and territorial education systems in Canada; and
- comparability assessment outcomes for academic credentials issued within the 13 education systems in Canada.

8.2.2 Higher education institutions

The 2016 Monitoring Report¹¹¹ included the following two questions:

- Is the list of institutions that belong to the national higher education system published and available on-line?
- Is information on the programs operated by the recognized higher education institutions that belong to the national higher education system published and available on-line?

The list of higher education institutions in Canada is published and publicly accessible through CICIC's Directory of Educational Institutions in Canada.¹¹² An advanced search feature enables users to refine their search using various criteria. Each institution has its own profile, displaying contact information and enabling referral to its Web site for further information. The directory contains the list of educational institutions currently recognized, authorized, registered, and/or licensed by the competent authorities in the provinces and territories of Canada. These institutions have all met the requirements established by the relevant provincial or territorial government for each type of institution. The list of institutions includes:

- all public elementary/secondary school boards or districts;
- postsecondary educational institutions that are recognized, authorized, registered, or licensed by the provinces and territories according to provincial/territorial legislation;
- language schools offering second-language programs that meet the standards of Languages Canada;
- EduCanada-eligible and/or -authorized institutions; and
- designated learning institutions under Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's International Student Program.

The profile of each institution displays:

- general contact information;
- legislation and authorization enabling it to offer academic programs and issue credentials, with a

focus on legislation; and

- information on its provincial/territorial education system and associated quality assurance mechanisms.

The profile also provides referrals to other Web sites for further information. The importance of selecting an educational institution from the directory—in order to facilitate the recognition of completed academic credentials in the future—is explicit. It is clearly stated that selecting an institution that is recognized, authorized, registered, and/or licensed by the competent authorities in Canada facilitates the portability and recognition of the studies, both within and outside Canada.

CICIC's on-line directory does not provide a list of programs offered by institutions. However, each institution's profile provides a hyperlink referring users to the list of academic programs on the Web site of the institution and/or of the province or territory. In most cases, such information is available only in one language. In addition, although a searchable list of academic programs is not available in the directory, CICIC publishes a Web page facilitating the identification of specific postsecondary academic programs of interest in Canada, categorized by:

- occupation, referring users to a list of professional academic programs leading to professional certification; and
- geographical location, referring users to other pan-Canadian or provincial/territorial Web sites that publish some information.

Some provinces in Canada offer their elementary and secondary academic programs through authorized schools outside Canada. These programs can lead to transfer credits or even a high school diploma issued by a provincial government in Canada. The Directory of Offshore Schools and International Education Resources¹¹³ on CICIC's Web site contains the following:

- information on approximately 120 offshore schools offering a provincial elementary or secondary academic program outside Canada
- contact information and links to resources for the relevant province, including its elementary and secondary curriculum

8.3 Other information-dissemination methods

The Web site of the ENIC-NARIC Networks contains country-specific sections, including one for Canada.¹¹⁴ CICIC, in collaboration with the Working Party on Electronic Communication for Recognition (ELCORE, see Case Study 13), continually ensures that published information remains up to date.

Case Study 13 ELCORE

The Working Party on Electronic Communication for Recognition (ELCORE) was established by the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board in December 1999, following a proposal by Canada at the 6th Joint Meeting of the ENIC and NARIC Networks in June 1999. ELCORE reports to the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board, and provides advice on issues related to the electronic provision of information under the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. The aim of ELCORE is to foster capacity building and oversight of the management and development of the ENIC-NARIC Networks' information system, as well as to develop strategic communication. Many of its experts have a background in strategic policy, while others are more focused on information technologies and strategic communications. ELCORE experts are from:

- ENIC/NARIC Canada (i.e., CICIC), France, Holy See, Italy, and the United States;
- UNESCO;
- the Council of Europe;

- the European Commission; and
- the ENIC Bureau.

Tools managed by ELCORE volunteers include the following:

- five listservs used by more than 400 subject-matter experts in 55 countries
- the ENIC-NARIC.net Web site (which shows 263,486 users and 966,521 Web page views over a one-year period in 2017)
- three social media channels

ELCORE works closely with all 55 national information centers in the ENIC-NARIC Networks to ensure that their respective country pages on the ENIC-NARIC Networks' Web site remain up-to-date.

With its contributions as a member, CICIC has demonstrated leadership since the inception of ELCORE. For several years from the late 1990s until the mid-2000s, CICIC hosted the ENIC-NARIC Networks' information systems on its Web servers in Canada. Since 2013, CICIC has also contributed to the increasing use of social media channels to improve stakeholder engagement with the ENIC-NARIC Networks. Most recently, CICIC held the chair of ELCORE from 2015 to 2020. CICIC's information systems and implementation of the information provision of the LRC are often cited as best practice within the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

The working group receives funding for its activities from the Council of Europe, while the ENIC-NARIC.net information systems are funded by the European Commission.

CICIC coordinates the update of information on provincial and territorial education systems in Canada that is published in the World Higher Education Database (WHED) Portal¹¹⁵ and the *International Handbook of Universities* (IHU)¹¹⁶ of the International Association of Universities (IAU) (see Case Study 14).

Case Study 14 World Higher Education Database (WHED) Portal and the International Handbook of Universities (IHU)

The International Association of Universities (IAU) publishes the World Higher Education Database (WHED) Portal and the *International Handbook of Universities* (IHU). These electronic and paper-based publications have been used for many decades as reference tools for assessors in their recognition work. The country-specific comprehensive information they contain includes the following:

- descriptions of the education system and key contact information
- academic credentials offered
- all degree-granting educational institutions belonging to a country's education system

Within these publications, each province/territory in Canada has an individual section, and there is an overview for Canada. CICIC has collaborated with the IAU for many decades to ensure continued accuracy of published information on provincial and territorial education systems in Canada. With the assistance of CICIC Committee members, CICIC coordinates a comprehensive information update every four years.

As these publications are kept for historical purposes in internal research libraries of assessment services and competent recognition bodies, ensuring continued information accuracy is crucial and demonstrates how CICIC can facilitate engagement with key international stakeholders.

To support the pan-Canadian Postsecondary Student Information System (PSIS)¹¹⁷ survey, CICIC annually provides data extractions of all public postsecondary educational institutions found in CICIC's Directory of Educational Institutions in Canada. Information obtained from the survey is published by the Canadian Education Statistics Council (CESC), which is a partnership between CMEC and Statistics Canada to coordinate data and research activities related to education.

In addition to on-line information, CICIC also uses various other methods to disseminate information about provincial and territorial education systems, including institutions belonging to these systems:

- As part of customer service, staff answer inquiries through e-mail, phone, postal mail, and social media channels.
- Through webinars, meetings, conferences, and teleconferences, staff provide specific information tailored to the audience.

8.4 Conclusions

CICIC is to be congratulated on its Web site, which publishes comprehensive information on provincial and territorial education systems, including a list of educational institutions that have met the requirements established by the relevant provincial or territorial government, and for continually ensuring that the Web site is up to date. Its Web site and use of social media channels are often referred as best practice within the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and they reinforce the relevance of CICIC's contribution to ELCORE. CICIC's continued engagement with other stakeholders to ensure accuracy of the information on other external platforms is equally to be commended. The results of CICIC's efforts clearly fulfill the LRC informational requirements in an exemplary fashion.

It is important that CICIC continue to be provided with the resources and support from provincial and territorial officials on the CICIC Committee to ensure that information is kept up to date and relevant, especially when education reform occurs.

9 National Information Centre

Each Party shall establish or maintain a national information centre. (Article IX.2.1)

In each Party, the national information centre shall facilitate access to information on the higher education systems and qualifications of the other Parties. (Article IX.2.2)

The articles in question [Articles IX, 2.1 and 2.2] commit the parties to establishing and maintaining a national information centre and describe the functions of the national information centres at the national level. The national information centre shall, in accordance with national laws and regulations, give advice and information on recognition matters and assessment of qualifications, to both individuals and institutions, including students; higher education institutions (HEIs); staff members at HEIs; ministries responsible for higher education; parents; employers; national information centres of other parties and other international partner institutions; any other interested parties (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 71)

Every national information centre shall have at its disposal the necessary means to enable it to fulfil its functions. (Article IX.2.3)

In order to fulfil a party's obligation under the convention, it is important that the national information centre be given adequate resources by which to fulfil its functions. These resources include an adequate number of competent staff, technical facilities and a sufficient budget to allow adequate contacts with higher education institutions in the country in which the centre is located as well as with national information centres of other parties (Explanatory report). (2016 Monitoring Report, p. 79)

This chapter is a companion chapter to Chapter 8, "National Information Centre," and Chapter 9, "Resources to Enable the National Information Centre to Fulfil Its Functions," of *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report).

9.1 Overview

In addition to the three articles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) quoted above, the 2004 *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*¹¹⁸ specifies the recommended tasks and responsibilities of the national information centres, as well as the resources, expertise, and information that they should provide. This recommendation was accompanied by the 2004 *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition*,¹¹⁹ which provided additional guidance for ENIC/NARIC.

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) is Canada's national information centre (also known, in the context of the present discussion, as an ENIC, or ENIC Canada). It fulfills Canada's obligations under UNESCO conventions to facilitate the mobility of talent.

CICIC was established in 1990, after Canada ratified the UNESCO Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees concerning Higher Education in the States belonging to the Europe Region, to assist Canada in carrying out its obligations under the terms of this convention. Since August 1, 2018, the LRC has superseded the first-generation convention in Canada. CICIC is Canada's representative in the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and held the presidency or vice-presidency of the ENIC Network from 2004 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2014.

As described in Chapter 1, CICIC is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), the collective voice of Canada's provincial and territorial ministers of education. CMEC provides leadership

in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education.

9.2 CICIC mandate and role

A key part of CICIC's mandate¹²⁰ is to provide information and referral services to individuals and organizations on mobility and credential recognition. As noted previously in Section 1.2.3, CICIC's role is to:

- provide information and referral services to individuals and organizations on the recognition of academic and occupational credentials for working and studying in Canada and abroad;
- provide information on Canada's education systems and their quality assurance mechanisms to assist in the recognition of Canadian qualifications, in collaboration with provincial and territorial ministries or departments of education;
- contribute to policy dialogue and analysis on the management of academic credential assessment issues in Canada, including building awareness of the impact of developments in related areas such as immigration and labour market policies, and of the need to facilitate mobility by reducing barriers to students and workers moving to, across, or outside Canada;
- develop tools and resources to support the community of academic credential assessors in order to improve consistency of and capacity for academic credential assessment in Canada; and
- manage labour-mobility projects, focusing on academic credential assessment and the teaching profession.

It is important to note that *CICIC is not responsible for recognizing academic credentials issued outside Canada*. This responsibility falls to various organizations in Canada, including educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies and some professional associations, and employers. In this respect, Canada is different from countries in which the national information centre is responsible for providing academic credential assessment reports to individuals, and thus for making recognition decisions (in some cases legally binding under their country's legal framework). In the implementation of UNESCO's 1979 and 1997 recognition-related conventions in Canada, the national information centre (i.e., CICIC) was not given this responsibility, and it was determined that the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) would provide these services and produce assessment reports for competent recognition authorities that require assistance with document authentication and comparability procedures in Canada.

CICIC's mandate¹²¹ underwent a review in 2003, when it came under the sole purview of CMEC. This review coincided with steps leading to the adoption of the 2004 *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*. Since 2003, various factors—the use of new information technologies, education reform, increasing mobility of internationally educated individuals, trends affecting recognition practices, and additional workload assigned by CMEC to CICIC staff outside its mandate as a national information centre—have greatly affected CICIC's activities and public service delivery. The ENIC-NARIC Networks have recently explored the issue of the mandate of national information centres in the ENIC-NARIC Networks outside Canada (see Case Study 15).

Case Study 15 Evolving mandate of national information centres

While the LRC respects the diversity of education systems and the implementation structure of each signatory, obligations under the convention require each ratifying country to establish a national information centre. To provide additional guidance, the LRC Committee adopted the 2004 *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*, which specified recommended tasks and responsibilities of the national information centres, as well as the resources, expertise, and information that they should provide. This recommendation was accompanied by the 2004 *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition*, which provided additional guidance for national information centres in the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

Since their establishment in the 1990s, national information centres have adapted their mandate and public

service delivery in response to several factors, including the publication of the 2004 Joint Charter, the use of new information technologies, education reform, increasing mobility of internationally educated individuals, and trends affecting recognition practices. Recently many national information centres have collaborated to further explore these issues and formulate recommendations, which in turn may serve to inform the approaches of LRC signatories. For example, the Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA) I and II projects resulted in the publication of two reports:

- *The Changing Role of NARICs (CHARONA)*¹²² in 2014
- *The Changing Role of NARICs: Stakeholder Perspective*¹²³ in 2016

In February 2018, the Quality and Impact of the Recognition Networks (IMPACT) project published a report titled *Recognition in Europe: An Impact Evaluation of the ENIC-NARIC Networks*.¹²⁴ All of these projects were funded by the European Commission.

9.3 On-line services

Given Canada's decentralized constitutional arrangements regarding education-related matters and academic credentials recognition, CICIC's Web site provides a simple and straightforward one-stop shop for audiences in and outside Canada, one that is in line with the best practice of other national information centres in the ENIC-NARIC Networks.

CICIC's Web site, which is in both of Canada's official languages, is divided into four Web portals:

- The Individual Web portal (<http://Individual.cicic.ca>) provides information on the credential recognition process to study or work in Canada or abroad, along with the following directories:
 - the Directory of Educational Institutions in Canada, which provides a comprehensive list of competent recognition bodies responsible for making admission decisions for further studies
 - the Directory of Occupational Profiles, which provides a comprehensive list of competent recognition bodies responsible for making decisions for access to regulated occupations as well as other voluntary certification
 - the Directory of Canadian Offshore Schools and International Education Resources, which provides a comprehensive list of competent bodies by country, as well as offshore schools offering a provincial elementary or secondary curriculum outside Canada
 - the Directory of International Labour-Mobility Resources, which highlights professional mobility agreements in place between Canada and other countries for some regulated profession
- The Assessor Web portal (<http://Assessor.cicic.ca>) provides a toolbox of resources for international academic credential assessment, as well as tools developed in partnership with other organizations and information about initiatives to support greater consistency of and capacity for academic credential assessment in Canada.
- The Education Web portal (<http://Education.cicic.ca>) provides information on education systems and quality assurance in Canada's 13 provinces and territories.
- The Mobility Web portal (<http://Mobility.cicic.ca>) provides information on the legal framework related to the recognition of academic credentials, such as the Lisbon Recognition Convention, and other mobility agreements.

The Web site also contains information on a number of important initiatives that CICIC has undertaken that support consistency and portability, capacity building, and research. These include the following:

- consistency and portability initiatives:

- the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)¹²⁵
- a step-by-step guide on assessing academic credentials issued outside Canada¹²⁶
- Terminology Guides for Academic Credential Assessment in Canada¹²⁷
- information on alternative qualification-assessment procedure¹²⁸
- capacity-building initiatives:
 - the Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor¹²⁹
 - information sessions and webinars on an ad hoc basis
 - on-line distance education program for academic credential assessors¹³⁰
- research reports:
 - *Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation: Final Report*¹³¹
 - *A Feasibility Study for a Distance Education Program for Canadian Academic Credential Assessors*¹³²
 - *A Feasibility Study for a Web-Based Application to Share Assessment Results, Resources, and Methodologies on Academic Credential Assessments*¹³³
 - *Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees: Best Practices and Guidelines—Final Report*¹³⁴
 - *Speaking for Excellence: Language Competencies for Effective Teaching Practice*¹³⁵
 - *Certification and Workforce Integration: Experiences of Internationally Educated Teachers*¹³⁶
 - *Feasibility Study: Establishing a Pan-Canadian Credential Assessment Centre for Internationally Educated Teachers*¹³⁷

In 2015, CICIC launched a new feature, Connect the Dots!¹³⁸ It allows individuals to generate a report tailored to their particular situation by answering a few questions.

Since 2017, academic credential assessors across Canada have been able to register on the CICIC Web site through the password-protected part of the Assessor Web portal to access additional resources, including the following:

- the Directory of Comparability Assessment Outcomes¹³⁹ for detailed profiles on the education systems and academic credentials of 12 countries, and how they compare to education systems in Canada
- the EVALUATION listserv,¹⁴⁰ in which experts can obtain feedback or access resources with the assistance of other subject-matter experts. In 2018, more than 300 experts were registered on the listserv. CICIC also uses the listserv to disseminate information on recent developments affecting the community of subject-matter experts

In addition to its Web site, CICIC has a presence on major social media channels. It posts general information on subjects touching on the mobility of internationally educated individuals and the recognition of academic credentials. The target audience is both individuals seeking mobility and the community of subject-matter experts on recognition.

The following list summarizes the information available on the CICIC Web site and indicates, based on the 2016 Monitoring Report, how many other members of the ENIC-NARIC Networks provide similar types of information, where applicable:

- descriptions of the activities, tasks, and responsibilities of the national information centre (41 of the 45 countries with a Web site)

- sections describing provincial and territorial education systems and academic credential recognition procedures, with a significant number of hyperlinks referring users to each provincial and territorial Web site
- information on the LRC and its subsidiary texts (37 countries' Web sites)
- general information on recognition tools (32 countries' Web sites)
- descriptions of the postsecondary education systems in the country (or referral to the relevant Web sites) (40 countries' Web sites)
- a list of recognized postsecondary educational institutions and programs (or referral to the relevant Web sites) (36 countries' Web sites)
- a section on the Canadian Degrees Qualification Framework and other province-specific qualifications frameworks
- procedures and criteria for the assessment of international academic credentials, in the form of the QAF, which facilitate organizations' voluntary adherence to its principles
- a partial list of mutual recognition agreements for select regulated occupations. However, CICIC does not collect information on agreements between educational institutions

The Web site does *not* contain information on the following items, as they are not applicable to the decentralized approach in which the recognition of international academic credentials is undertaken in Canada:

- a single national regulation on the recognition of international academic credentials, as legislative authority on education-related matters is at the provincial and territorial level
- an appeal procedure, as individual assessment services and competent recognition bodies have this responsibility

9.4 Website usage

Over a one-year period between April 1, 2017 and March 31, 2018, the CICIC's Web site was accessed by 515,027 users, the majority of whom (504,949; 85.3 per cent) were new to the site. The number of sessions was 719,243. Each user accessed the Web site for an average of 1.4 sessions (in other words, a sizable proportion accessed the Web site more than once) and viewed 3.17 Web pages per session (the total Web page views was 2,276,643). Approximately half of all users accessed more than one Web page on the Web site (the bounce rate was 50.82 per cent). The average duration of each session was 2:59 minutes.

The number of users was constant (about 1,500 per day) over this period. About two-third (67.2 per cent) accessed the Web site from a desktop and slightly less than one-third (28.5 per cent) from a mobile device. The remainder (4.3 per cent) used a tablet. The bounce rate for desktop users (47.9 per cent) was somewhat lower than that for mobile and tablet users (57.5 per cent and 55.0 per cent, respectively); in addition, desktop users viewed more Web pages per session and had longer average session durations.

The majority of users (42.7 per cent) were direct referrals (i.e., they were referred to the Web site from other Web site domains). About one-third (31.6 per cent) came to the site without a traceable referral source (e.g., by typing the URL into their address bar or using a bookmark on their browser). One-quarter (25.8 per cent) came to the Web site after searching Google and other search engines, and 2.9 per cent came to the site from a social media channel.

9.5 Requests for information and customer service delivery

Aside from on-line services, CICIC provides customer service to a wide range of individuals and organizations. Since the centre's establishment, its customer service delivery methods have gradually evolved with the use of information technology.

Initially, most incoming inquiries were received by fax, postal mail, and telephone. After CICIC established its Web site in the mid-1990s, inquiries were increasingly received by e-mail. To support the increasing number of inquiries, in 2009 CICIC set up an internal customer relationship management (CRM) software. The CRM software is used to facilitate the preparation of responses by e-mail. A large number of pre-written, topic-specific response templates are available. CICIC staff can select a template and then personalize the response for individual clients. All inquiries received by CICIC are archived. The CRM software enables CICIC to collect information on its customer service delivery in real time.

Over a one-year period between April 1, 2017 and March 31, 2018, CRM data indicate that CICIC received 4,607 inquiries requesting information, 78.4 per cent in English and 21.6 per cent in French. This averages to 338.9 requests per month.

In comparison with other national information centres noted in the 2016 Monitoring Report, CICIC falls into the middle group of centres with respect to requests for information: that report noted that 19 other countries received between 3,000 and 10,000 applications for assessment and other requests for information.¹⁴¹ However, comparisons are not particularly meaningful, given the reliability of the data in the 2016 Monitoring Report and the strong possibility that Canada's unique decentralized system for assessment and recognition influences the volume and type of inquiries received by CICIC.

Over three-quarters (78.0 per cent) of requests received by CICIC were by e-mail and about one-fifth (21.1 per cent) by telephone. The remainder (0.9 per cent) were by fax or by walk-in at the office location in Toronto. The top three purposes of requests were interest in academic credential assessment procedures (59.6 per cent), undertaking further studies (15.2 per cent), or working in Canada (10.8 per cent). Inquiries appear to relate mostly to obtaining information on inbound mobility flow rather than outbound.

CICIC received inquiries regarding 279 different occupations, of which the top three were general practitioners and family physicians, financial auditors and accountants, and psychologists, all of which are regulated professions in all provinces and territories of Canada.

Inquiries originated from 141 countries. The top three regions from which these originated were North America (60.0%), Asia-Pacific (12.7%), and Africa (11.5%). More than half of inquiries (55%) were from within Canada, with the next four top countries being India (4.7%), Algeria (2.9%), France (2.6%), and the United States (2.1%).

As assessment procedures are not centralized in Canada, a large volume of inquiries received by CICIC are from internationally educated individuals trying to understand steps required to obtain an assessment of their academic credential and, ultimately, recognition for a specific purpose in Canada. CICIC referrals will guide a large number of these individuals to obtain an assessment from one of the six ACESC members, and a smaller number to specific competent recognition bodies that are responsible for recognizing their academic credential. The latter type of referral requires more time from CICIC staff, as they have to explain Canada's decentralized recognition procedures and the multiple pathways that may apply to each individual situation.

It is important to note that inquiries received by phone require significantly more CICIC staff resources to process, while inquiries received by e-mail can be processed more quickly, as responses can be partially automated, with pre-written text.

The current service standard is CICIC staff responding to public inquiries within two business days. The majority of inquiries (59 per cent) were resolved the same day they were received, while 22 per cent (1,034 inquiries) required one day to process. The remaining 19 per cent required more than the service standard to process, with one inquiry requiring 51 days. Such extended processing times usually occur when additional time is required to perform in-depth research and consult external stakeholders to validate sensitive information that may have a significant impact for an individual seeking recognition in or outside Canada. When such a situation occurs, the customer is informed of expected delays that are outside CICIC's control.

The Connect the Dots! feature was introduced to maximize the use of on-line self-service tools to partially automate responses to some inquiries. This feature, which is integrated into CICIC's CRM software, uses the same pre-written response templates that would be used if staff were to generate a response to an inquiry received by e-mail. Over the one-year period noted above, this automated tool generated almost 9,000 reports tailored to the users' particular situations. It would be fair to extrapolate that this feature alleviates some of the pressure on customer service delivery.

9.6 Professional development activities for academic credential assessors

In Canada, no postsecondary educational institution offers an educational program tailored to the academic credential assessment profession, as it is not a regulated profession in this country. Furthermore, unlike other occupations that require certain competencies and knowledge of their professionals in order to meet minimum standards, there is no association in Canada representing assessment professionals or offering training. As a result, all assessors in Canada are trained on the job, a process that can take one and a half to two years. However, given the diversity of the organizations, large and small, that perform assessments in Canada, many do not have the in-house capacity to train new assessors. Section 9.7.2 of this report demonstrates a significant unsatisfied demand from the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community for further CICIC professional development activities.

The recently published study titled *International Transfer Credit Practices* confirms the need for support for the profession of academic credential assessment in Canada. It notes:

Those interviewed and surveyed indicated a need for resources and training to support faculty and staff involved in international document assessment to enhance efficiencies, timeliness, and quality of decision making. Furthermore, they urged the adoption and/or creation of shared assessment principles, strategic partnerships, system-level resources, training, and tools for both faculty and staff.¹⁴²

In addition:

The findings suggest that international document assessment as a unique discipline, requires system-level supports and expertise not easily replicated within individual institutions either in central registry areas or in specific academic disciplines. This situation impacts smaller institutions with fewer internationally educated students more so than it does those with larger volumes and/or longer histories practising in the field. ...

Institutions and other bodies rely on the resources and supports provided by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), Canada's official representative within the international ENIC-NARIC (the European Network of National Information Centres and the National Academic Recognition Information Centres), and designated body responsible for disseminating information relevant to meeting our collective obligations to the LRC.¹⁴³

The report notes that "CICIC represents an exemplar and offers several assessor tools, including a practitioners' listserv which could be of great use to staff."¹⁴⁴

One of the report's six "thematic options" suggests the following:

2. Create new and provide system-level access to existing resources, tools and training for faculty and staff, to expand their knowledge of the field of international document assessment.... Consider consulting further with faculty and staff to identify what they would recommend for training. Assess the relevancy of existing training programs such as those run by the CICIC and consider developing additional training tiered to different competency levels.¹⁴⁵

In 2007, CICIC, in partnership with ACESC members, embarked on the pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation project with funding provided through the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada. At the core of this project was the goal of improving the consistency and portability of academic credential assessments through the introduction of pan-Canadian competency standards. In 2012, under the second phase of the project, a competency profile was developed by CamProf Inc.¹⁴⁶ This profile was intended to help individual academic credential assessors and their employers improve their skills and increase their professionalism. The competency profile is published on CICIC's Web site.¹⁴⁷

The competency profile was also intended to be the basis for the development of a distance education university program tailored specifically to the requirements of academic credential assessors in Canada and elsewhere, resulting in those assessors meeting minimum standards consistent with LRC principles for conducting work related to assessment and recognition. CamProf Inc. was contracted to explore the feasibility of such a

program.¹⁴⁸ The resulting study recommended that consideration be given to constructing a flexible program of modules, at both the bachelor and higher levels, focused on specific ranges of competencies from the profile.

