



An Immigration Attorney's Guide to Foreign Credentials Evaluation

Three Things Immigration Attorneys should know about Credentials Evaluation:

1. To ensure due diligence in the evaluation process, an expert should view each international credential and sign off on the final evaluation;
2. You should be comfortable with a private evaluation company's personnel and expertise before accepting evaluations from them.
3. No matter how someone's credentials are evaluated, the following issues need to be addressed:

Ten Objectives of Complete Credentials Evaluation

1. Verification of English Translations:

Verify the accuracy of English translations for academic documents issued in a language other than English. The official academic document issued by the institution must be the primary credential evaluated. The English translation must be verified for accuracy to ensure that dates, grades, names, and key words match those on the official academic document.

2. Accurate Biographical & Academic History:

Compare the applicant's academic history and biographical information with the academic documents presented. In addition to the applicant's name, other biographical information like age should correspond reasonably to the education represented in the documents.

3. Authenticity of Documents:

Determine the submitted academic documents' authenticity by identifying the type of documents submitted (i.e., original documents issued by institution, sealed documents sent directly from institution, attested copies, etc.) and if necessary, contacting issuing institutions to verify student records.

4. Foreign Academic Institution Status:

Determine the official status of the institution where the studies were completed by identifying how the institution is accredited and who recognizes its accreditation.

5. Entrance Criteria:

Determine the level of the academic or professional program represented by the document submitted (lower secondary, senior high school, post-secondary, etc.) by establishing the minimum academic criteria for admission to the institution and the program being evaluated.

6. Length of Study:

Determine the required length of full-time study for the academic program evaluated.

7. Purpose or Intent of Program of Study:

Determine whether the academic/professional program completed is terminal and suitable for employment only, or if it provides access to academic study at an advanced level.

8. Conversion of Instruction Hours to U.S. Semester Credits:

Calculate the U.S. semester or quarter credits for post-secondary studies completed and if necessary, determine the level of post-secondary courses in terms of lower, upper division and graduate division.

9. Conversion of Grades into U.S. equivalent Grades:

Convert the grades or final examination results/marks reported on the academic documents into U.S. equivalent grades, and calculate the overall grade point average.

10. Educational Equivalents:

Determine the closest possible U.S. academic equivalents based on the analysis above and on available research results in the field, including NAFSA's *Guide to Educational Systems Around the World*, foreign ministry of education publications, and institutional websites among others.