More recently, CICIC has undertaken to assist credential assessors in their professional development through a blended learning course, “Assessment 101,” which was based on the competency profile (see Case Study 16).

Case Study 16 “Assessment 101” pilot

In 2014–15, CICIC led a pilot project for a blended learning course entitled “Assessment 101.”¹⁴⁹ It consisted of an on-line distance-education course specifically designed for and developed by the assessment community. It was offered in both official languages to over 60 academic assessors over the course of two months. The on-line portion was hosted by the University of Manitoba’s Centre for Higher Education Research and Development, and the course culminated in a two-day in-person workshop held in Toronto in April 2015. The course provided participants with:

- a common framework, especially for new assessors, within the Canadian context;
- an overview of the foundations of international academic credential assessment;
- instruction in core competencies relevant to all assessors, regardless of the nature of their organization;
- a supplement to on-the-job training; and
- structured opportunities for mentorship and knowledge transfer from experienced assessors.

The course explored 17 different topics and was divided into three modules:

- Overview of International Credential Assessment
- How to Assess Academic Credentials
- Research and Resources

The topics were based on selected key competencies found in the CICIC competency profile for an academic credential assessor, which outlines the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values (collectively referred to as “competency”) that an individual needs to be able to perform assessments in Canada.

Funding for the pilot was provided by the Government of Canada’s FCR Program. Since the pilot, CICIC has been unable to continue offering “Assessment 101” on a permanent basis, given the level of resources currently available. CICIC continues to receive inquiries on a regular basis from community members interested in enrolling if the course becomes available in the future.

ACESC members also offer seminars and reports of value to other credential assessors,¹⁵⁰ such as the WES Global Talent Bridge,¹⁵¹ which offers webinars, periodic seminars, and a series of publications. Other ENIC/NARIC also offer training, but this is often not tailored to the context in Canada, is offered mainly in English, and is usually not a free service.

A significant professional development issue is the lack of opportunities in this area offered in French for the francophone community of academic credential assessors in Canada.

9.7 Engagement with stakeholders

In its activities, CICIC engages with many stakeholders both within Canada and outside the country.

9.7.1 Engagement in a decentralized system

CICIC provides a public service in close collaboration with and on behalf of the ministries/departments responsible for education in Canada. CICIC's role is to support them in ensuring continued compliance with ratified legal instruments, but also evolving discussions on newly proposed instruments, such as UNESCO's Global Convention.

Given the decentralized approach to academic credentials assessment and recognition in Canada, CICIC continually maintains consultation mechanisms to support compliance with international legal instruments while respecting the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. CICIC's key stakeholders are provincial and territorial ministries responsible for education in Canada, given their role in ensuring implementation of the LRC. However, most assessment services and competent recognition bodies that are bound by the legal provisions of the LRC are not governmental organizations.

CICIC coordinates the work and engagement of two official and two non-official CMEC committees:

- The CICIC Committee (see Case Study 12) is mandated to work with CICIC staff to ensure the accuracy of information that CICIC provides on provincial and territorial education systems, institutions, and quality-assurance mechanisms. Members are senior provincial and territorial government officials with responsibility for education, including in relation to quality assurance, international education, and the recognition of qualifications.
- Registrars for Teacher Certification Canada (RTCC) supports the implementation of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement and helps ensure the intra-jurisdictional mobility of domestically and internationally educated teachers. Most members are registrars for teacher certification operating within provincial and territorial governments, while two members are private organizations.
- The Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) is composed of the assessment services within Canada's LRC implementation structure (see Case Study 1). ACESC engages in information exchange concerning academic credential assessment policies and practices, with the ultimate aim of supporting the consistency and portability of assessments across provinces and territories of Canada. Members manage these services, with support from select senior personnel. Two members operate within provincial governments, two members operate within public postsecondary educational institutions, and two are private organizations.
- The Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF) Steering Committee is responsible for reviewing the QAF and making amendments as required, thus ensuring the continuous quality of the framework. The steering committee also approves any applications to adopt the QAF by organizations assessing academic credentials in Canada and reviews evidence provided by organizations that already adhere to the QAF through a self-assessment and peer-review process. Members are representatives from ACESC, the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC), and the Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation (CNAR), with up to four members-at-large with experience in credential assessment and/or immigrant integration. These members-at-large include at least one provincial government official employed by a provincial Fairness Commissioner.

CICIC also maintains ongoing contact with relevant federal government departments, including the following:

- Global Affairs Canada, in particular the International Education Division and the Treaty Law Division

- Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), which has funded many CICIC-led initiatives and works to improve assessment and recognition processes in regulated professions
- Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, which in recent years has overhauled its international study permit program and now requires an Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) for applicants under skilled immigration programs

CICIC has also established strong relationships with a diverse range of organizations engaged in the assessment and recognition of international academic credentials to ensure compliance with legally binding international conventions ratified by Canada. Stakeholders include the following:

- admission departments at postsecondary educational institutions
- professional regulatory authorities or associations of regulated occupations for professional licensure
- other organizations facilitating the assessment process on behalf of any of the above organizations
- the five provincial Fairness Commissioners (see Section 2.6)
- the Mobility and Qualification Recognition Working Group (MQRWG) under the purview of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM)

CICIC is a member of the following organizations:

- the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC)
- the Canadian Network of Agencies for Regulation (CNAR)
- the Association of Accrediting Agencies of Canada (AAAC)
- the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP) Steering Committee

In addition, CICIC maintains more limited relations with the following organizations:

- the Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE)
- Universities Canada
- Colleges and Institutes Canada
- the National Association of Career Colleges (NACC)
- Languages Canada
- the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA)
- the Canadian Council of Directors of Apprenticeship (CCDA)

9.7.2 Engagement with academic credential assessors in Canada

CICIC is closely and positively engaged with the academic credential assessor community in Canada, providing leadership as well as a communication channel and coordination with organizations outside Canada. Examples of this engagement include the following:

- CICIC helped create and continues to serve as the secretariat of ACESC, demonstrating its close and supportive engagement with a body whose members perform two-thirds of credential assessments in Canada.
- As well as its useful Web site, CICIC has created a number of publicly available tools in both

official languages for the pan-Canadian community, such as the QAF (which has just been updated to include a new section on alternative pathways), the Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor, and Terminology Guides to Academic Credential Assessment in Canada. It has also carried out a number of research and feasibility studies in recognition-related subjects.

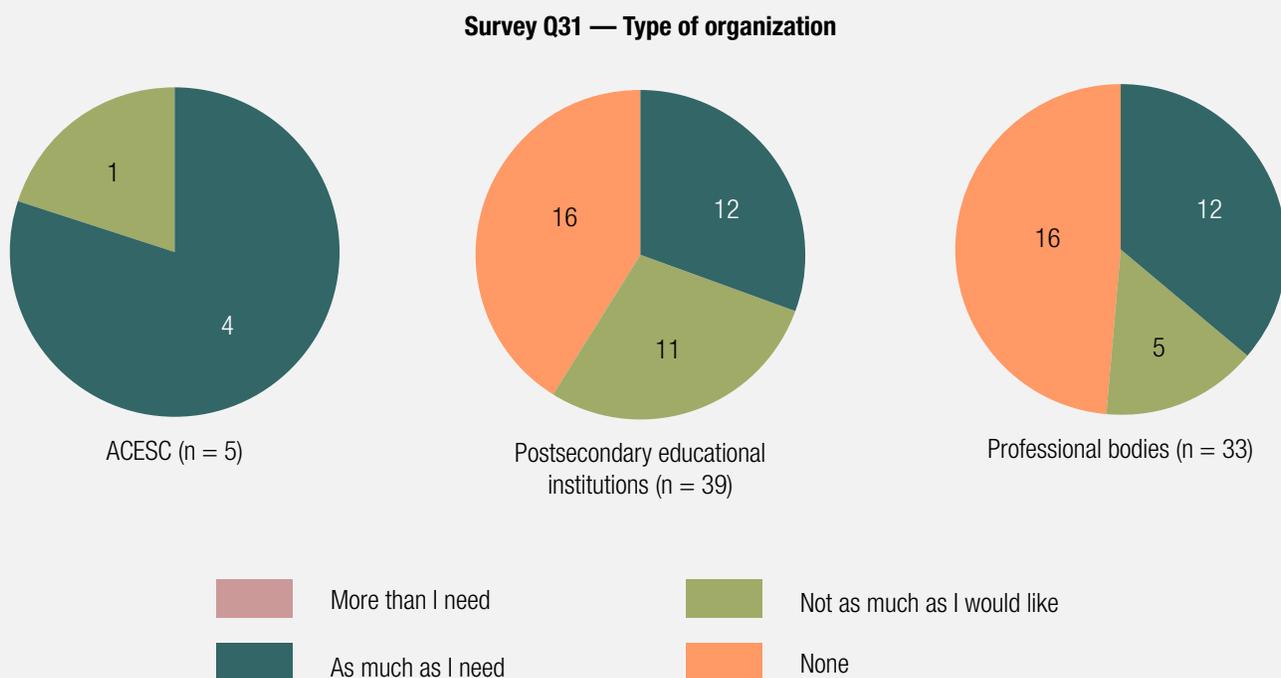
- CICIC ensures engagement through the management of CMEC consultation committees under its responsibilities. These include ACESC, the QAF Steering Committee, and the RTCC.

Findings of the survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community presented below indicate satisfaction with the quality of the services offered by CICIC and a desire for more. These findings were reinforced by interviews demonstrating that the community in Canada appreciates how CICIC engages with it and provides leadership.

Q31 How much engagement with and support from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) do you have in a year?

The responses are presented in Figure 19.

Figure 19 Engagement with and support from CICIC



As seen in Figure 19, this question received a largely positive or neutral response. No organization complained of receiving more support than needed. Of the 77 organizations that responded, 58 per cent (45 organizations) engage with and receive support from CICIC over the course of a year. Of these, 38 per cent (17 organizations) indicate that they would like to engage more and receive more support. Most of these organizations were postsecondary educational institutions (11 organizations), followed by regulatory bodies (5 organizations).

Q 32 How can CICIC use new technologies to better engage and support you in the assessment of academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

The responses are presented in Table 9.

Table 9 Use of new technologies by CICIC for better engagement and support

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Webinars	100%	87%	68%	80%	83%	100%	73%	75%	40%
	6	34	21	61	25	9	16	3	2
On-line training	83%	79%	74%	78%	77%	89%	77%	75%	60%
	5	31	23	59	23	8	17	3	3
Classroom training	33%	33%	32%	33%	37%	22%	36%	0%	40%
	2	13	10	25	11	2	8	0	2
e-Helpline or listserv	50%	64%	45%	55%	63%	67%	50%	25%	40%
	3	25	14	42	19	6	11	1	2
e-publications	83%	77%	58%	70%	73%	89%	59%	75%	40%
	5	30	18	53	22	8	13	3	2
Access to international networks	67%	74%	68%	71%	80%	56%	68%	50%	80%
	4	29	21	54	24	5	15	2	4
Database of decisions	67%	87%	61%	75%	87%	89%	64%	75%	40%
	4	34	19	57	26	8	14	3	2
Community of practice	67%	67%	55%	62%	73%	44%	55%	75%	40%
	4	26	17	47	22	4	12	3	2
Other	0%	15%	3%	9%	17%	11%	5%	0%	0%
	0	6	1	7	5	1	1	0	0
Total	8%	51%	41%	100%	39%	12%	29%	5%	7%
	6	39	31	76	30	9	22	4	5

Table 9 reveals positive and practical responses in favour of more support from CICIC. Of the 76 organizations that responded, more than two out of three would welcome more of the following types of support:

- webinars (80 per cent)
- on-line training (78 per cent)
- e-publications (70 per cent)
- access to international networks (71 per cent)

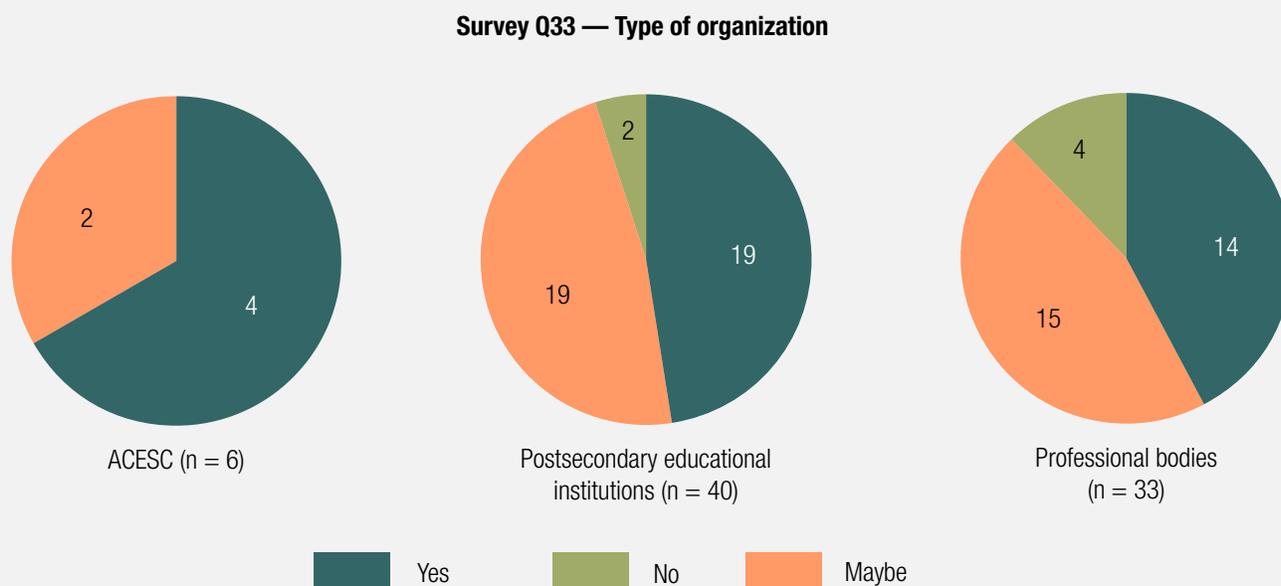
- a database of decisions or precedents (75 per cent)

In addition, 62 per cent asked for engagement and support through a pan-Canadian community of practice, while 55 per cent requested an e-mail helpline or listserv. Only classroom training was unattractive (33 per cent favoured this option). Yet in spite of this last finding, when responding to Question 33 below, only 8 per cent rejected a repeat of a hybrid e-learning and face-to-face workshop, while almost half (47 per cent) stated that they would register for such a course if it were offered by CICIC.

Q 33 In 2015, CICIC offered a course on credential assessment, called “Assessment 101,” to 60 assessors in both official languages. It was a distance-education course that concluded with a two-day in-person workshop. If this course were offered again, would you or someone from your organization register for it?

The responses are presented in Figure 20.

Figure 20 Organizations that would register for “Assessment 101”



As shown in Figure 20, two-thirds of ACESC members responded favourably to the idea of a course. Professional bodies were somewhat less enthusiastic (42 percent responding “yes,” but an almost equal proportion responding “maybe”).

Question 34 asked about the fee that organizations would be willing to pay if the “Assessment 101” course were offered again. Respondents provided a wide variety of answers, with a median of \$400. Responses reveal the following differences among the types of organizations:

- ACESC members were willing to pay more than double the overall median, at \$1,000
- the median among professional organizations was \$300
- postsecondary educational institutions offered a median of \$500, although 32 per cent of such institutions were unable to suggest a suitable fee

9.7.3 International engagement

CICIC has played a prominent role in the ENIC-NARIC Networks, including with respect to governance. CICIC’s role in these networks includes the following:

- the presidency or vice-presidency of ENIC from 2004 to 2008 and from 2013 to 2014
- membership on the UNESCO Drafting Committee on the Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications, which was responsible for drafting the preliminary text of the Global Convention in 2016–17
- membership on the Council of Europe’s ELCORE (Working Party on Electronic Communication for Recognition) since it was established by the ENIC Bureau and NARIC Advisory Board in December 1999, following a proposal by Canada. Most recently, Canada held the chair from 2015 to 2020 (see Case Study 13)
- a leading role working closely with national information centres and ACESC members to develop alternative pathways to assess the qualifications of those without documentation, including participation in the second phase of the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) project (see Case Study 11)
- participation in the System of Quality Assurance for the Recognition Networks (SQUARE) peer-review process.¹⁵² The Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC assessed the engagement of and services provided by CICIC; CICIC and an ACESC member then reviewed the Spanish ENIC/NARIC (see Case Study 17)
- active partnership in a number of projects led by ENIC/NARIC (e.g., REACT, DigiRec) (see the Case Study 10 on REACT and Case Study 22 on DigiRec)
- provider of access to tools and best practices developed in Canada (e.g., the Competency Profile for an Academic Credential Assessor), which then served to inspire professional development activities and standards in the international community of subject-matter experts

Case Study 17 System of Quality Assurance for the Recognition Networks (SQUARE)

The System of Quality Assurance for the Recognition Networks (SQUARE) was designed as a voluntary self-evaluation and international advisory review of national information centres (i.e., ENIC/NARIC) under the framework of the Lisbon Recognition Convention. SQUARE enables ENIC/NARIC to assess the extent to which they work according to internationally agreed upon good practice and to determine potential areas for improvement. It is intended to contribute to fair and smooth recognition for applicants but also to further international collaboration in the ENIC-NARIC Networks. SQUARE is based on a two-step process:

- a self-assessment process through which ENIC/NARIC can objectively audit their practices according to a set of standards and guidelines based on the LRC; and
- an external international advisory review involving experts employed by an ENIC/NARIC from another country who are responsible for reviewing the initial self-assessment, interviewing employees, and formulating recommendations.

In 2015–16, CICIC participated in the international advisory review process, under the auspices of the SQUARE project, along with ENIC/NARIC from Lithuania, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy, Malta, Sweden, and Norway. CICIC was reviewed by its counterpart from the Lithuanian ENIC/NARIC and, in turn, was charged with subsequently reviewing the Spanish ENIC/NARIC. This project was funded by the European Commission.

Participation provided CICIC and CMEC with information on the fulfillment of CICIC’s mandate and constructive suggestions for improvements to practices consistent with the international criteria of the LRC while taking into account CICIC’s specific mandate. It highlighted many of the good practices in CICIC’s operations, developed in collaboration with provincial and territorial officials. A final report was presented to CICIC by ENIC/NARIC Lithuania.

Furthermore, CICIC continues to facilitate the engagement of organizations in Canada with competent recognition bodies outside Canada, on an ad hoc basis. This service is highly beneficial when assessors in Canada are having difficulty validating information with those outside Canada. The reverse process is also true. CICIC facilitated the addition of senior assessors employed by ACESC members to the ENIC-NARIC RECOGNITION listserv, which has more than 400 assessors from 55 ENIC/NARIC.

CICIC also ensures continued engagement with UNESCO and the Council of Europe, given their role as co-secretariats of the LRC. Examples of such engagement by CICIC include the following:

- gathering comments from provincial and territorial governments on the draft *Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*. This recommendation was then adopted in November 2017 by the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee
- finalizing preparatory steps with provinces and territories, competent assessment and recognition bodies, Global Affairs Canada, and UNESCO for a possible signature of the UNESCO Global Convention in November 2019, at the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference
- reliance by UNESCO and the Council of Europe on CICIC and CICIC Committee officials on an ad hoc basis to provide information in response to public inquiries about a provincial or territorial education system
- coordinating inquiries on recognition matters with officials from Global Affairs Canada, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe, and ensuring that responses provided by CICIC reflect agreed-upon positions of provincial and territorial governments

9.7.4 Holders of international academic credentials

CICIC is fully engaged in providing information to holders of international academic credentials who are seeking mobility. CICIC's Web site serves as the first point of contact for:

- individuals seeking information about academic credentials and professional qualifications;
- employers seeking to understand and recognize an international academic credential; and, most importantly,
- internationally educated newcomers wishing to have their credentials assessed and recognized.

Section 9.4 presented evidence of substantial use of the CICIC Web site (more than half a million visits annually), mostly from new users visiting multiple Web pages, while Section 9.5 demonstrated that the requests for information originated from all over the world.

As discussed above, CICIC also processes approximately 4,600 public inquiries annually as part of its customer service. This is significantly fewer than we would have expected, placing it in the second rank of activity compared to countries in the 2016 Monitoring Report. We believe that this is a reflection of decentralized responsibilities in Canada, as many inquiries will be sent directly to the 500 or more educational institutions and professional regulator bodies (which assess over 500,000 academic credentials annually) rather than to CICIC. It may also reflect the high quality of information available to the public through CICIC's on-line services, which maximize the use of technological automation and enable users to easily locate information without requiring any interaction with CICIC staff.

9.8 CICIC staff and CMEC's shared services

Three full-time staff members are responsible for fulfilling CICIC's mandate as the national information centre under the LRC: a coordinator, a digital communications officer, and an administrative officer.

CICIC is a unit of CMEC, and all CICIC staff members are physically located at the CMEC Secretariat, in Toronto. Prior to 2012, two of these staff members were located in Ottawa and Montreal. These diverse locations

facilitated access to and engagement with two additional metropolitan areas of Canada, and also with the Quebec Ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion (MIDI), in whose office the Montreal CICIC was located.

The CMEC Secretariat provides CICIC with access to shared services on a needs basis. These services can include office space, editing and translation services, simultaneous interpretation services, financial services, a Web site hosting environment and IT equipment, coordination for hosting international delegations in Toronto, and representation at international meetings outside Canada. Most of these shared services are direct costs in the CICIC annual budget, while a smaller portion is absorbed by CMEC through general operation costs.

CICIC falls among the national information centres with the fewest staff. According to the 2016 Monitoring Report, the number of staff reported in different countries varies from one to 65, and only 15 countries mentioned in the report have fewer than a total staff of five. However, the report notes:

The number of staff employed by each national information centre depends mainly on the range of tasks and activities performed as well as the size of the country and its education system.... The total number of the staff also depends on other significant responsibilities which the national information centre may be expected to perform, such as policy development, national qualifications framework, and engagement in mobility, migration support, etc. Credential evaluators make up the core staff in the centres, however.¹⁵³

Because CICIC itself does not perform credential evaluations, it makes sense, then, that its staff would be smaller than that of other national information centres that do such work. It is important to note that, while CICIC does not perform academic credential assessments, it does maintain large data sets (e.g., the Directory of Educational Institutions in Canada), process a high volume of referral and information services for the public and the assessment community, and coordinate and support Canada's uniquely large, diverse, and scattered academic credential assessment community. CICIC also plays an important role in facilitating the development and promotion of policy and best practices in Canada in close collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, is engaged in pan-Canadian and international projects supporting the implementation of the LRC in Canada, and maintains engagement with the ENIC-NARIC Networks to ensure ongoing connectivity between the pan-Canadian community of assessors and those working outside Canada. Furthermore, as discussed in Section 9.7.1, working in a decentralized system for education poses significant challenges.

It is also worth noting that, over the years, CMEC has delegated to CICIC staff additional tasks that are not part of the core mandate of national information centres (e.g., coordination of the CMEC Registrars for Teacher Certification Canada (RTCC) Committee and its externally funded projects).

9.9 Technical facilities and new technologies

CICIC has not rated the adequacy of the technical facilities supporting its work in a way that is completely comparable to the information provided about countries' IT facilities in the 2016 Monitoring Report. However, CICIC has noted in interviews conducted for this study that it is seeking to use new technologies to allow it to deal more efficiently with the high volume of requests for information (e.g., implementing an automated system for public inquiries received by phone and improving automation tools on its Web site).

CICIC revamped its Web site in 2013–15 and, as discussed in Section 9.5, developed its CRM software to automate its response to some public inquiries received by e-mail. These developments demonstrate that, over the years, CICIC has very successfully used new technologies strategically to help reduce CICIC staff workload in answering inquiries from the public. Further investment in recently developed automation technology would further support that goal.

CICIC is also seeking to use new technologies to better engage and support organizations in the assessment of academic credentials in Canada. As indicated earlier in this chapter, stakeholders show strong support for the idea of CICIC expanding existing initiatives and on-line tools as well as introducing new ones. Such initiatives/tools include webinars, on-line training, e-publications, access to international networks, a database of decisions or precedents, and further engagement using the on-line platform for the pan-Canadian community of practice. However, current funding levels do not permit CICIC staff to be assigned to these tasks or allow assigning funds to technology solutions to deliver these on-line services.

9.10 Funding

In terms of funding, CICIC is unlike the vast majority of countries in the 2016 Monitoring Report. Most national information centres' operations are financed out of the budget of the national government. In the absence of any federal ministry responsible for education, CICIC receives its core funding from provincial and territorial governments through CMEC. Thus, its personnel and core operations are funded out of CMEC's annual budget, which is formed from voluntary contributions of Canada's 13 provincial and territorial governments, based on population.

For the fiscal year 2017–18, the contribution assigned to CICIC's annual core funding was approximately \$450,000. To support the implementation of the LRC in Canada, CICIC has undertaken multiple initiatives involving a significant number of stakeholders in Canada, especially in the past 10 years. However, given the level of resources required for the development of these initiatives, including consultation processes with the pan-Canadian community of practice, most of these initiatives were not funded through CICIC's core funding.

In 2007, the Government of Canada launched the Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Program¹⁵⁴ to coincide with the development of the Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications. Initially, the FCR Program committed to provide \$73 million in funding over six years for projects that would improve assessment and recognition procedures of competent recognition bodies in Canada, with a focus on professional regulatory bodies.¹⁵⁵ Since then, additional funding was allocated to this federal program. Within the context of this program, through application for funding of special projects as opposed to continued and stable core funding, CICIC received a significant amount of funding for special pan-Canadian projects, including the following:

- Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Credential Evaluation: Phase I¹⁵⁶ in 2008–9
- Pan-Canadian Quality Standards in International Academic Credential Assessment: Phase II¹⁵⁷ in 2010–12
- Building Bridges: Consistency, Portability, and Capacity in International Academic Credential Assessment in 2013–15
- Assessing the Qualifications of Refugees¹⁵⁸ in 2016–17

It is important to note that, in 1990, CICIC was jointly established, funded, and managed by the federal government and all provincial and territorial governments. However, CMEC decided in the mid-2000s that CICIC should be brought under its sole governance to specifically focus on issues relating to academic credentials. In turn, the Government of Canada established its own Foreign Credentials Referral Office (FCRO) in 2007,¹⁵⁹ under the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, with a similar mandate to CICIC but focusing on issues affecting professional qualifications recognition leading to integration into the labour market in regulated occupations. The FCRO was provided with a \$32.2 million budget over its first five years of operation. In 2016, the Government of Canada decided to close the FCRO and redirect some stakeholders to resources published by CICIC.

Finally, we note that CICIC has participated as a partner in other projects or as an invited expert on working groups funded from outside Canada (e.g., by UNESCO, the Council of Europe, and the European Commission). The funding received in itself is not significant and is, for the most part, aimed at reimbursing CICIC staff expenses to attend expert consultations and professional development activities occurring mainly in countries of the European Union. However, this funding enables CICIC to maintain a high level of engagement with the ENIC-NARIC Networks, thus furthering international collaboration. CICIC has taken the strategic decision to participate in these activities to ensure that expertise developed in Europe can be shared as best practice with competent recognition bodies and assessment services in Canada to inform policies and procedures, and thus ensure implementation in practice of the LRC in the provinces and territories of Canada.

9.11 Conclusions

9.11.1 National information centre functions

Canada has established a national information centre, as have all 50 countries that responded to the questionnaire for the 2016 Monitoring Report. Canada is similar to 16 other countries noted in the 2016 Monitoring Report whose national information centre tasks and responsibilities are not set out in national legislation. In keeping with Canada's constitutional arrangements, CICIC is a unit of CMEC, the collective voice of provincial and territorial ministers responsible for education, which provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. CICIC operates at the pan-Canadian level, providing information regarding recognition and giving advice to both organizations and individuals on international academic credentials. CICIC's tasks and activities, including other significant tasks that it performs beyond its role as a national information centre, are set out in detail on its Web site.

CICIC's comprehensive on-line services contain detailed information in Canada's two official languages, English and French, on its tasks and activities, procedures and criteria for recognition of international academic credentials, the LRC and its subsidiary texts, provincial and territorial education systems, recognition tools, and more. The Web site is designed to be user friendly and has four entry points. Web site analytics indicate it serves an important function, reporting more than half a million users (an average of about 1,500 per day) over a recent one-year period.

Similarly, statistics on customer service delivery in response to public inquiries received by CICIC indicate that it fulfills its role as a national information centre by responding to a need for information. Given the increasing use of automation by organizations, CICIC may wish to explore how implementing other new technology solutions may provide greater support in customer service delivery.

CICIC is very successful at engaging with a wide variety of stakeholders, both within and outside Canada, to their substantial satisfaction. Nevertheless, the decentralized approach to assessment and recognition procedures in Canada highlights the need for continued engagement with all groups. Some factors that may impact engagement include the following:

- varying levels of access to expertise and resources, which may result in information confirmation requiring additional time
- procedures requiring consensus-based decisions and legislative review involving multiple orders of government (e.g., ratification of an international legal instrument)
- the need to ensure absolute parity in the provision of information in French and English for public information but also for committee work (e.g., document translation)
- geographical barriers and time zone differences, where most engagement is carried out virtually rather than through face-to-face meetings

The need for additional support of the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors is clear. As demonstrated by survey responses, offering professional development activities would be greatly welcomed as a means to support capacity building and more consistency in assessment outcomes, while ensuring closer engagement with subject-matter experts across Canada. Respondents were in favour of CICIC using a variety of new information technologies to increase engagement and support organizations in the assessment of academic credentials.

CICIC is well placed to provide more support, given its mandate, but is unable to do so with its current resource level. Charging a registration fee to users could enable CICIC to hire subject-matter experts from the community to prepare and deliver professional development supports. Yet such fees could greatly limit access for smaller organizations that most need such support but cannot afford the fees.

9.11.2 Resources

As noted in the 2016 Monitoring Report, the parties to the LRC undertake to provide their national information centres with the necessary means to enable them to function properly.¹⁶⁰

Canada's national information centre staff of three is one of the smallest among the 50 reported in the 2016 Monitoring Report. Only 15 countries mentioned in that report have national information centres with total staff numbering fewer than five. It is difficult to assess from the available survey data, both for Canada and for the 2016 Monitoring Report, how the number of staff compares with other countries in terms of factors cited in the 2016 Monitoring Report, such as the size of the country, the size of the higher education system, the number of inbound/outbound students and skilled professionals, and the range of activities and tasks assigned to the centre. However, it should be noted that, in the vast majority of countries, academic credential assessors make up the core staff of national information centres. This is not so for Canada, as academic credential assessment is not performed by CICIC, but through the organizations of the selected implementation structure set up by provincial and territorial governments.

We suggest that, even if academic credential assessment is not CICIC's responsibility, the organization appears to be substantially understaffed compared to other countries. This is particularly evident when we consider that, as the national information centre for Canada, CICIC faces a number of challenges, including the following:

- Canada's status as a major immigration country, with a population of 37 million (38th largest population in the world), welcoming over 300,000 potential newcomers each year. Canada's population is expected to grow substantially year-on-year¹⁶¹
- Canada's role as a major international education hub actively recruiting international students to undertake further studies in its educational institutions. The number of international students in Canada is expected to grow substantially¹⁶²
- Canada's decentralized educational administration, with 21 ministries/departments responsible for education in 13 provinces and territories, cooperating voluntarily as equals, and no overall authority or budget at the federal level
- the challenge of directly engaging with the pan-Canadian community of practice in an exceptionally large and diverse country extending over six time zones
- the need for all CICIC activities to be conducted in both official languages (English and French)

Furthermore, the following points should be noted:

- CICIC does not merely provide referral and information services; it also undertakes training, facilitates the development and dissemination of best practice, and actively participates in and collaborates with the ENIC-NARIC Networks.
- Our survey indicates that members of the assessment community, particularly those from postsecondary educational institutions and regulatory bodies, would like to engage to a greater degree with CICIC and receive more support from it (see Section 9.7). Some 35 per cent of respondents have not yet engaged with or received support from CICIC.
- Among other responsibilities, CICIC staff also perform important functions for CMEC that fall outside its role as a national information centre within the mandate it was initially given.

In terms of answering public inquiries alone, Canada is among the seven countries with the smallest number of staff in the national information centre. At the same time, the number of information requests received by CICIC is more than that received by centres in 20 countries.¹⁶³

Given its small staff, CICIC is seeking to innovate and use new technologies. Survey results confirm that there is a demand for CICIC to provide additional support services to its stakeholders (see

Sections 9.6 and 9.7), through webinars, on-line training, e-publications, access to international networks, and a database of decisions or precedents.

Over the long term, CICIC's current funding model would appear insufficient to enable it to maintain its mandate and cope with anticipated change, especially in the context of the possible expansion from a UNESCO regional convention to a global convention that would include all UNESCO Member States.

Unlike the vast majority of information centres mentioned in the 2016 Monitoring Report, CICIC is not financed out of the budget of the national government. Its core funding is derived from its position as a unit within CMEC. CICIC serves not only as a national information centre, but, as noted above, its staff also perform other tasks for CMEC.

It is important to note that CICIC's governance was brought under CMEC's sole purview in the mid-2000s, a change from the prior joint management approach by federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada. As CICIC's current funding model provides only for three staff and core functions, CICIC has relied heavily on securing external funding for special projects aimed at supporting the implementation of the LRC in Canada, especially among the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors who are responsible for applying LRC principles in their day-to-day work. However, reliance on external funding for this purpose is not ideal: it is extremely costly in terms of staff resources for preparation and submission of project proposals, and, perhaps even more significantly, it carries the risk that these external ad hoc funding opportunities will no longer be available at the same rate of funding seen in the late 2000s and early 2010s, when the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program allocated significant amounts to support CICIC, assessment services, and professional regulatory bodies across Canada.

10 Subsidiary Texts and Recommendations to the Lisbon Recognition Convention

Since 1997, the Committee of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (commonly known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee, LRCC), which oversees, promotes, and facilitates the implementation of the convention, has adopted many subsidiary texts and recommendations. These are not legally binding, but rather suggest actions that can be undertaken by states that have ratified the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). They are meant to keep the LRC current over time, and they supplement the LRC by providing more detailed guidelines on how the convention could be applied by signatory states. This chapter examines how key subsidiary texts have been implemented within Canada.

10.1 Overview of subsidiary texts

Since 1999, the LRCC has adopted a series of subsidiary texts to support the implementation of the convention. More recently, some of these have been revised. These subsidiary texts include the following:

- *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*¹⁶⁴
- *Diploma Supplement*¹⁶⁵
- *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*¹⁶⁶
- *Recommendation on International Access Qualifications*¹⁶⁷
- *Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation*¹⁶⁸
- *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*¹⁶⁹
- *Recommendation on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*¹⁷⁰
- *Revised Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education*¹⁷¹
- *Revised Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications*¹⁷²
- *Revised Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees*¹⁷³

10.2 Qualifications held by refugees

The *Recommendation on Recognition of Qualifications Held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-like Situation* was adopted in November 2017. Chapter 7 of this report details our study of this subsidiary text.

10.3 Joint degrees

The *Recommendation on the Recognition of Joint Degrees* was adopted in June 2004, followed by a revised version in February 2016. This subsidiary text provides principles and good practice for the handling of academic credentials issued by multiple parties (i.e., combining academic studies undertaken through multiple educational institutions) across education systems (whether within a country or across more than one country). In addition to “joint degrees,” the text also refers to a “double degree” or “cotutelle.”

The survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community explored the issue of joint degrees, as detailed in Section 11.2.3. The handling of credentials from more than one source (e.g., joint degrees and/or students moving from one university or country to another) is common, with all respondents advising how they assess joint degrees. This highlights growing pan-Canadian and international collaboration in academic program delivery as a result of increased student mobility.

On the same issue, the BRIDGE (Best Recognition Instruments for the Dialogue between Global Experts) project was initiated by CIMEA, the Italian national information centre. Funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ program, it was launched in 2010 and completed in 2012. This project explores three phases affecting recognition procedures and education systems:

- the creation of joint programs, where it is necessary to take into consideration differences between education systems
- student selection for admission into those programs, which follows assessment criteria for previously completed academic credentials, including the status of the issuing educational institution
- the issuing of the academic credential (e.g., a double, multiple, or joint degree) by the educational institutions, in compliance with multiple legal frameworks governing the relevant education systems

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) was provided with an opportunity for further international collaboration on the issue through the ENIC-NARIC Networks, along with the ENIC/NARIC for Italy (project coordinator), Estonia, Malta, Portugal, and Spain. A study visit to Canada was organized in spring 2012, during which European project partners were able to connect with assessment services and competent recognition bodies in the Greater Toronto Area over three days. The *BRIDGE Handbook*¹⁷⁴ was published and disseminated to assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada.

10.4 Qualifications framework

The *Recommendation on the Use of Qualifications Frameworks in the Recognition of Foreign Qualifications*¹⁷⁵ was adopted in June 2013. This subsidiary text promotes the development and use of qualifications frameworks as a tool for enhancing transparency and comparability of qualifications.

A qualifications framework acts as a reference system to help place individual qualifications within their respective education systems. The framework specifies a number of levels of intellectual challenge, and each qualification (and corresponding educational programs) is allocated to that level. The best-known is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which commits all 42 members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Union to reference their own national frameworks (and also to use learning outcomes and to introduce systems for recognition of prior learning).

The use of qualifications frameworks in recognition procedures for international academic credentials has increased around the globe. Most credential assessors are using qualifications frameworks as a reference tool to better understand where a given academic credential is situated in the structure of an education system and to provide clarity about the level. In turn, this facilitates the comparability process, helping to determine its placement within a provincial or territorial education system in Canada. The reverse process is also true, where situating a given academic credential issued within a provincial and territorial education system is of great importance in ensuring fair recognition practices outside Canada. Qualifications frameworks are tools to increase transparency and, ultimately, to facilitate the recognition of international academic credentials.

At the pan-Canadian level, the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework¹⁷⁶ was adopted in 2007 by provincial and territorial ministers responsible for postsecondary education in Canada. It is part of the overarching *Ministerial Statement on Quality Assurance of Degree Education in Canada*.¹⁷⁷ This qualifications framework is only at the degree level and is the result of work led by the CMEC Quality Assurance Committee in the mid-2000s.

At the regional level, the Maritime Degree Level Qualifications Framework¹⁷⁸ was adopted in 2007 through the Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission, and includes the education systems of New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island. This qualifications framework is also only at the degree level.

At the provincial level, the Ontario Qualifications Framework (OQF)¹⁷⁹ includes all non-religious postsecondary certificate, diploma, and degree programs offered in the Ontario education system. The Alberta Credential Framework¹⁸⁰ provides context on the Alberta education system and is the most recent qualifications framework in Canada. It is the most comprehensive qualifications framework in Canada.

Other provincial governments are currently exploring the development of a qualifications framework to describe their respective education systems.

At the pan-Canadian level, we note no recent developments since 2007, when the Canadian Degrees Qualification Framework was introduced. Given that 13 provincial and territorial education systems co-exist in Canada, it may be worth exploring the approach taken by the EHEA for 48 education systems, with the adoption of the EQF as an overarching framework. The EQF enables the “matching” of levels against each individual qualifications framework developed by EHEA countries, while respecting their jurisdiction over education. One could envisage having a more developed pan-Canadian framework used as an overarching framework for all academic credentials recognized by provincial and territorial governments, including those at elementary and secondary levels, professional and vocational qualifications, and certification of essential skills and global competencies. The overarching framework could then be used as a pan-Canadian benchmark to compare individual provincial and territorial qualifications frameworks to enhance comparability while respecting diversity and autonomy.

Question 38 of the survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community asked assessment services and competent recognition bodies about their use of national qualifications frameworks in the recognition process. Their use has grown in importance, mostly in universities and among members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), but it does not appear to be systematic. It is perhaps surprising that almost half the respondents, including postsecondary educational institutions and 62 per cent of the professional body respondents, do not make use of the country’s qualifications framework when assessing an academic credential, although all ACESC members do. However, this may reflect a lack of awareness rather than an informed rejection. More detailed results for this question are presented in Section 11.2.2 of this report.

Findings indicate that CICIC faces a substantial task in raising awareness of the usefulness of qualifications frameworks among competent recognition bodies in Canada as well as among provincial and territorial governments, especially in the context of discussions on the proposed UNESCO Global Convention.

10.5 Assessment criteria and procedures

The *Recommendation on Criteria and Procedures for the Assessment of Foreign Qualifications* was adopted in 2001, followed by a revised version in June 2010.¹⁸¹ These recommendations were meant to establish clear criteria and procedures to improve recognition practices. Chapter 3 of this report presents our findings on these subsidiary texts.

This text provided guidance for CICIC in formulating the 2012 Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)¹⁸² (see Case Study 3). The framework’s principles are based largely on the *General Guiding Principles for Good Practice in the Assessment of Foreign Credentials* produced by ACESC members and supported by CICIC, which in turn was derived from the LRC. The QAF is non-prescriptive and respects the autonomy of organizations. Although not cited as a source, this framework preceded the publication of the *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual*.¹⁸³ In 2017, CICIC launched an on-line step-by-step guide¹⁸⁴ on how to assess an academic credential issued outside Canada. This resource is a companion to the QAF and provides a practical approach and guidance to assessors. It was based largely on the EAR and EAR-HEI Manuals.

Although the picture is complex, it does appear that most survey respondents’ criteria and procedures are in accordance with the LRC, but often via other sources. It is clear that the QAF and the step-by-step guide are still not widely known or widely used beyond ACESC members.

10.6 Transnational education

The *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* was adopted in 2001, followed by a revised version in June 2007.¹⁸⁵ It calls for the development of two complementary documents:

- a code of good practice in the provision of higher education study programs and other educational services by means of transnational arrangements, and
- a recommendation on procedures and criteria for the assessment of foreign qualifications, with a view to implementing such a code of good practice and to facilitating the recognition of qualifications awarded following completion of transnational study programs/courses of study.

Transnational education affects all types of postsecondary educational institutions (including distance education) in which the learners are located in a different country from where the awarding institution is based. We have not found any specific CICIC initiatives on transnational education, although the practice is becoming more widespread in the postsecondary sector.¹⁸⁶

10.7 Diploma Supplement

The Diploma Supplement¹⁸⁷ was adopted in 2007. It is not, strictly speaking, a subsidiary text but rather is an addition to a credential that has been adopted by the LRC. It is a supplementary document that accompanies an academic credential issued by an educational institution. The Diploma Supplement provides standardized information on the holder of the qualification, the identification of the qualification, the level of the qualification, contents and results of the academic program, the function of the qualification, and other relevant information about the education system. It is offered in both the language of study and in another major European language. This text facilitates comparability, translatability, and handling of academic credentials being reviewed by assessors, with the aim of facilitating recognition procedures and student mobility.

The Diploma Supplement has been adopted by the EHEA and has been implemented by most educational institutions within the 48 EHEA countries.

An updated Diploma Supplement was recently approved at the EHEA Ministerial Conference held in Paris in May 2018. In 2018–19, the LRCC Bureau is expected to complete work on updating the 2007 LRC subsidiary text on the revised Diploma Supplement. CICIC has to prepare for the consultation process in Canada in early 2019, during which provincial and territorial governments will be invited to provide comments on the subsidiary text before it is presented for approval at the next meeting of the LRCC.

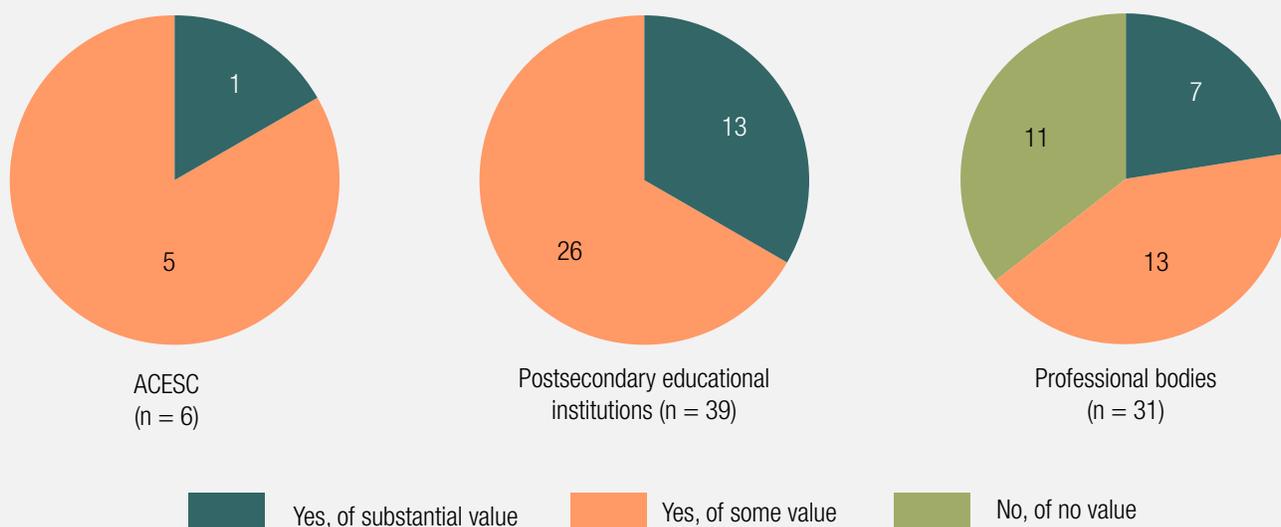
The focus of the updated Diploma Supplement is to recommend that countries adopt a digital solution and to provide this document to all students, who in turn could use it to seek recognition from assessment services and competent recognition bodies within and outside Canada. The development of the updated Diploma Supplement is closely tied to the proposed ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project (see Case Study 18 in Chapter 12).

In the survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community, Question 29 enquired about the value of a digital academic credential supplement.

Q29 Would a Pan-Canadian digital academic credential supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement) be of value to you?

The responses are shown in Figure 21.

Figure 21 Perceived value of a pan-Canadian digital academic credential supplement
Survey Q29 — Type of organization



Twenty-eight per cent of respondents saw a digital academic credential supplement as being of *substantial value* and a further 58 per cent of *some value*. Only 14 per cent (and no ACESC members or postsecondary educational institutions) rated it as being of *no value*. We may therefore conclude that the introduction of a diploma supplement in Canada is unlikely to raise significant concerns from postsecondary educational institutions.

10.8 ENIC/NARIC activities and services

The *Joint ENIC/NARIC Charter of Activities and Services*¹⁸⁸ was adopted in June 2004. This text specifies recommended tasks and responsibilities of the national information centres, as well as resources, expertise, and information that should be provided by them. This recommendation was accompanied by the 2004 *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Information on Recognition*¹⁸⁹ but was adopted only by the ENIC-NARIC Networks and not the LRCC.

Chapter 9 of this report presents our findings on this subsidiary text.

10.9 International access qualifications

The *Recommendation on International Access Qualifications*¹⁹⁰ was adopted in June 1999. It recommends that LRC signatory countries recognize international access qualifications and advises their providers on transparent systems to facilitate their recognition (including issuing the Diploma Supplement).

The recommendation has relevance in Canada for two categories of organizations:

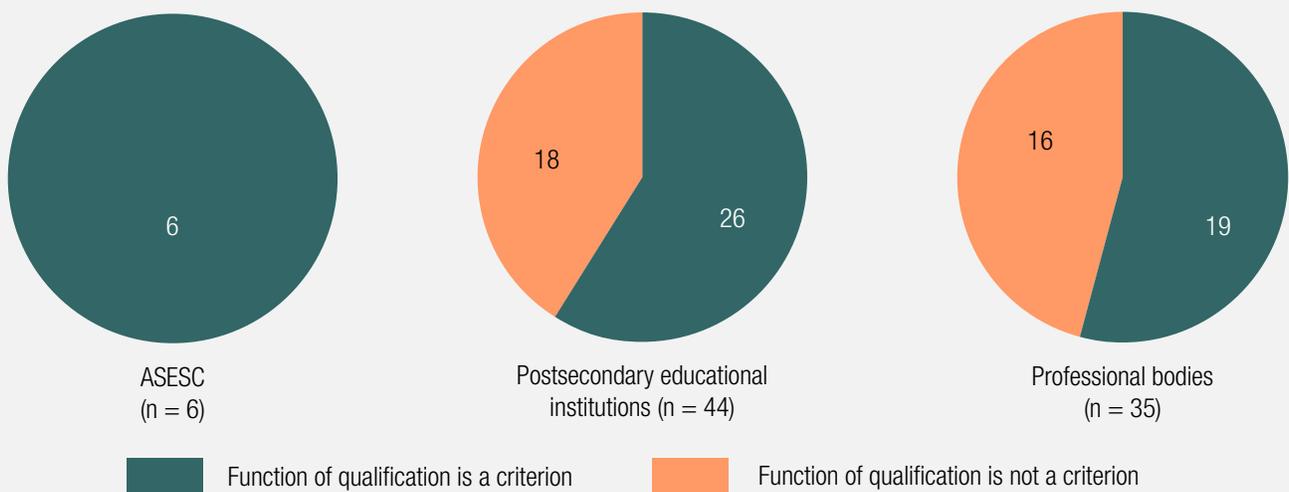
- secondary schools offering academic credentials that:
 - are distinct from programs offered within the provincial or territorial education systems
 - are administered by one or more bodies external to provincial or territorial education systems
 - have an international orientation and scope
 - meet the general requirements for access to postsecondary education
 - are subject to well-defined and transparent quality-assurance mechanisms
 - incorporate a core curriculum of sufficient academic rigour
- pan-Canadian academic credential assessors

Many students in Canada study in one of the International Baccalaureat programs or the Option Internationale du Baccalauréat, and some home-study students use the International Certificate of Christian Education. However, these programs are all governed from outside Canada. Their quality-assurance mechanisms and compliance with this subsidiary text will be imposed from beyond provincial or territorial governments’ authority and outside CICIC’s general influence. In our research, we did not identify home-grown international access programs in Canada, to which this subsidiary text might apply.

With regard to pan-Canadian academic credential assessors, Question 6 of our survey asked: *What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials?* One of the options for answers to this question was “formal rights or function of the qualification in the home country (e.g., access to further studies, access to a regulated occupation).” Figure 22 presents the findings for this specific criterion.

Figure 22 Use of the function of a qualification as a criterion

Survey Q6 — Type of organization



As seen in Figure 22, while all ACESC members take into account the formal rights or function of the qualification in the home country, only a bare majority of the other organizations do so.

10.10 Conclusions

In many cases, federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada have undertaken activities to address the implementation of subsidiary texts to the LRC, mostly through CICIC's mandate as the national information centre. Some examples are the QAF and a pan-Canadian qualifications framework at the degree level. Some subsidiary texts have been addressed through policies or initiatives undertaken by assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. However, for others, such as those regarding the Diploma Supplement, transnational education, and international access qualifications, it appears as if significant work is needed.

11 UNESCO Global Convention

The Introduction to this report presented the evolution of UNESCO regional conventions on the recognition of higher education qualifications and the proposed UNESCO Global Convention. A summary of the differences between the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) and the proposed UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications is provided in Section 1.3.4 and Appendix I. This chapter examines aspects of academic credential recognition in Canada related to the UNESCO Global Convention that are not covered in preceding chapters.

11.1 Expanding the Convention

The survey that provides one of the bases for this report asked assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada about their practice as it relates to the proposed Global Convention.

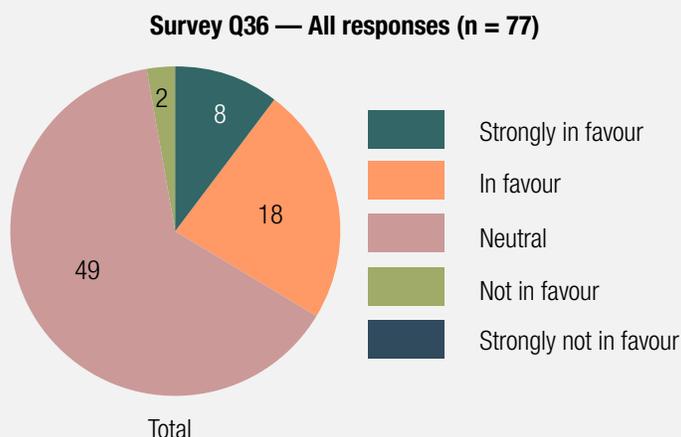
Q35 Do you differentiate in any way between applicants from jurisdictions bound by the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) (i.e., from the 55 countries that have ratified the Convention) and those from other countries?

All 77 respondents to this question indicated that they did not distinguish their assessment on the basis of the applicant's country. This means that their respective organizations have policies and procedures that are aligned with the LRC and that they are applying them to all countries, regardless of UNESCO's regional classification.

Q36 Would you be in favour of Canada's ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention? (Note that, following ratification, Canadian organizations would need to apply the Convention to applicants from all ratifying countries and not only those from the 55 countries currently covered by the LRC.)

The responses to this question are shown in Figure 23.

Figure 23 Opinions of ratification of the Global Convention



Of the 77 respondents who answered this question, 26 were either *in favour* or *strongly in favour* of ratification. Two-thirds were *neutral*. Just two professional regulatory bodies were *not in favour*, and none of the respondents were *strongly not in favour*.

Twenty-five respondents provided comments, generally expressing caution with respect to their answers and noting that they would need more details on the implications of ratification for their organization.

11.2 Recognition processes

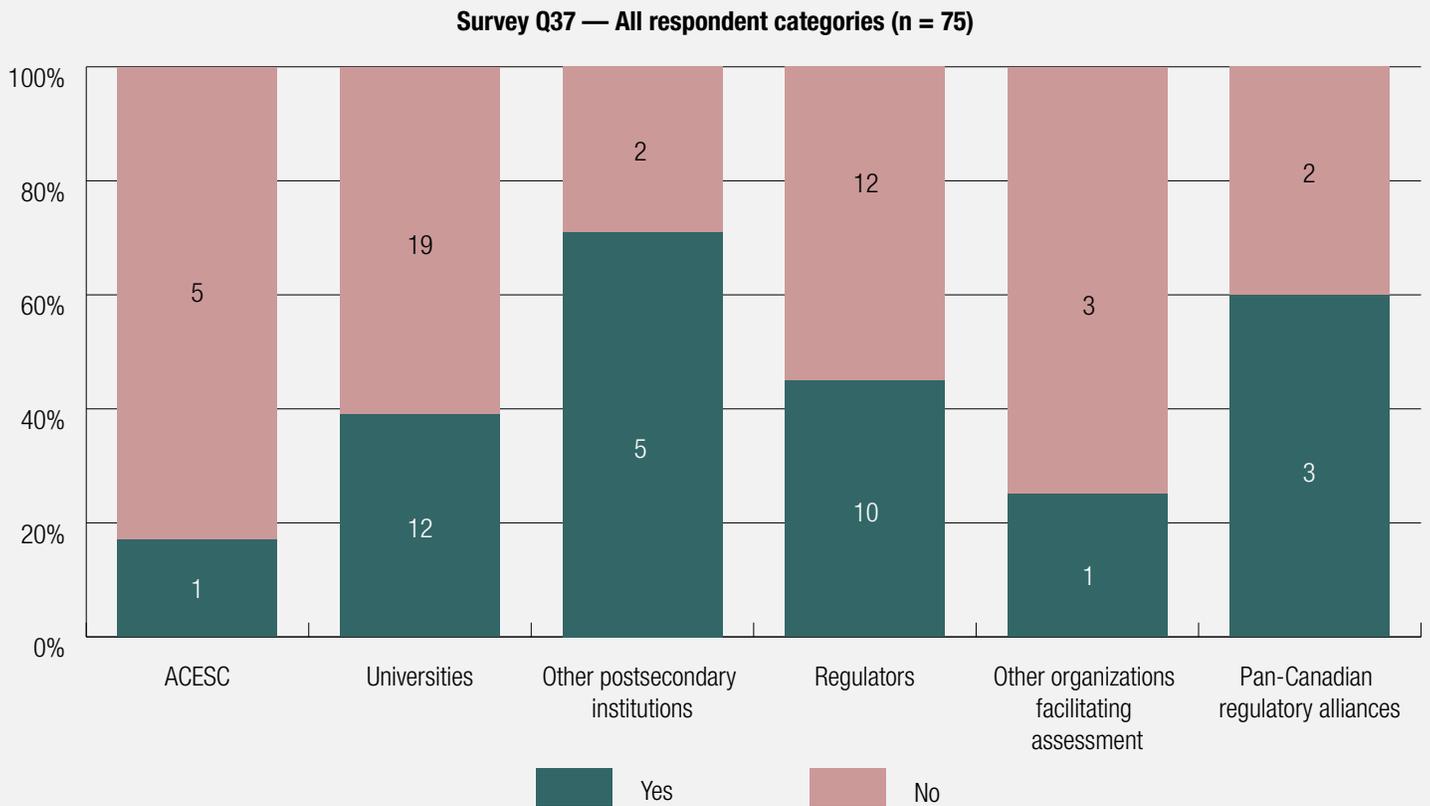
11.2.1 Recognition of prior learning

The new Global Convention covers recognition of prior learning (e.g., informal, non-formal, and non-traditional learning). Canada has been an early proponent of the recognition of prior learning, with some initiatives led by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA). Prior learning assessment and recognition has been one of the tools available to newcomers to Canada when their academic credentials do not reflect their competencies and work experience.

Q37 The Global Convention will include the recognition of prior learning (e.g., informal, non-formal, and non-traditional learning) possibly accumulated over a lengthy period. Do you currently consider prior learning in your recognition process?

The responses to this question are shown in Figure 24.

Figure 24 Consideration of prior learning in the recognition process



As shown in Figure 24, there were 75 responses to this question. Responses were split 60:40 in favour of not considering prior learning, with five members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC), most universities, and most professional regulatory bodies replying “no.” The position of ACESC is perhaps understandable, because members provide advice on credentials, not recognition of competence. Interestingly, five out of seven non-university postsecondary institutions responded positively, perhaps indicating their engagement in vocational training, where skills and experience may carry more weight.

Respondents who answered “yes” were asked to provide a brief explanation, and all did so, generally qualifying their responses (e.g., noting that they considered prior learning sometimes, in special cases, or on a case-by-case basis).

11.2.2 National qualifications frameworks

As discussed in Section 10.4, a qualifications framework acts as a reference document to help place individual qualifications within their respective education systems. The best-known is the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), which commits all 42 members of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Union to reference their own frameworks (and also to use learning outcomes and to introduce systems for recognition of prior learning). Globally, many countries have put in place a qualifications framework at the national level, while others have participated in the development of frameworks at the regional level (e.g., Southeast Asia, the Caribbean, the Gulf region, the Pacific, Southern Africa, and the Commonwealth States).¹⁹¹

In Chapter 10, we discussed the situation regarding regional and provincial qualifications frameworks in Canada, and noted that there have been no recent pan-Canadian developments since 2007, when the Canadian Degrees Qualification Framework¹⁹² was introduced.

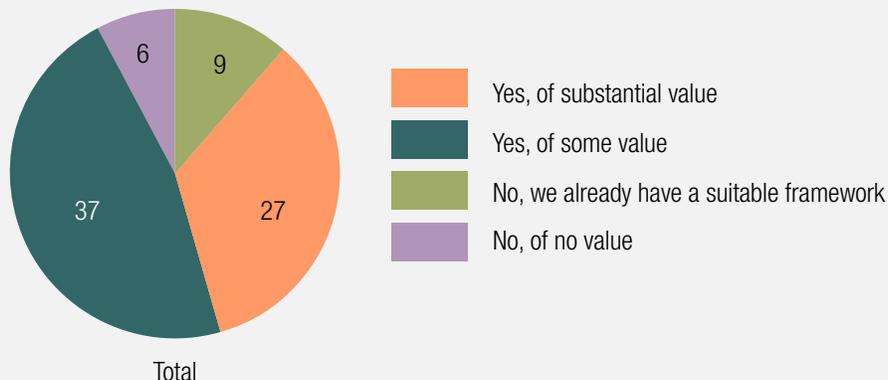
The survey asked the following question about qualification frameworks:

Q28 Would a pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial qualification framework (encompassing credentials other than those at the degree level) be of value to you?

The responses to this question are shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25 Perceived value of a pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial qualifications framework

Survey Q28 — All responses (n = 79)



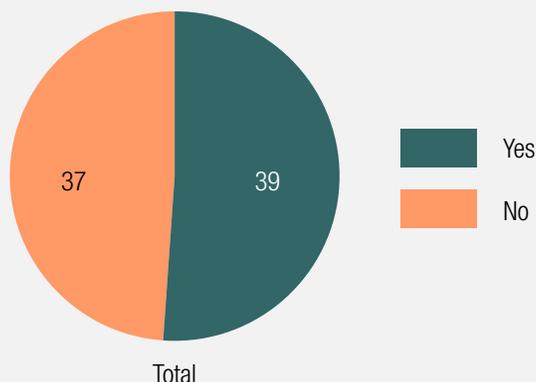
The responses demonstrate overwhelming support for a qualifications framework: 82 per cent of respondents said that they already have a suitable framework or that a new framework would be of either some or substantial value. Only 8 per cent (mostly professional bodies) said that such a framework would be of no value (although 17 per cent of professional bodies reported they already have a suitable framework).

Q38 In your recognition process, do you use the national qualifications framework published by the country that issued the academic credential to the applicant (if such a framework is available)?

The responses are presented in Figure 26.

Figure 26 Use of the national qualifications framework published by the country that issued the academic credential

Survey Q38 — All responses (n = 76)



As seen in Figure 26, just over half of the 76 respondents answered positively. This included all ACESC respondents.

11.2.3 Credentials from more than one institution

The issue of an applicant having credentials from more than one institution is becoming more common with the expansion of international education, and is covered by the proposed Global Convention.

The survey addressed this issue in Question 40, *How do you assess credentials with credits from more than one institution?*

Several points are evident from the 66 respondents:

- From professional regulators, a common response was that they assess each credential independently. Other points were that they rely on academic transcripts and take care that credits are not double-counted.
- Postsecondary educational institutions made points similar to those of professional regulators. In addition, they note a strong emphasis on course content and the need for original academic transcripts from each issuing institution.
- The responses of ACESC members are similar to those of other respondents. In addition, they note that the final academic credential carries more weight than earlier ones.

11.3 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes (LOs) for a learning program or qualification are statements of what the learner is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate on completion. They describe the *outputs* of a program rather than its *inputs* (e.g., content, curriculum, syllabus). LOs are therefore the basis of both instructional design (including informal or non-formal learning from experience) and design of assessment that includes recognition of prior learning. They are a key feature of the current worldwide trends toward student-centred lifelong learning and qualification frameworks, and are part of the EHEA Bologna Process.

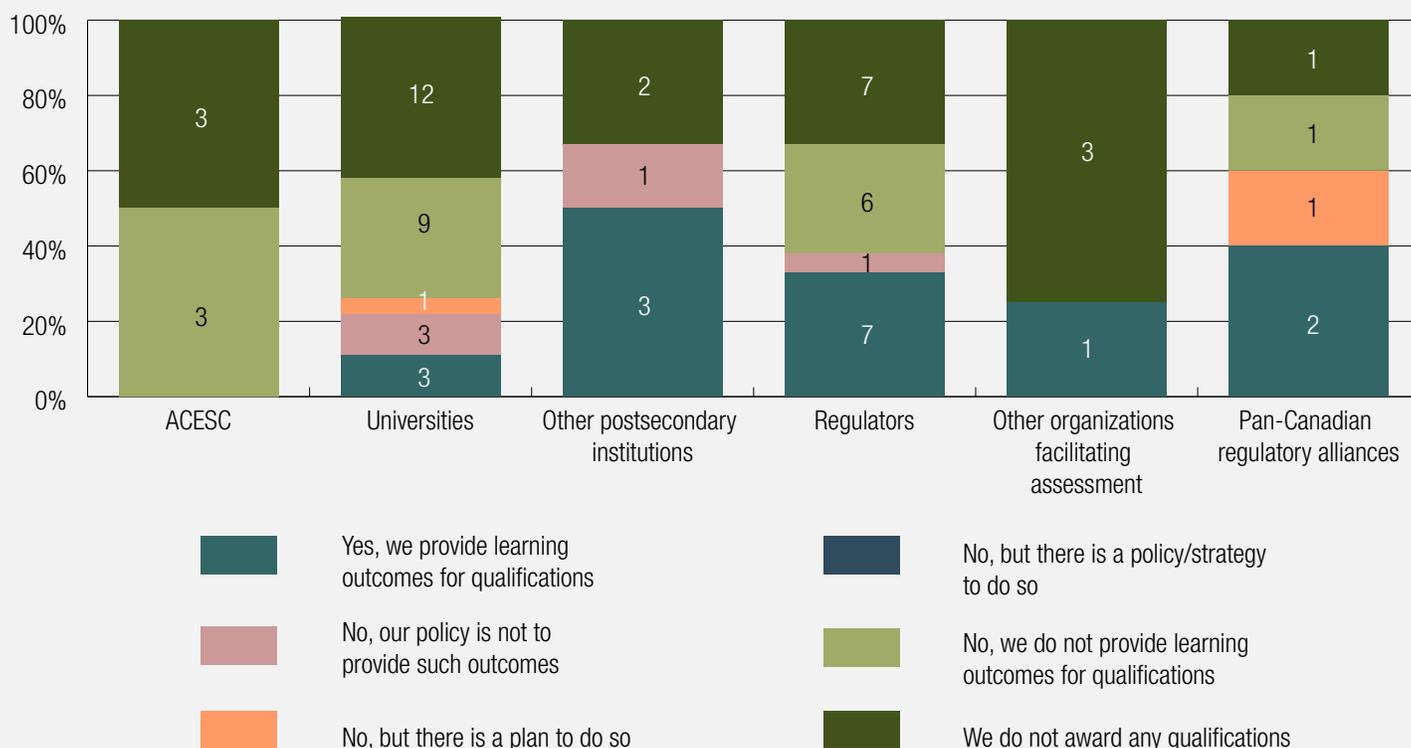
The survey asked the following question about learning outcomes:

Q39 Do you provide the learning outcomes for the qualifications you issue to students or licensed professionals, highlighting what the holder is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate?

The responses are presented in Figure 27.

Figure 27 Provision of learning outcomes for qualifications issued

Survey Q39 — All respondent categories (n = 70)



Of the 70 responses, 28 said they do not provide any qualifications. Respondents who provided that answer include one college and 12 universities, suggesting that the question was misunderstood.

Of the 42 that do award qualifications, 18 said they already have or plan to introduce LOs. Twenty-four respondents who replied “no” noted either that they simply did not provide such outcomes or it was their policy not to do so. The former includes three ACESC members, again suggesting that the question was misunderstood. Discounting for all those who may have misunderstood the question, the responses are more evenly split but still clearly negative overall.

These results position Canada somewhat indifferently regarding LOs, behind Western Europe and some of the Commonwealth, but ahead of most other countries. LOs are a part of the EHEA Bologna Process and have been

fully implemented in the United Kingdom and partly so in some Western European and Commonwealth countries, but barely at all in Eastern Europe and Africa.

11.4 Conclusions

All respondents to the survey said that they do not distinguish their assessment based on the applicant's country of origin. This means that the transition to applying the principles of the LRC to countries belonging to the other five UNESCO regions should have no effect. In the context of provincial and territorial governments' continued participation in the preparation phase of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention, this finding is welcomed and very significant.

One-third of respondents were in favour of the possible ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention by Canada, with the rest neutral. This caution is understandable, given that most of them were unaware of or did not have time to consult closely the detailed provisions in the preliminary text of the Global Convention, published in July 2017. The draft text of the Global Convention was provided for reference with the survey, but some time is required to closely study the proposed articles and understand how these could be implemented within Canada's decentralized system.

The survey demonstrated only mixed support for recognition of prior learning, with a minority of universities and regulators currently considering it when making decisions. This is surprising in light of a significant number of initiatives in the field, such as those led by CAPLA. Colleges were much more in favour of recognizing such learning than were universities. Just one ACESC member currently considers recognition of prior learning, but this is because they provide credential assessment rather than recognition decisions.

The use of national qualifications frameworks to aid recognition was also weak, but all six ACESC members do use them.

Currently, the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework is available only at a degree level. Other academic credentials, such as associate degrees, applied degrees, and certificates and diplomas related to both undergraduate and postgraduate study, have not been articulated in this framework, nor have professional and vocational qualifications. However, Ontario has developed a qualifications framework for its education system, and other provinces are exploring the matter.

The handling of credentials from more than one source (e.g., joint degrees, students moving from one university or country to another) is already common, with all respondents to this question advising how they address this issue.

The implementation of learning outcomes in postsecondary educational institutions in Canada should be highlighted as an area of focus, given that just three colleges and four universities indicated that they provide learning outcomes, or plan to do so, compared with 12 that do not. It is surprising that the responses from professional regulatory bodies were relatively more positive. There are some indications that this survey question was not fully understood, which perhaps indicates a lack of awareness of the concept of LOs.

In summary, Canada already complies with the application of the principles of the LRC to all other countries belonging to the other five UNESCO regions. The possible ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention by Canada would not appear to be a contentious issue, but additional information on the possible implication of applying provisions to organizations in Canada should be communicated to competent recognition bodies by CICIC.

Canada seems well placed regarding the use of qualifications frameworks of other countries as a reference tool, but additional work remains to be done on the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework and measures initiated by some provinces.

Canada seems strong too on dealing with multiple source credentials, but weaker on recognition of prior learning and on its own implementation of learning outcomes.

12 Fourth Industrial Revolution and the Digitization of Academic Credentials

Paper-based qualifications issued by competent issuing bodies have been the standard means by which students demonstrate their learning achievement and professional standing. In turn, competent recognition bodies have relied on authentication procedures for paper-based qualifications as a cornerstone to identify and guard against fraudulent activities.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution appears to be changing the landscape in the field of assessment and recognition of academic credentials and qualifications. Areas particularly affected by these changes include training-delivery methods (e.g., distance learning, massive open on-line courses (MOOCs), small private on-line courses (SPOCs)); assessment (e.g., on-line assessment, remote proctoring); the types of qualifications issued to students (e.g., badges); authentication procedures (e.g., digitization and transfer of documents through trusted data exchange networks, blockchain technology, automation of assessment outcomes); the issuing of student data upon completion of the study period (e.g., digital student portfolios); skilled professionals having met the requirements of a profession (e.g., electronic professional qualification certificate or licence to practise); and new forms of criminal enterprise (e.g., identity theft, impersonation, hacking and data manipulation, fake degrees).

The ENIC-NARIC Networks have identified digitization as a pressing issue requiring national information centres, assessment services, and competent recognition bodies to take action to ensure continued compliance with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention.

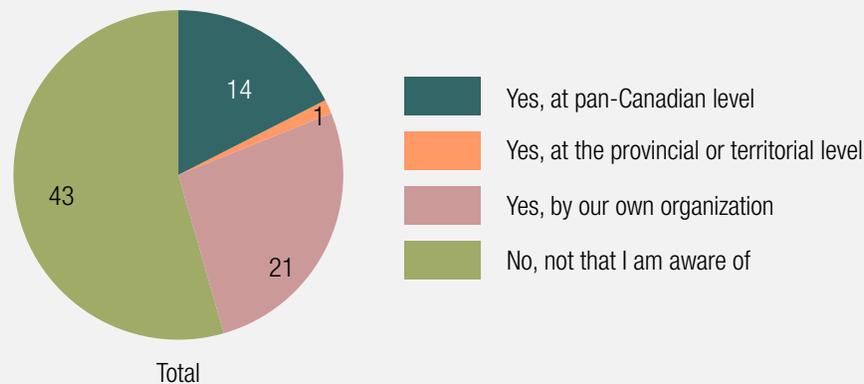
12.1 Overview

The results of the survey of the pan-Canadian assessment community show some movement toward digitization and Fourth Industrial Revolution initiatives among approximately half of the organizations in Canada involved in the assessment and recognition of academic credentials. Several questions dealt with this area.

Q22 Is your organization currently involved in the implementation of initiatives related to the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolution (especially around the assessment and recognition of academic credentials)?

The responses to Question 22 are presented in Figure 28.

Figure 28 Involvement in implementation of initiatives related to the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolution
Survey Q22 — All responses (n = 79)



Of the 79 organizations that responded to Question 22, fewer than half (36 organizations, or 46 per cent) have been involved in any initiatives related to the Third or Fourth Industrial Revolution. There is a striking dominance of single organization initiatives (21), compared with pan-Canadian initiatives (14) and a single provincial/territorial initiative. Surprisingly, only one of the six Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) members is involved in any pan-Canadian initiatives. Among respondents, 6 of 41 postsecondary educational institutions and 7 out of 32 professional bodies are involved in pan-Canadian initiatives, and over half of postsecondary educational institutions (25, or 61 per cent) and professional bodies (25, or 56 per cent) are not involved in any initiatives at all.

Case Study 18 highlights how World Education Services (WES) Canada, an ACESC member, is involved in the digitization of documents in academic credential assessment.

Case Study 18 Digitization of credentials for assessment: World Education Services (WES) Canada

Digitization of documents has allowed World Education Services (WES) Canada over time to build one of the world's largest databases of educational documents. This digitization has facilitated the organization's ability to speed up the assessment process while improving quality, has reduced costs of document handling and storage, and has increased capacity among remote staff.

Each WES applicant must complete an on-line application for an academic credential assessment report, upon which he or she receives a WES reference number, which must accompany all submissions of required documents (usually authenticated copies or documents sent directly by the issuing educational institution). WES commits to completing an academic credential assessment report within a period of 7 to 20 working days of receiving and accepting verifiable documents, depending on the purpose of the requested assessment.

WES has long digitized the academic documents (e.g., diplomas, transcripts, degrees) that it receives as part of applications. More recently, it has opted to scan documents early in the intake and review process, before

the files are reviewed by the assessor. After authentication of hard copies is confirmed, the assessment process continues using high-resolution, high-quality digital copies.

The WES database contains digital records associated with more than 45,000 educational institutions, one million courses, and 1,600 grading scales from around the world. The database is maintained by a team of professionals responsible for researching, verifying, and codifying this information. Digital records in the database are used for training, assessing comparability, and assessment. The digital records enable assessors to:

- verify the authenticity of the academic credentials and the legal status of the issuing educational institutions;
- assess academic credentials with reference to admission requirements, education levels, institution types, and objectives of the academic programs;
- convert credit hours and grades earned in education systems around the world to their comparable academic credentials found in provincial/territorial education systems in Canada; and
- issue assessment reports to hundreds of thousands of international students and skilled newcomers annually.

WES assessment reports, which can include digitized versions of authenticated academic credentials, are delivered to professional regulatory bodies and educational institutions via AccessWES, the organization's proprietary, secure on-line delivery system.

Digitization of documents has enabled WES to provide clients and stakeholders with consistently high-quality document reviews that promote the recognition of international academic credentials; build one of the world's largest database of sample documents; identify fraudulent documents; increase capacity in terms of addressing increasingly high volumes of requests, by enabling remote assessors to securely access documents they need to review; ensure more consistent decision-making in document review; and track and process applicants' requests with greater efficiency and accuracy.

In addition, digitization of records supports disaster recovery and business continuity in cases where unexpected events threaten the integrity of paper documents. Digitization also allows for secure sending of digital images of verified documents, together with academic credential assessment reports, to educational institutions, professional regulatory bodies, or other recipients identified by applicants.

Digitization of academic documents ensures consistent handling across all stages of the assessment process, facilitates quick and accurate identification and retrieval of relevant comparison documents, permits rapid distribution for staff reviews, and ensures access for both in-house and remote staff. It also contributes to the ongoing development of a robust and up-to-date archive of comparable sample documents.

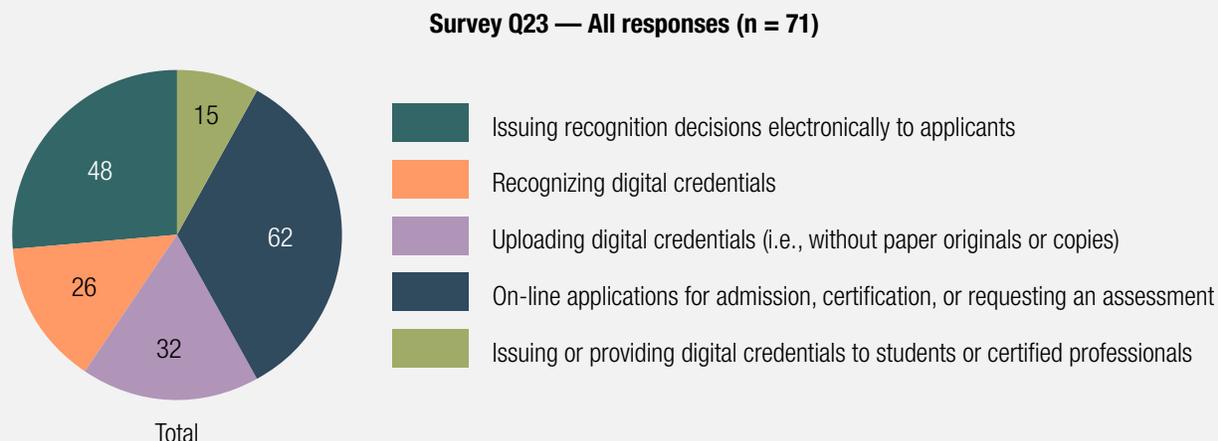
Through document digitization, WES ensures continuous improvement of outputs, operational effectiveness, and the ongoing iteration of organization-wide policies and procedures that govern consistent, timely, and accurate document review.

Question 23 addressed the digitization of documents and other on-line systems.

Q23 Within your organization, are on-line systems in place for the following? (Check all that apply.)

The responses are presented in Figure 29.

Figure 29 Existence of on-line systems

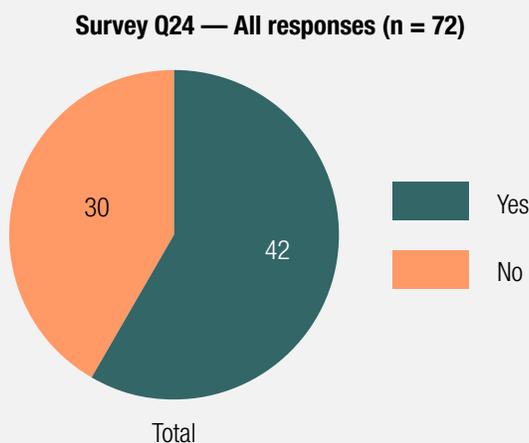


As seen in Figure 29, the top two types of on-line systems that are in place are on-line applications for admission, certification, or requesting an assessment (62 respondents, or 87 per cent), and issuing or providing recognition decisions electronically to applicants (48 respondents, or 68 per cent). Only 32 respondents (45 per cent) have on-line systems for the uploading of digital credentials and recognizing digital credentials. Less than a quarter (21 per cent) of respondents have any systems in place for issuing or providing digital credentials to students or certified professionals.

Q24 If any of these systems apply, has your organization changed policies and/or procedures or updated rules to accommodate them?

The responses to Question 24 are presented in Figure 30.

Figure 30 Change in policies and/or procedures to accommodate on-line systems

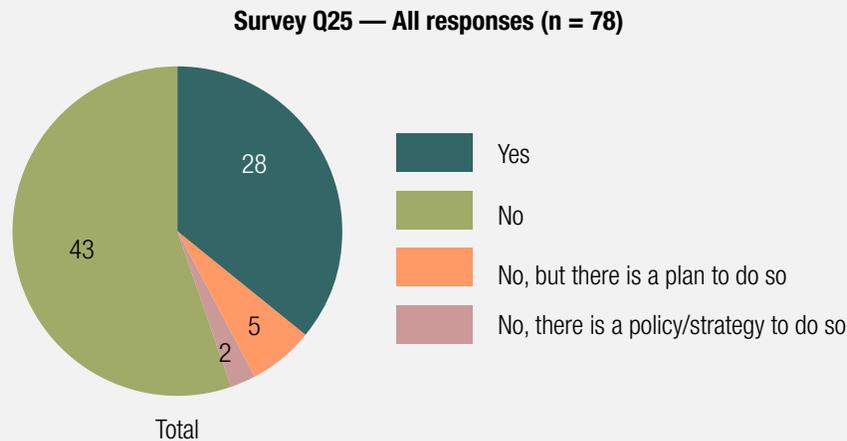


As seen in Figure 30, 42 of 72 respondents (about 58 per cent) have changed their policies and/or procedures or updated rules to accommodate on-line systems. It is interesting to note that, although 62 organizations responded that they have introduced on-line applications for admission, certification, or requesting an assessment, only 42 organizations claim to have made any changes to their systems.

Q25 Does your organization share the use of a centralized data hub?

The responses to Question 25 are presented in Figure 31.

Figure 31 Use of a centralized data hub



As seen in Figure 31, 43 of 78 respondents (51 per cent) indicated they do not share the use of a centralized data hub. This may be indicative of the non-existence of organized hubs (e.g., a pan-Canadian organization that is assisting the coordination of data in a regulated profession on behalf of provincial and territorial regulatory bodies) providing them the opportunity of participating. A little more than a third (36 per cent) of respondents already share the use of a data hub, and only 9 per cent have any plan or policy/strategy to do so.

Respondents described a wide variety of different uses of data hubs. These included:

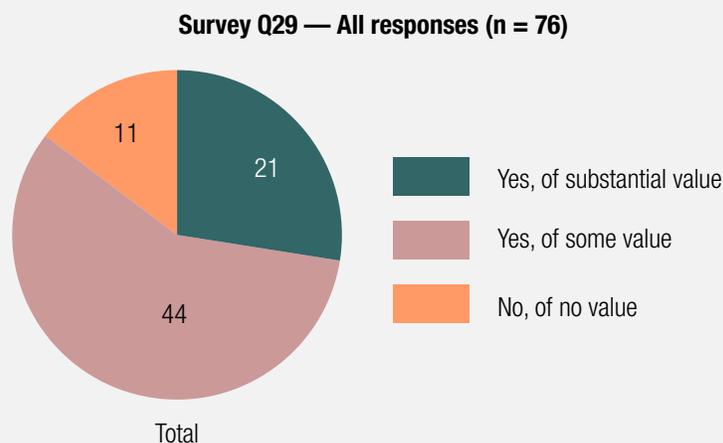
- internal systems for policies, procedure documentation, and document sharing;
- electronic document imaging systems to store and share admission data; and
- databases, including internal databases on applicant profiles as well as a national membership database for checking licensure in other provinces/territories in Canada and a database of international institutions and degrees universities (for engineers), an on-line database for teacher certification that is shared with provincial hiring authorities, and use of an external hub (e.g., the Ontario Universities Application Centre) for processing applications and supporting documents.

The vast majority of respondents (about 86 per cent) find a data hub helpful or even transformative. Although in response to Question 25, only 28 organizations claim to share a data hub, or have any plan, policy, or strategy to do so, 36 answered Question 27 on the usefulness of hubs. Of these respondents, five claimed that sharing is not useful. Close to half (44 per cent) of respondents indicated that the data hub is mostly useful, while 42 per cent noted that the hub is “transformative” for them.

Q29 Would a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement) be of value to you?

The responses to Question 29 are presented in Figures 32 and 33.

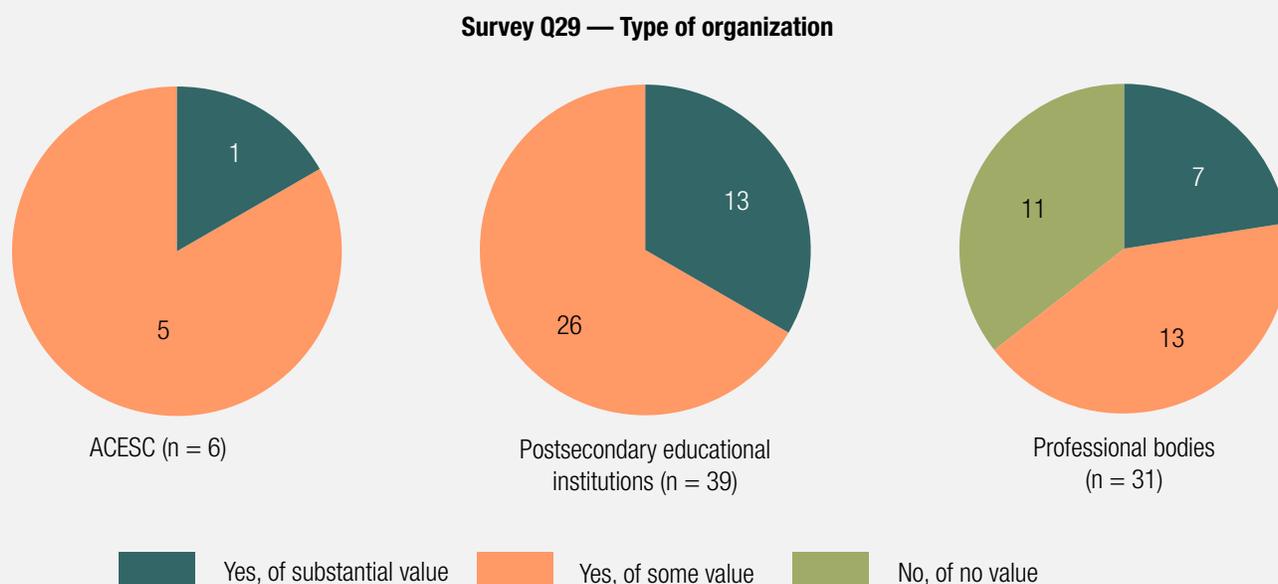
Figure 32 Perceived value of a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (all responses)



The survey revealed overwhelming support for a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement): 86 per cent of respondents noted that such a supplement would be of value. Twenty-one of 76 respondents (19 per cent) noted that such a supplement would be of *substantial* value.

Figure 33 shows a marked difference in responses to Question 29 by respondent categories. No ACESC members or postsecondary educational institutions (including universities) indicated that that a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement would be of no value. However, 18 per cent of professional bodies did so.

Figure 33 Perceived value of a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (by type of organization)



12.2 Digital connectivity of student data among postsecondary educational institutions

In 2015, the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) became a signatory to the Groningen Declaration Network,¹⁹³ which seeks to promote student mobility through international data mobility. Since then, ARUCC has initiated the ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project,¹⁹⁴ which aims to advance pan-Canadian and international student mobility. Case Study 19 highlights the scope of this project.

Case Study 19 ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project: Advancing student mobility through trusted data exchange¹⁹⁵

After the Association of Registrars of the Universities and Colleges of Canada (ARUCC) became a signatory to the Groningen Declaration Network in 2015, it initiated the ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project, which seeks to facilitate pan-Canadian and international student mobility through reliable electronic data exchange. Its primary goals include enhancing Canada-wide data exchange capacity by creating a national network that supports postsecondary educational institutions and students. This project is one way in which ARUCC is realizing the goals of the Groningen initiative.

The project involves creating a pan-Canadian platform that facilitates student data exchange between provinces, territories, and trusted organizations around the world. It seeks to realize many benefits for student mobility, including enhancing service to students and postsecondary educational institutions.

The project is under the leadership of ARUCC, in partnership with the Pan-Canadian Consortium on Admissions and Transfer (PCCAT), the Canadian University Council of Chief Information Officers (CUCCIO), and the Canadian Post-Secondary Electronic Standards Council (CanPESC) User Group.

Benefits of the project include advancing pan-Canadian and international student mobility for Canada; supporting students by providing their transcripts and academic credentials in a digitized format and at a speed that facilitates seamless mobility into institutions and the workforce; maximizing postsecondary educational institutions' efficiency and student service through trusted digital student data exchange both across Canada and from around the world; and accelerating existing efforts to create new connections between provincial application centres in Canada and data hubs with international student data exchange providers.

The principles underpinning the project include the following:

- maintaining a student focus
- respecting provincial and territorial regulatory frameworks as well as institutional and provincial/territorial autonomy and authority
- focusing on priorities and activities that advance improvements and enhancements to student mobility and trusted data portability
- complementing the work of the existing student application centres in Canada and/or data exchange hubs supporting postsecondary educational institutions
- ensuring focused attention on existing and future needs of ARUCC members
- encouraging collaboration with core partners, including PCCAT, CUCCIO, and CanPESC
- ensuring that the efforts of the project's steering committee reflect pan-Canadian interests and promote evidence-based research and decision-making for student mobility and data exchange and portability

Since April 2017, the project has:

- received formal endorsements from close to 60 institutions, student groups, government bodies, and

allied associations;

- conducted a national survey and extensive consultations with representatives of the higher education community across Canada;
- made more than 400 presentations to registry and data exchange experts (provincial, pan-Canadian, international);
- made a formal research request to more than 1,400 data exchange and student mobility experts through the Groningen Network;
- undertaken direct consultation with over 100 organizations, vendors, and people with expertise in national data exchange; and
- reviewed 16 formal research submissions, including 8 from application centres in Canada, student data hubs, and postsecondary educational institutions in Canada.¹⁹⁶

Research undertaken through this project effectively summarizes the state of student data digitization within Canada.¹⁹⁷ The research highlights the strengths within some Canadian provinces:

- exchange of high school data with postsecondary educational institutions to support admissions within a province (evident in Alberta, British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, and Quebec)
- data exchange between postsecondary educational institutions to support intra-provincial exchange (British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec)
- data exchange with a data hub or postsecondary educational institution located in another province (in any capacity) (British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec)
- information resources on postsecondary pathways and transfer agreements (seven provinces)
- other support services, including research, transfer policy guidelines, links to various government bodies (five provinces)

In terms of international exchange, the research notes that organizations in Canada have data exchange with other institutions, such as the National Student Clearinghouse and the Chinese Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC), to support admissions. In addition, organizations in Canada, such as Aura Data and Open Badge, undertake verification and/or sharing of digital credentials with third parties, such as the National Student Clearinghouse and Parchment in the United States, and CHESICC in China. The research also notes emerging blockchain consortiums in Canada.

This project has also highlighted the following gaps in postsecondary educational digital data exchange among organizations in Canada:

- no inter-provincial data exchange
- the exchange of only high school or cégep data
- no graduate student data exchange
- no connection to trusted third parties (e.g., WES, regulatory bodies, national-level recognized credential verifiers and student data providers), other than governments
- no pan-sector, provincial, or pan-Canadian exchange/service for outbound postsecondary credential verification (not including apps/transcripts)
- no pan-sector, provincial, or pan-Canadian exchange/service for inbound postsecondary credential verification (e.g., WES)

The following points are noteworthy:

- Most initiatives are concerned with exchange of data within Canada (i.e., within or among provinces).
- On-line academic credential verification capacities are limited and exist either at the institutional level or through a few third-party vendors (e.g., Parchment, AuraData, the National Student Clearinghouse) partnering with institutions.
- There is no international connectivity to global nodes, aside from:
 - an agreement between McGill University, the National Student Clearinghouse, CHESICC, and the China Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC) to verify and electronically transmit academic records from China; and¹⁹⁸
 - the Ontario Universities' Application Centre (OUAC), which captures Law School Admission Test (LSAT) and Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) scores.
- There is no pan-Canadian network or service for exchange of micro-credentials or badges or their underlying data that is owned, led, or endorsed by any pan-Canadian association/consortium of recognized postsecondary educational institutions.
- eCampusOntario, an eLearning consortium of 45 Ontario colleges and universities, is working with Canadian Open Badges provider CanCred.ca to develop a prototype of an innovative cross-sectoral network to recognize both “hard” and “soft” skills that leverage experiential learning.
- OUAC has established a partnership with WES Canada in which the academic credential assessor sends PDF versions of assessed international documents to the application centre for use in admissions processing at Ontario universities. Students apply for an assessment report, which is subsequently used by more than one institution. This initiative extends a long-standing arrangement for Ontario law school application processing.¹⁹⁹

Also noteworthy are the international student Web pages or Web portals in some provinces. At the moment, aside from the International Application Service (IAS) of the Ontario College Application Service (OCAS), featured in Case Study 20, these merely provide information resources; nevertheless, they hold the promise of extending further digitized services relating to the recognition of academic credentials. Relevant Web pages or portals include the following:

- The Service régional d'admission du Montréal métropolitain (SRAM) Web page for international students,²⁰⁰ which offers information on cégeps and their programs. SRAM handles applications for admissions to its 32 member cégeps located across nine Quebec regions. It provides guidance to international students through the application process, receives all documents needed to complete application packages, and sends students' files to their chosen cégep for admission review
- MyNSFuture,²⁰¹ which is operated and maintained by the Nova Scotia Council on Admission and Transfer (NSCAT). NSCAT is a collaboration of the 11 publicly funded universities and colleges in Nova Scotia, in partnership with the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Advanced Education. NSCAT serves as the organization through which collaborative systems that support student enrolment, mobility, and success are managed. The Web site provides “at-a-glance” information on all postsecondary educational institutions in the province, to make the process of choosing a Nova Scotia school easier and more straightforward
- An international students page on Apply Alberta,²⁰² the Alberta Post-Secondary Application System, which contains links to individual institutions and international student resources
- Web environments to support students provided by other application centres across Canada

Case Study 20 International Application Service (IAS) for Ontario's colleges

The Ontario College Application Service (OCAS) has an International Application Service (IAS)²⁰³ for Ontario's colleges. The service is a platform designed to simplify international application and admissions processes for Ontario's colleges and international agents.

The IAS offers three distinct portals tailored to the needs of admissions and recruitment teams at Ontario's colleges, international agents working on behalf of applicants, and international applicants themselves. The portals form an efficient and easy-to-use service that brings colleges, agents, and applicants together, providing automated offer and communications processes, secure data exchange with colleges' student information systems, and analytics. IAS also helps colleges save time and money, while significantly improving the speed and quality of service for applicants.

With the IAS, college admissions' officers and global recruiters have the ability to efficiently review and manage applications, documents, and offers for international students. The portals allow users to view the status of applications, search for and filter applicants, and manage program intakes.

IAS has transformed international admissions' processes from a manual effort into a straightforward and secure automated process. The service promises to make a significant difference in offer turnaround time and in overall customer service for OCAS.

Features of the system include the following:

- flexible student information system integration
- configurable program management
- automated generation of offer letters
- automated status tracking
- three-way communication

The system improves quality, with clean, error-free data, validated documents, and complete applications.

One of the six thematic options in the recently published study *International Transfer Credit Practices* suggests that postsecondary educational institutions in Canada:

4. Endorse and support national and international data exchange projects that hold the promise of establishing trusted connections to international institutions and organizations to facilitate seamless and efficient student data exchange.²⁰⁴

12.3 Pan-Canadian hubs for internationally educated applicants

Many professions have organized themselves into collective hubs to facilitate the processing of applications from internationally educated individuals. These hubs share data on academic credentials and qualifications assessment results among provincial/territorial regulators, greatly facilitating the recognition of international academic credentials and aligning requirements between provinces/territories to conform with LRC principles.

Among the professions that have adopted such a hub with centralized application and assessment, and the redistribution of data to provincial and territorial regulators, are the following:²⁰⁵

- medical doctors/physicians through the Medical Council of Canada's "Physician Apply"²⁰⁶ Web portal. This Web site bundles together a number of services that newcomers can use, such as qualification assessment, translation, and viewing exam results. The Web site includes a qualification repository that can be shared and allows applicants to request an assessment and translation for a medical qualification in a language other than English or French

- nurses through the National Nursing Assessment Service's²⁰⁷ Web portal. This site allows applicants to apply on-line and have applications and supporting documents sent directly to the relevant provincial and territorial regulatory body, simplifying the application process for individuals in Canada's complex regulatory environment
- pharmacists through the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) "Pharmacists' Gateway Canada."²⁰⁸ This site includes a pan-Canadian repository for the secure storage of documents required at certain stages of the application process. While provincial and territorial regulatory bodies will still be responsible for assessing and recognizing international qualifications, all applications and associated documentation can be submitted directly through a central Web site. This information is then directed to the appropriate regulatory body for assessment. This system makes navigating the assessment process much easier for applicants and affords them the ability to provide necessary documentation only once to a single central organization

The Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) commissioned a study on establishing Canadian centres for the assessment of the credentials of internationally educated teachers (see Case Study 21).

Case Study 21 Establishing a pan-Canadian credential assessment centre for internationally educated teachers

In 2013, CMEC, through Registrars for Teacher Certification Canada (RTCC), commissioned a feasibility study on establishing Canadian centres for the assessment of the credentials of internationally educated teachers (IETs).²⁰⁹ The study was designed to provide recommendations for a pan-Canadian method of assessing the credentials of IETs. It was guided by four principles identified in the Forum of Labour Market Ministers' Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications: fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency.

The study identified commonalities in the current processes and practices for IET credential assessment across Canada and evaluated best practices in other contexts of credential assessment. It then drew upon previous reports, as well as focus groups, to synthesize its findings into a proposed model for the country.

The study developed summary profiles for each province and territory in Canada, outlining their respective qualification assessment processes for IETs. It found numerous commonalities among them, specifically in such areas as calculating credit equivalency, document-submission and -verification procedures, monitoring for fraudulent documentation, acceptance of English-language proficiency tests, distance education, and file and data storage.

Inevitably, of course, the study also found differences. These presented themselves in such areas as French-language testing, fees, academic and professional program credit requirements, secondary-school transcript requirements, character references, and document translation.

The study then reviewed four models of international credential recognition that were relevant to IET assessment in Canada: educators in Wales and England, engineers in Canada, nurses in Canada, and engineers in the United States. This review identified two key attributes of any successful implementation of a credential recognition model:

- consensus from stakeholders, and
- long-term planning and monitoring.

These attributes demand strong, consistent communication during model development and following implementation, as well as ongoing monitoring to ensure that the model continues to meet the needs of stakeholders.

12.4 Connecting to international hubs for document authentication

Some ACESC members and competent recognition bodies use hubs established outside Canada to authenticate academic credentials. Such use provides a good example of compliance with LRC principles in using primary sources of information for the assessment process. Some of these hubs charge for their services, but some are free.

Canadian organizations used hubs in various countries:²¹⁰

- Australia and New Zealand—My eQuals
- Bangladesh—Intermediate and Secondary Education Boards (ISEB) Exam Information Bank
- China—Academic Degrees and Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC) and China Higher Education Student Information and Career Center (CHESICC)
- Ecuador—Secretaría Nacional de Educación Superior, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación: Consulta de Instituciones de Educación Superior; Consulta de Títulos Registrados; Consulte el Estado de su Registro de Título Extranjero
- France—Verifdiploma
- Mexico—Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP), Registro Nacional de Profesionistas
- Moldova—Ministerul Educatiei, Verificarea Actelor de Studii
- Nepal—Ministry of Education, Office of the Controller of Examinations (OCE)
- Netherlands—Het diplomaregister
- Norway—Diploma Registry
- Peru—Superintendencia Nacional de Educación Superior (Sunedu): Dirección de Documentación e Información Universitaria y Registro de Grados y Títulos; Peru - Registro Nacional De Grados Académicos y Títulos Profesionales
- Romania—Registrul Matricol
- Ukraine—Ministry of Education and Science, IPS OSVITA
- United Kingdom—Higher Education Degree Datacheck (HEDD)
- United States—National Student Clearinghouse

In addition, regional hubs include:

- Caribbean Examinations Council student portal
- West African Examinations Council (WAEC), Direct Online Result Checker (Gambia, Ghana, and Liberia)

The Groningen Declaration Network lists some pilot projects in data exchange.²¹¹ These are good examples of developments that may potentially be useful in the future.

The DigiRec (Connecting Digital Exchange of Student Data to Recognition) project initiated by NUFFIC, the Netherlands' national information centre, explores the connection between digitization of student data and the recognition policies and practices of assessment services and competent recognition bodies (see Case Study 22). The ENIC-NARIC Networks (and, by extension, CICIC as well as ACESC members) are closely monitoring the developments of this project, as the results will ultimately impact their assessment procedures in the medium and long term.

Case Study 22 DigiRec: Connecting Digital Exchange of Student Data to Recognition²¹²

Initiated by NUFFIC, the Netherlands' national information centre, the DigiRec (Connecting Digital Exchange of Student Data to Recognition) project supports learning mobility in an age of rapid digital developments, to speed up and facilitate recognition procedure for applicants seeking recognition in other countries. It is the first initiative led by the ENIC-NARIC Networks to explore the connection between digitization of student data and the recognition policies and practices of assessment services and competent recognition bodies.

The DigiRec project will provide ENIC/NARIC with recommendations and guidelines to ensure that new initiatives in the digital data exchange area support the ongoing implementation of the principles of the LRC to guarantee fair recognition. The project will target ENIC/NARIC offices, but it could also provide guidance to postsecondary educational institutions and professional regulatory bodies. DigiRec is funded by the European Commission's Erasmus+ program. It was launched in spring 2018 and will be completed in early 2020.

CICIC is collaborating on the issue through the ENIC-NARIC Networks, along with national information centres from the Netherlands (project coordinator), France, Italy, Poland, and Sweden, as well as the EMREX digital data network and the Groningen Declaration Network. The project partners consist of experts with practical skills and competencies related to digitization and recognition. Moreover, many partners have already implemented policies related to digital exchange of student data.

The DigiRec project's outcome will be presented in a White Paper in 2020, which will discuss the link between the portability of digital student data and recognition. The paper will also focus on how this link affects institutional policies as well as assessors in their daily work, in order to prepare for an era of ongoing digitization and automation.

By furthering international collaboration, CICIC will ensure that expertise developed in Europe can be shared as best practice with competent recognition bodies and assessment services in Canada. Such sharing will serve to inform the policies and procedures of organizations in Canada and thus ensure implementation in practice of the LRC in the provinces and territories of Canada. An update of the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF) related to authentication procedures and sharing of data could potentially be undertaken based on the DigiRec White Paper.

12.5 Conclusions

Our survey results show that close to half of the organizations that responded are involved in digitization initiatives, and there appear to be some interesting initiatives among those responses. Respondents expressed strong support for a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement. In addition, the vast majority of respondents recognize the transformative value of data hubs.

The ongoing global trend in digitization has spurred initiatives such as the ARUCC Groningen & Student Mobility Project, which seeks to advance pan-Canadian and international student mobility through trusted electronic data exchange. This project will realize many benefits for student mobility, including enhancing service to students and postsecondary educational institutions. The creation, through this project, of a pan-Canadian platform that facilitates student data exchange between provinces, territories, and trusted organizations around the world will accelerate efforts to create new connections between provincial application centres and data hubs with international student data exchange providers.

The use of trusted data exchange networks and the adoption of digital friendly policies and procedures have the potential to support the implementation in Canada of international legal instruments related to qualification recognition. Such support includes the following:

- significantly reducing the timelines associated with document authentication procedures and partial automation of assessment outcomes. Overall, these can have a significant impact in reducing the workload of employees responsible for recognition procedures in organizations

- supporting alternative qualification-assessment procedures.²¹³ This would prove especially useful for countries experiencing political instability or natural disaster, where authentication with the issuing body may no longer be possible, given the destruction of educational institutions and their physical records
- facilitating inbound and outbound migration flows in Canada. This includes attracting international students to Canadian educational institutions and a highly skilled workforce to Canadian labour markets
- demonstrating to the world the importance of fair recognition practices being applied by competent authorities in the provinces and territories of Canada
- demonstrating the excellence of Canada's education systems by ensuring that academic credentials issued by Canadian educational institutions are delivered through trusted student data exchange networks.²¹⁴ This will significantly reduce fraudulent activities²¹⁵ that can potentially undermine the integrity of provincial and territorial education systems. It also ensures fair recognition of these academic credentials worldwide, given issuing and delivery quality-assurance procedures using trusted data exchange networks

We note the following important considerations:

- Organizations have put in place policies and procedures relating to issuing and authentication procedures (see Chapters 3, 4, and 5). In many cases, these may be tied to a legal framework, such as an international treaty or provincial/territorial legislation, or to approval through a council, senate, or board.
- Most employees tasked with authentication procedures have likely relied on a paper-based approach. Changing ingrained practices may be one of the main obstacles faced by organizations exploring adopting progressive best practices. The provision of professional development activities, especially on using new technologies, may assist with change management.
- Tasks that have relied on employees may eventually be partially or fully automated and based on quality-assured procedures intended to improve consistency in resulting recognition decisions. The use of technology may eventually lead to increased process efficiencies that speed up recognition decisions but also provide significant operational savings for organizations.
- Many organizations are facing similar challenges in the area of digitization. The adoption of agreed-upon trusted digital data exchange networks will be crucial to instill trust between organizations using this method. Organizations can share best practices and use them internally.
- It will be important to develop data exchange standards that align with the postsecondary educational institutions and professional regulatory sectors in Canada, as well as connecting with trusted networks worldwide.
- Individuals wish to demonstrate their learning achievement and professional standing to competent bodies while benefiting from mobility. However, the data are owned by these individuals, and bodies wishing to access these data need to address privacy concerns. Individuals should have control over their data portfolio.
- Digitization is a means to achieve global citizenship. If an individual is provided an opportunity to be mobile and the data held by this individual can also be mobile, cultural connectivity is increased between countries and regions, and a new generation of global citizens can emerge.
- Individuals “hold” or own their data (e.g., transcripts). Organizations should always think of empowering individuals to take ownership of their data and use this information as they need (e.g., ensuring that students initiate the sending of their electronic data to the organization that needs the data).

13 Conclusions and Recommendations

13.1 Overall conclusions

This report shows that the implementation structure of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) in Canada is not typical among the countries that have ratified the LRC. This is partly owing to the provisions of the Canadian Constitution, through which provinces and territories have exclusive jurisdiction over education. This structure is highlighted by the decentralized roles and responsibilities regarding academic credential assessment and recognition procedures, with a large community of practitioners with variable levels of expertise, employed by a significant number of organizations, and dispersed across six different time zones in Canada.

Compared to findings published in the *Monitoring the Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention: Final Report* (2016) (referred to in this document as the 2016 Monitoring Report) for the other countries that ratified the LRC, Canada is compliant with the convention to a leading extent.

This compliance is in part due to the six academic credential assessment services that constitute the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) and that, based on the sample collected for this report, perform two-thirds of all assessments for internationally educated applicants in Canada. The significant efforts of the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC), ACESC members, orders of government in Canada, and other allied organizations to support the improvement of policies and practices of competent recognition authorities in Canada over the past 10 years are also evident in the findings of this report. In particular, professional regulatory bodies have greatly improved the fairness, transparency, timeliness, and consistency of their processes, benefiting internationally educated skilled professionals trying to access regulated occupations in the Canadian labour market. For postsecondary educational institutions, evidence of significant growth in admission of international students for further studies in Canada, and their subsequent transition to the labour market, is another identifiable marker of success. However, we note that, given the decentralized approach in Canada, additional efforts may be needed to support competent recognition bodies that have less capacity or expertise to fully implement the LRC principles in their policies and practices.

There appears to be general support for the proposed UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications within the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community, although it is clear that the community requires additional information on its impact. Without exception, all assessment services and competent recognition authorities already apply the principles of the LRC to internationally educated applicants from all regions of the world. This constitutes a significant finding and demonstrates that Canada is ready for the Global Convention.

We have identified some areas for improvements where CICIC may wish to focus its resources in the short and medium term to ensure continued compliance with the LRC but also to prepare for the implementation of the proposed Global Convention. Areas for improvement include the following:

- limited capacity and expertise in the assessment of academic credentials (e.g., detailed knowledge of the LRC principles and its subsidiary texts) among many small postsecondary educational institutions and professional regulators, especially outside the main metropolitan areas in Canada
- recognition of prior learning, given the increasing trend in non-formal learning and in complement to formal learning where academic credentials are obtained by learners
- adoption of learning outcomes in the design of academic programs leading to an academic credential and their subsequent assessment

- use of the Diploma Supplement by postsecondary educational institutions in Canada
- the transition from paper-based academic credentials to a digitized exchange of student data
- development of an overarching pan-Canadian qualifications framework, encompassing all credentials, beyond the current degree-level framework

13.2 Implementation of the LRC

We present here in brief the conclusions presented in earlier chapters regarding implementation of the LRC in Canada:

13.2.1 Access to assessment

Although this is not regulated by a specific legal act or regulation in Canada, most assessment services and competent recognition authorities in Canada consider themselves bound by the provisions of the LRC, and are compliant with them. Applicants have excellent access to information and to assessment and recognition, although access to assessment and recognition is more complex than in other countries, due in large part to geography, the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education, and the decentralized implementation structure for the LRC in Canada.

13.2.2 Criteria and procedures

Survey results indicate that most organizations appear to source at least part of their criteria and procedures from the LRC, but often indirectly. ACESC members (providing half the assessments in Canada) score very high on both sourcing and adherence, and their procedures are explicit and on-line. Fairness legislation in five provinces has had a positive influence on criteria and procedures across all provinces and territories of Canada. There appears to be some weakness among postsecondary educational institutions about having explicit criteria in their academic credential assessment procedure. However, almost all are likely to have Web sites that should outline their admission requirements for academic programs and detail the process to submit a complete application package. Most of the elements of the process are established and communicated in most cases.

13.2.3 Time limits

In general, time limits or processing times exist and are published for all steps of the assessment and recognition process. Higher-order policies are in place that apply to departments, units, or staff that make recognition decisions. Timelines are published in academic calendars of postsecondary educational institutions. Informal standards (e.g., subject to availability of resources) are commonly adhered to. Time limits can be difficult to maintain with limited staff or when there are unusually high volumes of applicants.

13.2.4 Right to appeal

The right to appeal is reflected in legislation, policies, and guidelines in Canada. The unanimous offer of a right to appeal by ACESC members and the professional bodies is perhaps a reflection of the effectiveness of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA) and the “benchmarks of success” of the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) as well as CICIC’s Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF). Information on how to appeal a decision seems to be generally available, but provision of information could be improved so that it is more easily accessible alongside information on the initial application process and is included with the notice of the outcome of the assessment or recognition procedure. Some organizations require an additional fee for an appeal, perhaps as part of cost-recovery funding models. Existing arrangements about appeal processes appear satisfactory. Our review of Web sites of postsecondary

educational institutions shows the existence of the right to appeal for admission, though not specifically for academic credential recognition on various grounds.

13.2.5 Substantial difference

Survey results indicate that most of the assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada recognize the significance of accepting an academic credential as comparable in the absence of substantial differences. However, more than a quarter of all responding organizations were unaware of the significance of substantial difference. We conclude that the concept of substantial difference is applied in the majority of academic credential assessments in Canada. Nevertheless, a major task facing CICIC is to bring the academic credential assessment community up to standard with respect to this concept and, in particular, with its definition in the *European Area of Recognition (EAR) Manual*. The publishing of CICIC's step-by-step guide to academic assessment, and particularly its steps 4.1 to 4.5 on comparing the academic credential, is a good effort in this area, which can be further reinforced through offering professional development activities to the community.

13.2.6 Qualifications held by refugees

Canada has no regulations at any level concerning the recognition of qualifications held by refugees and displaced persons. Compliance with the LRC is achieved and evident in voluntary development and collaboration instead of through regulation or pan-Canadian, provincial, or territorial enforcement. Many initiatives in these areas have had wide impact both within and beyond this country. CICIC has played an important role in facilitating the sharing and exchange of information and the development of best practices. These best practice and guidelines have also been disseminated in the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and are followed in other countries. The high level of trust and reciprocity within the ENIC-NARIC Networks on the issue of refugees and recognition is notable, and CICIC's international participation and collaboration supports the aim of facilitating the recognition of qualifications held by refugees. For example, CICIC continues to play an active role as an expert on the steering group of NOKUT's Toolkit for Recognition of Higher Education for Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation (REACT) project. As well, ACESC members recently agreed to accept European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) documentation, and selected assessors have undertaken training on EQPR methodology.

13.2.7 Information on education systems, including higher education institutions

CICIC's excellent Web site publishes comprehensive and up-to-date information on provincial and territorial education systems, including a list of educational institutions that have met the requirements established by their provincial or territorial government. CICIC's Web site and use of social media channels are often considered best practices within the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and they reinforce the relevance of CICIC's contribution to the Working Party on Electronic Communication for Recognition (ELCORE). CICIC's continued engagement with other stakeholders to ensure the accuracy of the information on other external platforms is also commendable.

13.2.8 National information centre and resources

Canada has established a national information centre, CICIC. In keeping with Canada's constitutional arrangements, CICIC is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), which provides leadership in education at the pan-Canadian and international levels and contributes to the exercise of the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education. CICIC operates at the pan-Canadian level, providing information regarding recognition and giving advice to both organizations and individuals on international academic credentials. CICIC's tasks and activities are set out in detail on its Web site, which is in Canada's two official languages, English and French. CICIC's comprehensive on-line services contain detailed information on procedures and criteria for recognition of international academic credentials, the LRC and its subsidiary texts, descriptions of provincial and territorial education systems, quality assurance mechanisms, recognition tools, and more. Web site

analytics report usage by more than half a million users (an average of about 1,500 users per day) over a one-year period. Similarly, customer service delivery statistics on public inquiries received by CICIC indicate that it is fulfilling its role as a national information centre by responding to a need for information.

CICIC engages successfully with a wide variety of stakeholders, both within and outside Canada, to their substantial satisfaction. Nevertheless, the decentralized approach to assessment and recognition procedures in Canada highlights the need for continued engagement with all groups. The need for additional support of the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors is clear. Survey responses indicate that professional development activities would be greatly welcomed and that organizations are in favour of CICIC using a variety of new information technologies to increase engagement and support them in the assessment of academic credentials. Given its mandate, CICIC is best placed to provide more support, but is unable to do so with its current resource level.

Unlike the practice in other countries, and due to the implementation structure set up by provincial and territorial governments in Canada, academic credential assessment is not part of CICIC's responsibility. Even so, CICIC appears to be substantially understaffed compared to the national information centres of other countries, considering that Canada is a major immigration country and international education hub, has a decentralized administration, and is exceptionally large and diverse, and that all of CICIC's activities are conducted in Canada's two official languages. Furthermore, in addition to providing referral and information services, CICIC also undertakes training, facilitates the development and dissemination of best practice, and actively participates in and collaborates with the ENIC-NARIC Networks. CICIC staff also perform important functions for CMEC, outside of its role as a national information centre, to support the exclusive jurisdiction of provinces and territories over education and collaboration between all provinces and territories to ensure compliance with international legal instruments.

CICIC is seeking to innovate and use new technologies. Survey results confirm that there is a demand for CICIC to provide new support services to its stakeholders, through webinars, on-line training, e-publications, access to international networks, and a database of decisions or precedents.

Over the long term, CICIC's current funding model appears insufficient to enable it to maintain its mandate and cope with anticipated change. Unlike the vast majority of centres mentioned in the 2016 Monitoring Report, CICIC is not financed out of the budget of the national government. Its core funding is derived from its position as a unit within CMEC. CICIC has relied heavily on securing external funding for special projects aimed at supporting the implementation of the LRC in Canada, especially with the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors responsible for applying LRC principles in their day-to-day work. However, reliance on external funding imposes a burden on staff resources for preparation and submission of project proposals, and carries substantial risk associated with the continued availability of such funding for CICIC's use.

13.2.9 Subsidiary texts

In many cases, federal, provincial, and territorial governments in Canada have undertaken activities to address the implementation of subsidiary texts to the LRC, mostly through CICIC's mandate as the national information centre. Some examples are the QAF and a pan-Canadian qualifications framework at the degree level. Some subsidiary texts have been addressed through policies or initiatives undertaken by assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada. However, for others, such as those regarding the Diploma Supplement, transnational education, and international access qualifications, it appears that significant work is still needed.

13.3 The UNESCO Global Convention

The proposed UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications is largely a continuation of the LRC, with the introduction of a few additional concepts in light of an evolving landscape since the introduction of the LRC in 1997. Canada is well placed to implement the proposed convention and, in most respects, is already doing so without the legal framework in place.

The following observations are relevant to the proposed adoption of the Global Convention:

- Organizations in Canada are not differentiating in any way between applicants from countries bound by the LRC and those from other countries outside the UNESCO Europe region. This means that organizations have policies and procedures that are aligned with the LRC but are applying them to all countries, regardless of UNESCO's regional classification.
- One-third of survey respondents were in favour of a possible ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention by Canada, with the rest neutral. This cautious response is understandable, given that most of them were unaware of and/or did not have time to consult the detailed provisions in the preliminary text published in July 2017 in order to understand how these could be implemented within Canada's decentralized approach.
- There is only mixed support for recognition of prior learning, with most universities and most regulators not considering such learning, but colleges doing so. This is surprising in light of a significant number of initiatives in the field, such as those led by the Canadian Association for Prior Learning Assessment (CAPLA).
- The use of national qualifications frameworks to support recognition was weak, but all six ACESC members use them.
- Currently, the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework is available only at the degree level. Other academic credentials, such as associate degrees, applied degrees, and certificates and diplomas related to both undergraduate and postgraduate study, have not been articulated in this framework, nor have professional and vocational qualifications. However, Ontario has developed a qualifications framework for its education system, while other provinces are exploring the matter.
- The handling of credentials from more than one source (e.g., joint degrees, students moving from one university or country to another) is already common.
- There are some indications that the survey question about implementation of learning outcomes (LOs) was not fully understood, which perhaps indicates a lack of awareness of the concept of LOs. Just 3 postsecondary educational institutions responded positively, compared with 12 negatively, about the implementation of LOs in Canada. The responses from professional regulatory bodies were relatively more positive.
- The possible ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention by Canada would not appear to be a contentious issue, but additional information on the possible implication of applying its provisions to organizations in Canada should be communicated to competent recognition bodies by CICIC.
- Canada seems well placed regarding the use of qualifications frameworks of other countries as a reference tool, but additional work remains to be done on the Canadian Degree Qualifications Framework and frameworks initiated by some provinces.
- Canada seems strong on dealing with multiple source credentials, but weaker on recognition of prior learning and on its own implementation of LOs.

The six areas for improvement cited in Section 13.1 will become more salient under the proposed convention, but this need not discourage Canada's possible signature in November 2019. The agreement to sign an international convention indicates only that provincial and territorial governments agree to eventually be bound by the terms of the convention under international law and have an obligation only to refrain from acts that would defeat the object/purpose of the treaty during that phase of the process. Provincial and territorial governments

would have time to focus on the areas of improvements during the subsequent implementation phase, which took 20 years in the context of the LRC. Once prepared, provincial and territorial governments could then signify their readiness to ratify the convention to Global Affairs Canada, charged with completing the last legal step for ratification and therefore legally binding Canada under international law.

The global nature of the proposed convention will be of great benefit to a country that is so open to welcoming students and newcomers from all regions of the world, and furthering collaboration with the international community.

13.4 CICIC's performance

Together with ACESC members, CICIC should rightly take credit for Canada's achievements with respect to supporting the implementation of the LRC. With only three full-time staff, CICIC has "punched far above its weight" within Canada and internationally, to a remarkable extent. It has fulfilled its role as Canada's national information centre (i.e., ENIC Canada) in an exemplary way, playing a leading role in the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and initiating pan-Canadian projects to support the implementation of the LRC. It also provides a public service by delivering information and referral services on its excellent and comprehensive Web site. It has acted as an effective channel of communication between federal, provincial, and territorial governments, international organizations, the ENIC-NARIC Networks, and the pan-Canadian academic credential assessment community. It has worked to upgrade the capacity of subject-matter experts in this community, using innovative technologies to enhance its impact and efficiency, even in the face of geographical and resource-related challenges.

In Chapter 9, we show that CICIC has been very successful at engaging with its key stakeholder groups. However the need remains for additional support for the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors: offering professional development activities to support both capacity building and more consistency in assessment outcomes is key to fulfilling international obligations.

13.5 Future needs

The field of academic credential assessment and recognition is changing rapidly around the world. Europe has generated a wide range of innovations such as the use of qualifications frameworks, learning outcomes, diploma supplements, and new forms of competency-based assessments. North America has played a leading role in the development of digital credentials, e-learning solutions, and on-line assessment platforms. Undoubtedly, major changes in the near future will significantly affect the policies and procedures of and the expertise required by practitioners in the pan-Canadian community in relation to the issuing of academic credentials as well as their assessment and recognition by organizations in and outside Canada.

CICIC has been quick to adopt new technology, taking steps to address these changes before they reach a critical point. This was demonstrated in 2010 by the implementation of a customer relations management system to improve efficiencies in its public customer services delivery. These changes were followed by the launch of a revamp of its main Web site in 2015, followed in 2017 with the addition of a Web portal for the pan-Canadian community of academic credential assessors. Since 2012, CICIC has been particularly good at using social media channels to communicate with the public and the academic credential assessment community within Canada and internationally. CICIC has maximized the use of the Internet for public service delivery and engagement with its stakeholders. Our findings demonstrate strong support for CICIC to continue this strategy by expanding existing initiatives and on-line tools as well as introducing new ones. Such initiatives/tools include webinars, on-line training, e-publications, access to international networks, a database of decisions or precedents, and further engagement using the on-line platform for the pan-Canadian community of practice.

Endnotes

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Comparison of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997¹ (the Lisbon Recognition Convention, LRC) and the UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications² (Draft Text from July 7, 2017)

LRC		Comment	Global Convention		
Lisbon Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region			UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications		
Preamble		→ They differ.	←	Preamble	
Section I. Definitions		→ There are 28 terms for the Global convention (17 are new and 2 are substantially changed). This is new.	←	Section I. Definition of Terms	
Section II. The competence of authorities		→	←	Section II. Aims of the Convention	
Article II.1		→	←	Article X.2, Article X.3, Article X.4, Article X.5	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
Article II.2		→ It shares similarities.	←	Article X.1	
Article II.3		→ It is related.	←	Article XIX.4	Section VI. Final Clauses
Section III. Basic principles related to the assessment of qualifications		→	←	Article III.1	Section III. Basic Principles for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications
Article III.1.1		→	←	Article III.2	
Article III.1.2		→	←	Article III.3	
Article III.2		→	←		
Article III.3		→ There is no comparability.	←		
Article III.4		→ It is related.	←	Article III.4	Section III. Basic Principles for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications
Article III.5		→ It shares similarities.	←	Article IX.1	Section IX. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
		→ It shares similarities.	←	Article IX.2	
		→ There is no comparability.	←	Article III.5, Article III.6, Article III.7	Section III. Basic Principles for the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications

¹ Council of Europe and UNESCO, *Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997* (1997). Retrieved from https://www.cicic.ca/1398/an_overview_of_the_lisbon_recognition_convention.canada

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LRC			Comment		Global Convention	
Section IV. Recognition of qualifications giving access to higher education	Article IV.1, Article IV.2	→		←	Article IV.1, Article IV.2	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
	Article IV.3	→		←	Article IV.4	
	Article IV.4	→		←	Article XI.1	
	Article IV.5	→		←	Article XI.2	
	Article IV.6	→		←	Article XI.3, Article XI.4	
	Article IV.7	→		←	Article XI.5	
	Article IV.8	→	There is no comparability.			
	Article IV.9	→		←	Article XI.6	
			This is new.	←	Article IV.3	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
Section V. Recognition of periods of study	Article V.1	→		←	Article V.1	
	Article V.2	→		←	Article V.2	
	Article V.3	→	There is no comparability.			
			This is new.	←	Article VI.3	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
Section VI. Recognition of higher education qualifications	Article VI.1, Article VI.2	→	It shares similarities.	←	Article V.1, Article V.2	
	Article VI.3	→		←	Article V.4	
	Article VI.4	→	There is no comparability.			
	Article VI.5	→		←	Article XI.7	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
			It shares similarities with Article IV.3 of the Global Convention.	←	Article V.3	
Section VII. Recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation		→		←	Article VII. Recognition of Partial Studies and Qualifications held by Refugees, Displaced Persons and Persons in a Refugee-Like Situation	
	Section VIII. Information on the assessment of higher education institutions and programmes	Article VIII.1	→		←	Article VIII.1
Article VIII.2		→		←	Article VIII.3, Article VIII.4	

LRC			Comment		Global Convention	
Section IX. Information on recognition matters	Article IX.1	→	The addition of the concept of learning outcomes.	←	Article VIII.1	
	Article IX.2	→	It shares similarities.	←	Article XIII	Section V. Implementation Mechanisms of the Convention
	Article IX.2.1	→		←	Article VIII.3	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
	Article IX.2.2	→		←	Article VIII.4	
	Article IX.2.3	→	There is no comparability.			
	Article IX.3		There is no comparability.			
			This is new.	←	Article VIII.2	Section IV. Obligations of the Parties to the Convention
Section X. Implementation mechanisms	Article X.1	→	It shares similarities.	←	Article XII	Section V. Implementation Mechanisms of the Convention
	Article X.2	→	It is related.	←	Article XV	
	Article X.3	→	It shares similarities, but less detail in the Global Convention.	←	Article XIV	
Section XI. Final clauses	Article XI.1.1, Article XI.1.2	→		←	Article XVI.1	Section VI. Final Clauses
	Article XI.1.3	→	It shares similarities.	←	Article XVI.2	
	Article XI.2				Article XVIII	
	Article XI.3	→	It is related.	←	Article XVII	
	Article XI.4, Article XI.5	→	There is no comparability.	←		
	Article XI.6	→		←	Article XXI	Section VI. Final Clauses
	Article XI.7, Article XI.8	→	There is no comparability.			
	Article XI.9	→	It is related.	←	Article XXII	Section VI. Final Clauses
		This is new.	←	Article XIX		
		This is new.	←	Article XX		
		This is new.	←	Article XXIII		
		This is new.	←	Article XXIV		
		This is new.	←	Article XXV		

**Survey - Consultations on UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications:
Assessment Services and Competent Recognition Bodies in the Provinces and Territories of Canada**

**Subject: Consultations in Canada for the proposed UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of
Higher Education Qualifications**

Hello,

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) is consulting assessment services and competent recognition bodies in Canada on a draft of the proposed Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications. The information collected is intended to inform provincial and territorial governments' decision-making processes with respect to the possibility of Canada's signing the Global Convention in 2019. To assist this process, there is a need to better understand practices and methodologies used by your organization when assessing academic credentials under the framework of the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region 1997 (the Lisbon Recognition Convention, LRC). Additional background information regarding the LRC and the Global Convention is provided at (<http://CICIC.ca/Consultations>).

To support these consultations, we are asking that you answer an on-line survey, available at (<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/JGY5RY9>). Because the on-line survey has to be completed all at one time, we have provided a Word version of the survey at (<http://CICIC.ca/Consultations>), to assist with information gathering. Once you have assembled the information, please transfer the answers to the on-line version, which should take between 15 to 30 minutes to complete. To complete the survey, we recommend that you use the newest version of one of the following supported Internet browsers: Google Chrome, Firefox, Safari, or Internet Explorer. We would appreciate your response by June 15, 2018. Note that we will accept more than one survey per organization.

Your feedback is very valuable, and greatly appreciated. If you have any questions, please contact Nathanaël Poli (N.Poli@cmec.ca).

Best regards,

Michael Ringuette

Coordinator, CICIC

Introduction

1. Please tell us about yourself.

name:	
title:	
organization name:	
Web site:	
province or territory:	
e-mail:	

2. Please check the category that best describes your organization.

<input type="checkbox"/>	professional regulatory body/association of a regulated occupation
<input type="checkbox"/>	professional association
<input type="checkbox"/>	pan-Canadian alliance of professional regulatory bodies
<input type="checkbox"/>	cégeps, polytechnic, institute or other educational institutions
<input type="checkbox"/>	college
<input type="checkbox"/>	university
<input type="checkbox"/>	member of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC)
<input type="checkbox"/>	other organization facilitating the assessment process on behalf of any of the above organizations
<input type="checkbox"/>	provincial or territorial government
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify)

--

3. Do you conduct international academic credential assessment activities in-house?

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

4. Please tell us about your international academic credential assessment activities.

number of full-time credential assessors in your organization:	
number of part-time credential assessors in your organization:	
total number of credential assessments conducted in 2017:	
total number of credential assessments conducted in 2016:	
total number of credential assessments conducted in 2015:	
number of credential assessments outsourced in 2017:	

PART 1 - LISBON RECOGNITION CONVENTION (LRC)

On November 4, 1997, Canada became a signatory to the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region, commonly known as the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). It is an international agreement between 55 signatory states.

The aim of the LRC is to facilitate inbound and outbound international mobility of students, academics, and professionals with academic credentials. While recognizing the autonomy and diversity of educational institutions and professional regulatory authorities, the LRC spells out principles for promoting the mobility of individuals through mutual recognition of academic credentials.

Additional information on the LRC is available on CICIC's [Web site](#).

The following section focuses on the implementation in practice of principles and provisions of the LRC by your organization. There are no correct or incorrect responses, as each organization has the flexibility to implement these principles and provisions in accordance with its given context.

It is also important to note the following definitions:

- In Canada, **competent authorities** are defined as provincial and territorial governments and, more specifically, their ministries/departments responsible for education.
- An **assessment service** is an organization that provides an expert, non-binding opinion on the assessment of an academic credential, as opposed to formal recognition. In Canada, these are the six members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC): the Comparative Education Service (CES); the International Credential Assessment Service of Canada (ICAS); the International Qualifications Assessment Service (IQAS); the International Credential Evaluation Service (ICES); the ministère de l'Immigration, de la Diversité et de l'Inclusion du Québec (MIDI); and World Education Services (WES) Canada.
- A **competent recognition authority or recognition body** is an organization officially charged with making binding decisions on the assessment and recognition of an academic credential. In Canada, they include postsecondary educational institutions, professional regulatory authorities and associations, and employers.

5. What are the sources of the assessment criteria and procedures you use to assess international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	CICIC's Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)
<input type="checkbox"/>	a pan-Canadian, regional, provincial, or territorial association (e.g., a professional regulatory body or postsecondary institution) (please specify below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	our organization has developed its own criteria and procedures
<input type="checkbox"/>	provincial or territorial legislation (e.g., acts, regulations) or policies (please specify below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify below)

6. What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	recognition status of the awarding institution with a confirmation by the competent authority used to substantiate its legal operation within the education system of the issuing country.
<input type="checkbox"/>	type of awarding institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating
<input type="checkbox"/>	learning outcomes highlighting what the credential holder is expected to know, understand and demonstrate
<input type="checkbox"/>	list of courses and content completed
<input type="checkbox"/>	quality assurance and/or accreditation of institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating
<input type="checkbox"/>	formal rights or function of the qualification in the home country (e.g., access to further studies, access to a regulated occupation)
<input type="checkbox"/>	level in the qualifications framework and/or type of credential
<input type="checkbox"/>	workload as a quantitative measure of learning activities (e.g., hours, years, credits)
<input type="checkbox"/>	nominal duration
<input type="checkbox"/>	course profile (e.g., learning process, relationship between theory and practice)
<input type="checkbox"/>	admission requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	language of study
<input type="checkbox"/>	program recognition by a professional regulatory body
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify)

7. Are the elements of your organization's credential assessment procedure explicit?

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

8. Which of the following elements are included in your organization's credential assessment procedure? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	description of the assessment process
<input type="checkbox"/>	time needed for the process
<input type="checkbox"/>	documents required
<input type="checkbox"/>	status of recognition or the issued assessment report
<input type="checkbox"/>	fee charged
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify)

9. Are the recognition criteria and procedures published on-line?

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes (please provide the Web site hyperlink below)
<input type="checkbox"/>	yes, but we do assessments on behalf of many organizations, each with their own criteria and Web pages
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

10. Do you have a policy that specifies the time limit (from the time a complete application is received) within which you need to provide academic credential recognition decisions to applicants?

<input type="checkbox"/>	no
<input type="checkbox"/>	yes (please specify number of working days)

11. What specifies the time limit you use?

- internal policy
- pan-Canadian organization
- legislation

12. Do you provide applicants with the right to appeal the recognition decision?

- yes, at no cost to the applicant
- yes, for a fee
- no

13. How and when do you inform applicants about the appeal process? (Check all that apply.)

- details are provided with the recognition decision
- details are posted on-line (please provide the Web site hyperlink below)
- please specify

14. Is information on the applicant's assessment procedure for the profession you regulate available on-line?

- no
- yes, (please provide the Web site hyperlink below)
- no applicable

15. To what extent, if any, do you adhere to CICIC’s Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)? (You may wish to open the QAF in a new Web page.)

- we are not aware of the QAF
- we are aware of the QAF but unsure of its detailed principles
- we fully adhere to all QAF principles
- we adhere to most QAF principles (please specify exceptions below)
- we adhere to some principles (please specify principles adhered to below)
- we use an alternative quality assurance system (e.g., ISO17024) (please specify below)

16. Do you have procedures or an alternative pathway for applicants who have limited or no documentary evidence of their qualifications (e.g., refugees)? If so, please indicate at which level this framework is found.

- yes, at pan-Canadian level
- yes, at provincial or territorial level
- yes, by the competent recognition authority (please specify below)
- no, we do not have any such procedures (go to question 18)

As applicable, please specify the competent recognition authority along with a Web site hyperlink that describes those procedures or alternative pathway. Also, please note any background paper or other guidance used.

17. If you answered question 16 in the affirmative, what are the possible outcomes of the procedures or alternative pathway?)

- a formal decision (positive or negative)
- an explanatory document about the qualification, without any form of recognition
- other (please specify)

18. Do you use a definition of “substantial difference”?

<input type="checkbox"/>	no, I am unaware of the significance of “substantial difference”
<input type="checkbox"/>	no, I use my own judgment
<input type="checkbox"/>	no, but our organization has regulations, rules, guidelines, or precedents
<input type="checkbox"/>	yes (if so, please write the definition used by your organization in the box below and provide its source)

19. What do you consider to be the substantial differences between an academic credential issued outside Canada and the comparable credential issued in Canada? (Check all that apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	different access requirements
<input type="checkbox"/>	nominal duration of study is at least one year shorter than for a comparable academic credential issued in Canada
<input type="checkbox"/>	institution or program is not accredited or quality assured
<input type="checkbox"/>	no final thesis, project, or practicum
<input type="checkbox"/>	less demanding final thesis, project, or practicum
<input type="checkbox"/>	differences in program content or courses
<input type="checkbox"/>	mode of study (e.g., on-line studies)
<input type="checkbox"/>	part-time studies
<input type="checkbox"/>	qualification is awarded by a private educational institution
<input type="checkbox"/>	the program is not provided in Canada
<input type="checkbox"/>	the institution is recognized in the home country but is not listed in international databases
<input type="checkbox"/>	teaching staff do not have the same qualifications as those required in Canada (e.g., fewer instructors who have a PhD-level degree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	language of study
<input type="checkbox"/>	other (please specify)

20. Outside of the factors listed in question 19, please list any other reason(s) why an international academic credential is not recognized by your organization or why it is not recommended that it be recognized.

--

21. Do you take the awarding body's external rankings into account as one of the criteria when assessing international academic credentials? (e.g., Pakistan Higher Education Commission University Ranking)

--

no

--

yes, based on our organization's policies

--

yes, based on provincial or territorial legislation (if you checked this box, please provide the title of the relevant act or regulation as well as a Web site hyperlink for the relevant reference in the box below)

--

PART 2 - THIRD AND FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTIONS

Paper-based qualifications issued by competent issuing bodies has been the standard means by which students demonstrate their learning achievement and professional standing. In turn, competent recognition bodies have relied on authentication procedures for paper-based qualifications as a cornerstone to identify and guard against fraudulent activities.

The Fourth Industrial Revolution appears to be changing the landscape in the field of assessment and recognition of academic credentials and qualifications. especially around training-delivery methods [e.g., distance learning, massive open on-line courses (MOOCs), small private on-line courses (SPOCs)], the types of qualifications issued to students (e.g., badges), authentication procedures (e.g., receiving documents through trusted data exchange networks, automation of assessment outcomes), the issuing of student data upon completion of the study period (e.g., digital student portfolio), as well as skilled professionals having met requirements of a profession (e.g., electronic professional qualification certificate or licence to practise).

The ENIC-NARIC Networks have identified digitization as a pressing issue requiring national information centers, assessment services, as well as competent recognition bodies to take action to ensure continued compliance with the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC).

The following questions relate to these new developments.

22. Is your organization currently involved in the implementation of initiatives related to the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolution (especially around the assessment and recognition of academic credentials)?

- yes, at pan-Canadian level
- yes, at the provincial or territorial level
- yes, by our own organization
- no, not that I am aware of

If you answered in the affirmative, please provide the title of the initiative, a brief description, as well as a Web site hyperlink for the relevant initiative in the box below.

23. Within your organization, are on-line systems in place for the following? (Check all that apply.)

- issuing or providing digital credentials to students or certified professionals
- on-line applications for admission, certification, or requesting an assessment
- uploading digital credentials (i.e., without paper originals or copies)
- recognizing digital credentials
- issuing recognition decisions electronically to applicants

24. If any of these systems apply, has your organization changed policies and/or procedures or updated rules to accommodate them?

- yes
- no

25. Does your organization share the use of a centralized data hub?

- yes
- no, but there is a plan to do so
- no, there is a policy/strategy to do so
- no

26. If yes, briefly explain how you use the hub.

--

27. On a scale from 1–3, how useful is the hub?

1 - not useful	2 - mostly helpful	3 - transformative

28. Would a pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial qualification framework (encompassing credentials other than those at the degree level) be of value to you?

	no, we already have a suitable framework
	yes, of substantial value
	yes, of some value
	no, of no value

29. Would a Pan-Canadian digital academic credential supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement) be of value to you?

	yes, of substantial value
	yes, of some value
	no, of no value

30. When you consider examples of current best practices in the area of academic credential assessment, do these practices originate in your sector, at the provincial/territorial level, at the pan-Canadian level, or outside of Canada? (Check all that apply.) Please specify these best practices in the box below, providing Web site hyperlinks, as appropriate.

	in your sector
	in your province or territory
	at the pan-Canadian level
	outside Canada

--

PART 3 - ROLE OF THE CANADIAN INFORMATION CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL CREDENTIALS (CICIC)

The establishment of a national information centre is part of obligations under international legal instruments related to qualification recognition. In accordance with the LRC, provincial and territorial governments have jointly determined that the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) serves as the national information centre for Canada.

CICIC was established in 1990 and is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC). It delivers information and referral services to the general public but also promotes the adoption of best practices on the assessment and recognition of academic credentials and qualifications to organizations in Canada.

Additional information on CICIC's mandate is available on CICIC's [Web site](#).

The following section focuses on the services provided by CICIC to assessment services and competent recognition bodies.

31. How much engagement with and support from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) do you have in a year? (Please add any specific comments to the box below.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | more than I need |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | as much as I need |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | not as much as I would like |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | none |

32. How can CICIC use new technologies to better engage and support you in the assessment of academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | webinars |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | on-line training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | classroom training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e-mail helpline or listserv |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | e-publications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | access to international networks |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | database of decisions or precedents |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | pan-Canadian community of practice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | other (please specify) |

33. In 2015, CICIC offered a course on credential assessment, called “Assessment 101,” to 60 assessors in both official languages. It was a distance-education course that concluded with a two-day in-person workshop. If this course were offered again, would you or someone from your organization register for it?

<input type="checkbox"/>	yes
<input type="checkbox"/>	maybe
<input type="checkbox"/>	no

34. If the answer to question 33 is “yes” or “maybe,” what fee would your organization be willing to pay to help cover the cost of participation in the course?

PART 4 - UNESCO GLOBAL CONVENTION ON THE RECOGNITION OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS

Since 2012, UNESCO, in collaboration with its Member States, has undertaken to draft a new Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications (Global Convention). At the 39th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2017, Member States agreed to have the final text ready for signature by Member States at the 40th Session of the UNESCO General Conference in November 2019.

The aims of the Global Convention are similar to those of the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC). However, instead of applying to only 55 countries, the Global Convention would apply to all ratifying countries.

Additional information on the Global Convention is available on CICIC’s [Web site](#).

The following section focuses on your views on this new convention – which includes some new provisions and principles that are not in the LRC – and its possible ramifications for your organization. There are no correct or incorrect responses, as each organization would have the flexibility to implement these principles and provisions in accordance with its given context.

35. Do you differentiate in any way between applicants from jurisdictions bound by the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) (i.e., from the 55 countries that have ratified the Convention) and those from other countries?

<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below)

36. Would you be in favour of Canada's ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention? (Note that, following ratification, Canadian organizations would need to apply the Convention to applicants from all ratifying countries and not only those from the 55 countries currently covered by the LRC.) Please provide a brief explanation for your position.

- | | |
|--------------------------|------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | strongly in favour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | in favour |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | neutral |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | not in favor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | strongly not in favour |

37. The Global Convention will include the recognition of prior learning (e.g, informal, non-formal, and non-traditional learning) possibly accumulated over a lengthy period. Do you currently consider prior learning in your recognition process?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below) |

38. In your recognition process, do you use the national qualifications framework published by the country that issued the academic credential to the applicant (if such a framework is available)?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below) |

39. Do you provide the learning outcomes for the qualifications you issue to students or licensed professionals, highlighting what the holder is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate?

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | yes, we provide learning outcomes for qualifications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | no, our policy is not to provide such outcomes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | no, but there is a plan to do so |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | no, but there is a policy/strategy to do so |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | no, we do not provide learning outcomes for qualifications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | we do not award any qualifications |

40. How do you assess credentials with credits from more than one institution?

41. Please provide any other comments you may have.

You have now completed the survey. Thank you!

The Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials wishes to thank you for taking the time to provide answers to this survey. Your feedback is very valuable, and is greatly appreciated.

Survey Data: Consultations on UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications: Assessment Services and Competent Recognition Bodies in the Provinces and Territories of Canada

Where Survey Questions are used in the Report

Survey Questions		Report Sections
1.	Please tell us about yourself.	
2.	Please check the category that best describes your organization.	
3.	Do you conduct international academic credential assessment activities in-house?	
4.	Please tell us about your international academic credential assessment activities.	2.5
5.	What are the sources of the assessment criteria and procedures you use to assess international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)	3.2
6.	What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)	3.3, 10.9
7.	Are the elements of your organization's credential assessment procedure explicit?	3.3
8.	Which of the following elements are included in your organization's credential assessment procedure? (Check all that apply)	3.4
9.	Are the recognition criteria and procedures published on-line?	3.3
10.	Do you have a policy that specifies the time limit (from the time a complete application is received) within which you need to provide academic credential recognition decisions to applicants?	4.3
11.	What specifies the time limit you use?	4.3
12.	Do you provide applicants with the right to appeal the recognition decision?	5.1
13.	How and when do you inform applicants about the appeal process? (Check all that apply.)	5.1
14.	Is information on the applicant's assessment procedure for the profession you regulate available on-line?	2.8
15.	To what extent, if any, do you adhere to CICIC's Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)? (You may wish to open the QAF in a new Web page.)	3.1
16.	Do you have procedures or an alternative pathway for applicants who have limited or no documentary evidence of their qualifications (e.g., refugees)? If so, please indicate at which level this framework is found.	7.4
17.	If you answered question 16 in the affirmative, what are the possible outcomes of the procedures or alternative pathway?	7.4
18.	Do you use a definition of "substantial difference"?	6.2
19.	What do you consider to be the substantial differences between an academic credential issued outside Canada and the comparable credential issued in Canada? (Check all that apply.)	6.2
20.	Outside of the factors listed in questions 19, please list any other reason(s) why an international academic credential is not recognized by your organization or why it is not recommended that it be recognized.	6.2
21.	Do you take the awarding body's external rankings into account as one of the criteria when assessing international academic credentials? (e.g., Pakistan Higher Education Commission University Ranking)	6.2
22.	Is your organization currently involved in the implementation of initiatives related to the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolution (especially around the assessment and recognition of academic credentials)?	12.1
23.	Within your organization, are on-line systems in place for the following? (Check all that apply.)	12.1
24.	If any of these systems apply, has your organization changed policies and/or procedures or updated rules to accommodate them?	12.1
25.	Does your organization share the use of a centralized data hub?	12.1

Survey Questions		Report Sections
26.	If yes, briefly explain how you use the hub.	12.1
27.	On a scale from 1–3, how useful is the hub?	12.1
28.	Would a pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial qualification framework (encompassing credentials other than those at the degree level) be of value to you?	11.2.2, 12.1
29.	Would a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement) be of value to you?	10.7, 13.1
30.	When you consider examples of current best practices in the area of academic credential assessment, do these practices originate in your sector, at the provincial/territorial level, at the pan-Canadian level, or outside of Canada? (Check all that apply.) Please specify these best practices in the box below, providing Web site hyperlinks, as appropriate.	
31.	How much engagement with and support from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) do you have in a year? (Please add any specific comments to the box below.)	9.7.2
32.	How can CICIC use new technologies to better engage and support you in the assessment of academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)	9.7.2
33.	In 2015, CICIC offered a course on credential assessment, called “Assessment 101,” to 60 assessors in both official languages. It was a distance-education course that concluded with a two-day in-person workshop. If this course were offered again, would you or someone from your organization register for it?	9.6.2
34.	If the answer to question 33 is “yes” or “maybe,” what fee would your organization be willing to pay to help cover the cost of participation in the course?	9.7.2
35.	Do you differentiate in any way between applicants from jurisdictions bound by the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) (i.e., from the 55 countries that have ratified the Convention) and those from other countries?	11.1
36.	Would you be in favour of Canada’s ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention? (Note that, following ratification, Canadian organizations would need to apply the Convention to applicants from all ratifying countries and not only those from the 55 countries currently covered by the LRC.) Please provide a brief explanation for your position.	11.1
37.	The Global Convention will include the recognition of prior learning (e.g. informal, non-formal, and non-traditional learning) possibly accumulated over a lengthy period. Do you currently consider prior learning in your recognition process?	11.2.1
38.	In your recognition process, do you use the national qualifications framework published by the country that issued the academic credential to the applicant (if such a framework is available)?	10.4, 11.2.2
39.	Do you provide the learning outcomes for the qualifications you issue to students or licensed professionals, highlighting what the holder is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate?	11.3
40.	How do you assess credentials with credits from more than one institution?	11.2.3
41.	Please provide any other comments you may have.	

Question 4. Please tell us about your international academic credential assessment activities.

- number of full-time credential assessors in your organization:
- number of part-time credential assessors in your organization:
- total number of credential assessments conducted in 2017:
- total number of credential assessments conducted in 2016:
- total number of credential assessments conducted in 2015:
- number of credential assessments outsourced in 2017:

	ACEESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Avg No. full-time staff	18.3				4.3	6.2	1.8	1.0	2.1
Avg No. part-time staff	0.5				1.1	2.0	1.0	3.5	25.3
Assessments 2015	174,269	144,453	29,326	348,048	95,629	48,824	11,245	4,066	14,015
Assessments 2016	172,374	158,756	29,238	360,368	99,030	59,726	12,433	4,415	12,390
Assessments 2017	260,415	196,987	28,931	486,333	125,837	71,150	12,486	4,785	11,660
Outsourced assessments									
Total	6	54	36	96	42	12	25	4	7

Question 5. What are the sources of the assessment criteria and procedures you use to assess international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

- CICIC’s Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)
- a pan-Canadian, regional, provincial, or territorial association (e.g., a professional regulatory body or postsecondary institution) (please specify below)
- our organization has developed its own criteria and procedures
- provincial or territorial legislation (e.g., acts, regulations) or policies (please specify below)
- other (please specify below)

	ACEESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
CICIC QAF	100%	36%	26%	36%	38%	30%	25%	25%	29%
	6	16	9	31	13	3	6	1	2
Association	0%	57%	23%	39%	56%	60%	21%	50%	14%
	0	25	8	33	19	6	5	2	1
Own criteria procedures	100%	86%	69%	80%	88%	80%	58%	100%	86%
	6	38	24	68	30	8	14	4	6
Legislation or policies	0%	20%	63%	36%	18%	30%	75%	50%	29%
	0	9	22	31	6	3	18	2	2
Other	33%	48%	57%	51%	41%	70%	63%	75%	29%
	2	21	20	43	14	7	15	3	2
Total	7%	52%	41%	100%	40%	12%	28%	5%	8%
	6	44	35	85	34	10	24	4	7

Question 6. What are the criteria that your organization uses or has used in assessment and recognition of international academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

- recognition status of the awarding institution with a confirmation by the competent authority used to substantiate its legal operation within the education system of the issuing country.
- type of awarding institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating
- learning outcomes highlighting what the credential holder is expected to know, understand and demonstrate
- list of courses and content completed
- quality assurance and/or accreditation of institution according to the competent authority in the country where it is operating
- formal rights or function of the qualification in the home country (e.g., access to further studies, access to a regulated occupation)
- level in the qualifications framework and/or type of credential
- workload as a quantitative measure of learning activities (e.g., hours, years, credits)
- nominal duration
- course profile (e.g., learning process, relationship between theory and practice)
- admission requirements
- language of study
- program recognition by a professional regulatory body
- other (please specify)elow)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Recognition status	100%	75%	66%	73%	71%	90%	67%	50%	71%
	6	33	23	62	24	9	16	2	5
Type of institution	100%	84%	69%	79%	88%	70%	67%	75%	71%
	6	37	24	67	30	7	16	3	5
Learning outcomes	50%	32%	54%	42%	35%	20%	54%	75%	43%
	3	14	19	36	12	2	13	3	3
Courses and content	83%	80%	91%	85%	79%	80%	100%	50%	86%
	5	35	32	72	27	8	24	2	6
Institution QA/ accreditation	100%	77%	46%	66%	79%	70%	46%	75%	29%
	6	34	16	56	27	7	11	3	2
Function of qualification	100%	59%	54%	60%	68%	30%	54%	50%	57%
	6	26	19	51	23	3	13	2	4

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Level/type of qualification	100%	84%	66%	78%	82%	90%	67%	75%	57%
	6	37	23	66	28	9	16	3	4
Workload	100%	57%	71%	66%	68%	20%	75%	25%	86%
	6	25	25	56	23	2	18	1	6
Nominal duration	100%	55%	54%	58%	68%	10%	54%	50%	57%
	6	24	19	49	23	1	13	2	4
Course profile	50%	39%	51%	45%	41%	30%	63%	25%	29%
	3	17	18	38	14	3	15	1	2
Admission requirements	100%	77%	34%	61%	88%	40%	25%	50%	57%
	6	34	12	52	30	4	6	2	4
Language of study	17%	68%	29%	48%	68%	70%	25%	50%	29%
	1	30	10	41	23	7	6	2	2
Professional recognition	67%	50%	57%	54%	56%	30%	58%	75%	43%
	4	22	20	46	19	3	14	3	3
Other	17%	7%	23%	14%	9%	0%	21%	25%	29%
	1	3	8	12	3	0	5	1	2
Total	7%	52%	41%	100%	40%	12%	28%	5%	8%
	6	44	35	85	34	10	24	4	7

Question 7. Are the elements of your organization's credential assessment procedure explicit?

- yes
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliance
Yes	100%	39%	88%	63%	44%	20%	87%	75%	100%
	6	17	30	53	15	2	20	3	7
No	0%	61%	12%	37%	56%	80%	13%	25%	0%
	0	27	4	31	19	8	3	1	0
Total	7%	52%	40%	100%	40%	12%	27%	5%	8%
	6	44	34	84	34	10	23	4	7

Question 8. Which of the following elements are included in your organization’s credential assessment procedure? (Check all that apply)

- description of the assessment process
- time needed for the process
- documents required
- status of recognition or the issued assessment report
- fee charged
- other (please specify)

	ACECS	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Description	100%	44%	74%	61%	45%	40%	75%	25%	100%
	6	19	26	51	15	4	18	1	7
Time needed	100%	35%	77%	57%	33%	40%	79%	25%	100%
	6	15	27	48	11	4	19	1	7
Documents required	100%	91%	97%	94%	91%	90%	100%	100%	86%
	6	39	34	79	30	9	24	4	6
Status or report	100%	23%	74%	50%	27%	10%	79%	50%	71%
	6	10	26	42	9	1	19	2	5
Fee	100%	37%	86%	62%	33%	50%	88%	75%	86%
	6	16	30	52	11	5	21	3	6
Other	50%	16%	20%	20%	18%	10%	25%	25%	0%
	3	7	7	17	6	1	6	1	0
Total	7%	51%	42%	100%	39%	12%	29%	5%	8%
	6	43	35	84	33	10	24	4	7

Question 9. Are the recognition criteria and procedures published on-line?

- yes (please provide the web site hyperlink below)
- yes, but we do assessments on behalf of many organizations, each with their own criteria and web pages
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	50%	31%	71%	49%	34%	20%	71%	25%	100%
	3	13	25	41	11	2	17	1	7
Yes, but for others	17%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0
No	33%	69%	29%	49%	66%	80%	29%	75%	0%
	2	29	10	41	21	8	7	3	0
Total	7%	51%	42%	100%	39%	12%	29%	5%	8%
	6	42	35	83	32	10	24	4	7

Question 10. Do you have a policy that specifies the time limit (from the time a complete application is received) within which you need to provide academic credential recognition decisions to applicants?

- no
- yes (please specify number of working days)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No	33%	76%	49%	61%	82%	56%	54%	25%	43%
	2	32	17	51	27	5	13	1	3
Yes	67%	24%	51%	39%	18%	44%	46%	75%	57%
	4	10	18	32	6	4	11	3	4
Total	7%	51%	42%	100%	40%	11%	29%	5%	8%
	6	42	35	83	33	9	24	4	7

Time limits less than four months or more than four months

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Less than 4 months	100%	90%	72%	81%	83%	100%	73%	100%	50%
	4	9	13	26	5	4	8	3	2
More than 4 months	0%	10%	28%	19%	17%	0%	27%	0%	50%
	0	1	5	6	1	0	3	0	2
Total	12%	31%	56%	100%	19%	12%	34%	9%	12%
	4	10	18	32	6	4	11	3	4

Question 11. What specifies the time limit you use?

- internal policy
- pan-Canadian organization
- legislation
- other (please specify)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Internal policy	60%	68%	65%	66%	64%	78%	61%	75%	71%
	3	25	22	50	18	7	14	3	5
Pan-Canadian organization	0%	5%	3%	4%	4%	11%	4%	0%	0%
	0	2	1	3	1	1	1	0	0
Legislation	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	4%	0%	0%
	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Other	40%	27%	29%	29%	32%	11%	30%	25%	29%
	2	10	10	22	9	1	7	1	2
Total	7%	49%	45%	100%	37%	12%	30%	5%	9%
	5	37	34	76	28	9	23	4	7

Question 12. Do you provide applicants with the right to appeal the recognition decision?

- yes, at no cost to the applicant
- yes, for a fee
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes, at no cost	33%	49%	66%	55%	45%	60%	67%	50%	71%
	2	21	23	46	15	6	16	2	5
Yes, for a fee	67%	9%	31%	23%	12%	0%	33%	25%	29%
	4	4	11	19	4	0	8	1	2
No	0%	42%	3%	23%	42%	40%	0%	25%	0%
	0	18	1	19	14	4	0	1	0
Total	7%	51%	42%	100%	39%	12%	29%	5%	8%
	6	43	35	84	33	10	24	4	7

Question 13. How and when do you inform applicants about the appeal process? (Check all that apply.)

- details are provided with the recognition decision
- details are posted on-line (please provide the web site hyperlink below)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Details with decision	67%	61%	88%	77%	63%	50%	100%	33%	71%
	4	11	28	43	10	1	22	1	5
Details are on-line	67%	44%	59%	55%	44%	50%	50%	100%	71%
	4	8	19	31	7	1	11	3	5
Total	11%	32%	57%	100%	29%	4%	39%	5%	13%
	6	18	32	56	16	2	22	3	7

Question 14. Is information on the applicant's assessment procedure for the profession you regulate available on-line?

- no
- not applicable
- yes (please provide the Web site hyperlink below)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No	0%	35%	26%	29%	30%	50%	29%	50%	0%
	0	15	9	24	10	5	7	2	0
Not applicable	100%	65%	12%	46%	70%	50%	8%	25%	17%
	6	28	4	38	23	5	2	1	1
Yes	0%	0%	62%	25%	0%	0%	63%	25%	83%
	0	0	21	21	0	0	15	1	5
Total	7%	52%	41%	100%	40%	12%	29%	5%	7%
	6	43	34	83	33	10	24	4	6

Question 15. To what extent, if any, do you adhere to CICIC’s Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF)? (You may wish to open the QAF in a new Web page.)

- we are not aware of the QAF
- we are aware of the QAF but unsure of its detailed principles
- we fully adhere to all QAF principles
- we adhere to most QAF principles (please specify exceptions below)
- we adhere to some principles (please specify principles adhered to below)
- we use an alternative quality assurance system (e.g., ISO17024) (please specify below)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Not aware of QAF	0%	21%	24%	21%	28%	0%	22%	25%	33%
	0	9	8	17	9	0	5	1	2
Unsure of QAF details	0%	50%	21%	35%	44%	70%	26%	25%	0%
	0	21	7	28	14	7	6	1	0
Fully adhere to all QAF	83%	5%	30%	21%	6%	0%	26%	50%	33%
	5	2	10	17	2	0	6	2	2
Adhere to most QAF	17%	14%	9%	12%	13%	20%	9%	0%	17%
	1	6	3	10	4	2	2	0	1
Adhere to some QAF	0%	5%	0%	2%	3%	10%	0%	0%	0%
	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
Use other QA system	0%	5%	15%	9%	6%	0%	17%	0%	17%
	0	2	5	7	2	0	4	0	1
Total	7%	52%	41%	100%	40%	12%	28%	5%	7%
	6	42	33	81	32	10	23	4	6

Question 16. Do you have procedures or an alternative pathway for applicants who have limited or no documentary evidence of their qualifications (e.g., refugees)? If so, please indicate at which level this framework is found. As applicable, please specify the competent recognition authority along with a Web site hyperlink that describes those procedures or alternative pathway. Also, please note any background paper or other guidance used.

- yes, at pan-Canadian level
- yes, at provincial or territorial level
- yes, by the competent recognition authority (please specify below)
- no, we do not have any such procedures (go to question 18)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes, pan-Canadian	60%	20%	21%	23%	22%	11%	14%	50%	29%
	3	8	7	18	7	1	3	2	2
Yes, P/T level	20%	2%	21%	11%	3%	0%	23%	0%	29%
	1	1	7	9	1	0	5	0	2
Yes, by authority	0%	29%	18%	23%	31%	22%	27%	0%	0%
	0	12	6	18	10	2	6	0	0
No	20%	49%	39%	43%	44%	67%	36%	50%	43%
	1	20	13	34	14	6	8	2	3
Total	6%	52%	42%	100%	41%	11%	28%	5%	9%
	5	41	33	79	32	9	22	4	7

Question 17. If you answered question 16 in the affirmative, what are the possible outcomes of the procedures or alternative pathway?

- a formal decision (positive or negative)
- an explanatory document about the qualification, without any form of recognition
- other (please specify)

	ACEESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Formal decision	40%	76%	79%	74%	81%	50%	76%	100%	80%
	2	19	19	40	17	2	13	2	4
Explanatory document	0%	8%	0%	4%	5%	25%	0%	0%	0%
	0	2	0	2	1	1	0	0	0
Other	60%	16%	21%	22%	14%	25%	24%	0%	20%
	3	4	5	12	3	1	4	0	1
Total	9%	46%	44%	100%	39%	7%	31%	4%	9%
	5	25	24	54	21	4	17	2	5

Question 18. Do you use a definition of “substantial difference”?

- no, I am unaware of the significance of “substantial difference”
- no, I use my own judgment
- no, but our organization has regulations, rules, guidelines, or precedents
- yes (if so, please write the definition used by your organization in the box below and provide its source)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No, unaware	0%	35%	24%	28%	38%	25%	9%	50%	57%
	0	14	8	22	12	2	2	2	4
No, use own judgment	17%	15%	3%	10%	13%	25%	0%	25%	0%
	1	6	1	8	4	2	0	1	0
No, have our framework	67%	48%	64%	56%	50%	38%	82%	25%	29%
	4	19	21	44	16	3	18	1	2
Yes	17%	3%	9%	6%	0%	13%	9%	0%	14%
	1	1	3	5	0	1	2	0	1
Total	8%	51%	42%	100%	41%	10%	28%	5%	9%
	6	40	33	79	32	8	22	4	7

Question 19. What do you consider to be the substantial differences between an academic credential issued outside Canada and the comparable credential issued in Canada? (Check all that apply.)

- different access requirements
- nominal duration of study is at least one year shorter than for a comparable academic credential issued in Canada
- institution or program is not accredited or quality assured
- no final thesis, project, or practicum
- less demanding final thesis, project, or practicum
- differences in program content or courses
- mode of study (e.g., on-line studies)
- part-time studies
- qualification is awarded by a private educational institution
- the program is not provided in Canada
- the institution is recognized in the home country but is not listed in international databases
- teaching staff do not have the same qualifications as those required in Canada (e.g., fewer instructors who have a PhD-level degree)

- language of study
- other (please specify)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Access req'mts	100%	51%	35%	48%	61%	13%	30%	50%	43%
	6	20	12	38	19	1	7	2	3
>1 year shorter	50%	62%	56%	58%	65%	50%	57%	75%	43%
	3	24	19	46	20	4	13	3	3
No QA	100%	72%	59%	68%	74%	63%	74%	25%	29%
	6	28	20	54	23	5	17	1	2
No thesis, proj., prac.	33%	23%	24%	24%	29%	0%	35%	0%	0%
	2	9	8	19	9	0	8	0	0
Thesis less demanding	17%	15%	24%	19%	19%	0%	35%	0%	0%
	1	6	8	15	6	0	8	0	0
Content differs	33%	74%	76%	72%	77%	63%	87%	75%	43%
	2	29	26	57	24	5	20	3	3
Mode of study	50%	28%	44%	37%	32%	13%	52%	0%	43%
	3	11	15	29	10	1	12	0	3
Part-time	33%	5%	6%	8%	6%	0%	4%	0%	14%
	2	2	2	6	2	0	1	0	1
Private institution	0%	44%	24%	32%	52%	13%	26%	25%	14%
	0	17	8	25	16	1	6	1	1
Prog. not offered in Canada	0%	28%	9%	18%	32%	13%	13%	0%	0%
	0	11	3	14	10	1	3	0	0
Not in int. DB	0%	41%	29%	33%	42%	38%	30%	25%	29%
	0	16	10	26	13	3	7	1	2
Staff qualifications	0%	31%	12%	20%	39%	0%	17%	0%	0%
	0	12	4	16	12	0	4	0	0
Language of study	0%	49%	41%	42%	55%	25%	43%	50%	29%
	0	19	14	33	17	2	10	2	2
Other	50%	26%	38%	33%	32%	0%	35%	0%	71%
	3	10	13	26	10	0	8	0	5
Total	8%	49%	43%	100%	39%	10%	29%	5%	9%
	6	39	34	79	31	8	23	4	7

Question 20. Outside of the factors listed in questions 19, please list any other reason(s) why an international academic credential is not recognized by your organization or why it is not recommended that it be recognized.

- free text responses.

Question 21. Do you take the awarding body's external rankings into account as one of the criteria when assessing international academic credentials? (e.g., Pakistan Higher Education Commission University Ranking)

- no
- yes, based on our organization's policies
- yes, based on provincial or territorial legislation (if you checked this box, please provide the title of the relevant act or regulation as well as a Web site hyperlink for the relevant reference in the box below)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No	83%	93%	76%	85%	90%	100%	74%	100%	71%
	5	37	26	68	28	9	17	4	5
Yes, our policies	17%	8%	15%	11%	10%	0%	13%	0%	29%
	1	3	5	9	3	0	3	0	2
Yes, P/T legislation	0%	0%	9%	4%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%
	0	0	3	3	0	0	3	0	0
Total	8%	50%	43%	100%	39%	11%	29%	5%	9%
	6	40	34	80	31	9	23	4	7

Question 22. Is your organization currently involved in the implementation of initiatives related to the Third and Fourth Industrial Revolution (especially around the assessment and recognition of academic credentials)? If you answered in the affirmative, please provide the title of the initiative, a brief description, as well as a Web site hyperlink for the relevant initiative in the box below.

- yes, at pan-Canadian level
- yes, at the provincial or territorial level
- yes, by our own organization
- no, not that I am aware of

	ACEESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes, pan-Canadian	17%	15%	22%	18%	18%	0%	24%	25%	14%
	1	6	7	14	6	0	5	1	1
Yes, P/T	0%	0%	3%	1%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%
	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0
Yes, our own organization	83%	24%	19%	27%	24%	25%	19%	25%	14%
	5	10	6	21	8	2	4	1	1
No	0%	61%	56%	54%	58%	75%	52%	50%	71%
	0	25	18	43	19	6	11	2	5
Total	8%	52%	41%	100%	42%	10%	27%	5%	9%
	6	41	32	79	33	8	21	4	7

Question 23. Within your organization, are on-line systems in place for the following? (Check all that apply.)

- issuing or providing digital credentials to students or certified professionals
- on-line applications for admission, certification, or requesting an assessment
- uploading digital credentials (i.e., without paper originals or copies)
- recognizing digital credentials
- issuing recognition decisions electronically to applicants

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Digital credentials	20%	23%	19%	21%	25%	13%	24%	0%	20%
	1	9	5	15	8	1	4	0	1
On-line applications	100%	93%	77%	87%	91%	100%	82%	100%	40%
	5	37	20	62	29	8	14	4	2
Upload digital credentials	40%	53%	35%	45%	50%	63%	41%	25%	20%
	2	21	9	32	16	5	7	1	1
Recogn. digital credentials	100%	33%	31%	37%	34%	25%	35%	0%	40%
	5	13	8	26	11	2	6	0	2
Electronic decisions	80%	65%	69%	68%	69%	50%	65%	75%	80%
	4	26	18	48	22	4	11	3	4
Total	7%	56%	37%	100%	45%	11%	24%	6%	7%
	5	40	26	71	32	8	17	4	5

Question 24. If any of these systems apply, has your organization changed policies and/or procedures or updated rules to accommodate them?

- yes
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	100%	61%	48%	58%	63%	50%	45%	75%	40%
	5	23	14	42	19	4	9	3	2
No	0%	39%	52%	42%	37%	50%	55%	25%	60%
	0	15	15	30	11	4	11	1	3
Total	7%	53%	40%	100%	42%	11%	28%	6%	7%
	5	38	29	72	30	8	20	4	5

Question 25. Does your organization share the use of a centralized data hub?

- yes
- no, but there is a plan to do so
- no, there is a policy/strategy to do so
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	33%	41%	29%	36%	45%	25%	32%	0%	40%
	2	17	9	28	15	2	7	0	2
No, but a plan	0%	5%	10%	6%	3%	13%	9%	25%	0%
	0	2	3	5	1	1	2	1	0
No, but a policy	17%	2%	0%	3%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0
No	50%	51%	61%	55%	48%	63%	59%	75%	60%
	3	21	19	43	16	5	13	3	3
Total	8%	53%	40%	100%	42%	10%	28%	5%	6%
	6	41	31	78	33	8	22	4	5

Question 26. If yes, briefly explain how you use the hub.

- free text responses.

Question 27. On a scale from 1–3, how useful is the hub?

- 1 - not useful
- 2 - mostly helpful
- 3 - transformative

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Not useful	0%	14%	17%	14%	17%	0%	11%	0%	50%
	0	3	2	5	3	0	1	0	1
Mostly helpful	67%	48%	33%	44%	50%	33%	33%	0%	50%
	2	10	4	16	9	1	3	0	1
Transf.	33%	38%	50%	42%	33%	67%	56%	100%	0%
	1	8	6	15	6	2	5	1	0
Total	8%	58%	33%	100%	50%	8%	25%	3%	6%
	3	21	12	36	18	3	9	1	2

Question 28. Would a pan-Canadian, regional, or provincial/territorial qualification framework (encompassing credentials other than those at the degree level) be of value to you?

- no, we already have a suitable framework
- yes, of substantial value
- yes, of some value
- no, of no value

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No, already have a QF	0%	8%	18%	11%	6%	11%	17%	25%	17%
	0	3	6	9	2	1	4	1	1
Yes, subst. value	83%	35%	24%	34%	32%	44%	26%	50%	0%
	5	14	8	27	10	4	6	2	0
Yes, some value	17%	58%	39%	47%	61%	44%	39%	0%	67%
	1	23	13	37	19	4	9	0	4
No value	0%	0%	18%	8%	0%	0%	17%	25%	17%
	0	0	6	6	0	0	4	1	1
Total	8%	51%	42%	100%	39%	11%	29%	5%	8%
	6	40	33	79	31	9	23	4	6

Question 29. Would a Pan-Canadian Digital Academic Credential Supplement (like the proposed digital version of the European Diploma Supplement) be of value to you?

- yes, of substantial value
- yes, of some value
- no, of no value

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes, subst. value	17%	33%	23%	28%	35%	25%	22%	50%	17%
	1	13	7	21	11	2	5	1	1
Yes, some value	83%	67%	42%	58%	65%	75%	48%	0%	33%
	5	26	13	44	20	6	11	0	2
No value	0%	0%	35%	14%	0%	0%	30%	50%	50%
	0	0	11	11	0	0	7	1	3
Total	8%	51%	41%	100%	41%	11%	30%	3%	8%
	6	39	31	76	31	8	23	2	6

Question 30. When you consider examples of current best practices in the area of academic credential assessment, do these practices originate in your sector, at the provincial/territorial level, at the pan-Canadian level, or outside of Canada? (Check all that apply.) Please specify these best practices in the box below, providing Web site hyperlinks, as appropriate.

- in your sector
- in your province or territory
- at the pan-Canadian level
- outside Canada

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
In your sector	50%	51%	52%	51%	48%	63%	55%	33%	50%
	3	20	14	37	15	5	11	1	2
In your P/T	50%	49%	56%	51%	45%	63%	60%	33%	50%
	3	19	15	37	14	5	12	1	2
Pan-Canadian	100%	49%	63%	58%	52%	38%	55%	67%	100%
	6	19	17	42	16	3	11	2	4
Outside Canada	83%	23%	19%	26%	26%	13%	15%	0%	50%
	5	9	5	19	8	1	3	0	2
Total	8%	54%	38%	100%	43%	11%	28%	4%	6%
	6	39	27	72	31	8	20	3	4

Question 31. How much engagement with and support from the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) do you have in a year?

- more than i need
- as much as i need
- not as much as i would like
- none

	ACEESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
More than I need	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
As much as I need	80%	31%	36%	36%	32%	25%	33%	33%	50%
	4	12	12	28	10	2	8	1	3
Not as much	20%	28%	15%	22%	29%	25%	17%	33%	0%
	1	11	5	17	9	2	4	1	0
None	0%	41%	48%	42%	39%	50%	50%	33%	50%
	0	16	16	32	12	4	12	1	3
Total	6%	51%	43%	100%	40%	10%	31%	4%	8%
	5	39	33	77	31	8	24	3	6

Question 32. How can CICIC use new technologies to better engage and support you in the assessment of academic credentials? (Check all that apply.)

- webinars
- on-line training
- classroom training
- e-Mail helpline or listserv
- e-Publications
- access to international networks
- database of decisions or precedents
- pan-Canadian community of practice
- other (please specify)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Webinars	100%	87%	68%	80%	83%	100%	73%	75%	40%
	6	34	21	61	25	9	16	3	2
On-line training	83%	79%	74%	78%	77%	89%	77%	75%	60%
	5	31	23	59	23	8	17	3	3
Classroom training	33%	33%	32%	33%	37%	22%	36%	0%	40%
	2	13	10	25	11	2	8	0	2
e-Helpline or listserv	50%	64%	45%	55%	63%	67%	50%	25%	40%
	3	25	14	42	19	6	11	1	2
e-Pub.	83%	77%	58%	70%	73%	89%	59%	75%	40%
	5	30	18	53	22	8	13	3	2
Internat. networks	67%	74%	68%	71%	80%	56%	68%	50%	80%
	4	29	21	54	24	5	15	2	4
DB of decisions	67%	87%	61%	75%	87%	89%	64%	75%	40%
	4	34	19	57	26	8	14	3	2
Community of practice	67%	67%	55%	62%	73%	44%	55%	75%	40%
	4	26	17	47	22	4	12	3	2
Other	0%	15%	3%	9%	17%	11%	5%	0%	0%
	0	6	1	7	5	1	1	0	0
Total	8%	51%	41%	100%	39%	12%	29%	5%	7%
	6	39	31	76	30	9	22	4	5

Question 33. In 2015, CICIC offered a course on credential assessment, called “Assessment 101,” to 60 assessors in both official languages. It was a distance-education course that concluded with a two-day in-person workshop. If this course were offered again, would you or someone from your organization register for it?

- yes
- maybe
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	67%	48%	42%	47%	42%	67%	43%	50%	33%
	4	19	14	37	13	6	10	2	2
Maybe	33%	48%	45%	46%	52%	33%	52%	50%	17%
	2	19	15	36	16	3	12	2	1
No	0%	5%	12%	8%	6%	0%	4%	0%	50%
	0	2	4	6	2	0	1	0	3
Total	8%	51%	42%	100%	39%	11%	29%	5%	8%
	6	40	33	79	31	9	23	4	6

Question 34. If the answer to question 33 is “yes” or “maybe,” what fee would your organization be willing to pay to help cover the cost of participation in the course?

Course fee in CAD	ACESC	Postsecondary institutions	Professional bodies	Total
1000-1099	2	3	1	6
900-999		1		1
800-899	1	1		2
700-799		1	2	3
600-699				
500-599		6	3	9
400-499			1	1
300-399	1	5	3	9
200-299		1	3	4
100-199		1	1	2
0-99		4	3	7
Unsure		11	6	17
Total	4	34	23	61
Median	\$900	\$500	\$300	\$400

Question 35. Do you differentiate in any way between applicants from jurisdictions bound by the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC) (i.e., from the 55 countries that have ratified the Convention) and those from other countries?

- no
- yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below)

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
No	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
	6	39	32	77	31	8	22	4	6
Yes	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8%	51%	42%	100%	40%	10%	29%	5%	8%
	6	39	32	77	31	8	22	4	6

Question 36. Would you be in favour of Canada’s ratification of the proposed UNESCO Global Convention? (Note that, following ratification, Canadian organizations would need to apply the Convention to applicants from all ratifying countries and not only those from the 55 countries currently covered by the LRC.) Please provide a brief explanation for your position.

- strongly in favour
- in favour
- neutral
- not in favour
- strongly not in favour

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Strongly in favour	50%	5%	9%	10%	6%	0%	9%	25%	0%
	3	2	3	8	2	0	2	1	0
In favour	50%	21%	22%	23%	23%	13%	23%	25%	17%
	3	8	7	18	7	1	5	1	1
Neutral	0%	74%	63%	64%	71%	88%	59%	50%	83%
	0	29	20	49	22	7	13	2	5
Not in favour	0%	0%	6%	3%	0%	0%	9%	0%	0%
	0	0	2	2	0	0	2	0	0
Strongly not in favour	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	8%	51%	42%	100%	40%	10%	29%	5%	8%
	6	39	32	77	31	8	22	4	6

Question 37. The Global Convention will include the recognition of prior learning (e.g, informal, non-formal, and non-traditional learning) possibly accumulated over a lengthy period. Do you currently consider prior learning in your recognition process?

- yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below)
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	83%	55%	55%	57%	61%	29%	55%	75%	40%
	5	21	17	43	19	2	12	3	2
No	17%	45%	45%	43%	39%	71%	45%	25%	60%
	1	17	14	32	12	5	10	1	3
Total	8%	51%	41%	100%	41%	9%	29%	5%	7%
	6	38	31	75	31	7	22	4	5

Question 38. In your recognition process, do you use the national qualifications framework published by the country that issued the academic credential to the applicant (if such a framework is available)?

- yes (please provide a brief explanation in the box below)
- no

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliance
Yes	0%	49%	58%	49%	48%	50%	62%	50%	50%
	0	19	18	37	15	4	13	2	3
No	100%	51%	42%	51%	52%	50%	38%	50%	50%
	6	20	13	39	16	4	8	2	3
Total	8%	51%	41%	100%	41%	11%	28%	5%	8%
	6	39	31	76	31	8	21	4	6

Question 39. Do you provide the learning outcomes for the qualifications you issue to students or licensed professionals, highlighting what the holder is expected to know, understand, and demonstrate?

- yes, we provide learning outcomes for qualifications
- no, our policy is not to provide such outcomes
- no, but there is a plan to do so
- no, but there is a policy/strategy to do so
- no, we do not provide learning outcomes for qualifications
- we do not award any qualifications

	ACESC	Postsecondary educational institutions	Professional bodies	Total	Universities	Other postsecondary institutions	Regulators	Other organizations facilitating regulation	Pan-Canadian regulatory alliances
Yes	0%	18%	33%	23%	11%	50%	33%	25%	40%
	0	6	10	16	3	3	7	1	2
No, against our policy	0%	12%	3%	7%	11%	17%	5%	0%	0%
	0	4	1	5	3	1	1	0	0
No, but planned	0%	3%	3%	3%	4%	0%	0%	0%	20%
	0	1	1	2	1	0	0	0	1
No, but in policy	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
No	50%	26%	23%	27%	32%	0%	29%	0%	20%
	3	9	7	19	9	0	6	0	1
Don't award qualifications	50%	41%	37%	40%	43%	33%	33%	75%	20%
	3	14	11	28	12	2	7	3	1
Total	9%	49%	43%	100%	40%	9%	30%	6%	7%
	6	34	30	70	28	6	21	4	5

Question 40. How do you assess credentials with credits from more than one institution?

- free text responses.

Question 41. Please provide any other comments you may have.

- free text responses.

Substantial Agreement

Academic Credential Assessment in Canada:

Implementation of the Lisbon Recognition Convention
and Preparation for the UNESCO Global Convention

