

A green icon of a target with an arrow hitting the bullseye.

## Career Pathways

### Having Your International Education Recognized

Your education is the foundation of your career journey in the United States. If you hold international credentials, exploring career pathways begins with an understanding of the value of the education you received in the country where you earned your degree. Although there may be challenges to using your international credentials in the U.S., you do not have to start over. Obtaining an international credential evaluation is often the first step to gaining access to employment opportunities.

#### What is a Credential Evaluation?

A credential evaluation compares your international education to a similar degree or diploma in the U.S. and provides a degree equivalency. The evaluation considers your country's educational system, the status of the institution you attended, the content of the program, and any entry and graduation requirements.

Unlike many other countries, the U.S. does not have a federal ministry of education that evaluates international degrees. As a result, most colleges, universities, and state licensing boards—and many employers—rely on credential evaluation services to judge the quality and level academic work completed abroad.

Credential evaluations can be useful in several areas:

#### Evaluation for educational purposes

- **Educational:** Universities and colleges can use the information to make admissions decisions and to award transfer credit or advanced standing in a program.
- **Employment:** Employers may use your credential evaluation to determine whether you meet their academic requirements.
- **Licensing:** State licensing boards use your credential evaluation to determine whether you meet specific academic requirements to start the licensing process.

## Selecting a Credential Evaluation Service

Most colleges and universities accept credential evaluations from one or more of the services endorsed by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES) or the Association of International Credential Evaluators (AICE).



A credential evaluation can be difficult or impossible to obtain if adverse circumstances in your country of education prevent you from securing your academic documentation. To address this need, the **WES Gateway Program** issues evaluation reports designed to help displaced individuals continue their education, become licensed in their field, or take the next step in their career in the United States.

A state's licensing and certification agency, commonly referred to as a State Licensing Board, may require that applicants receive a credential evaluation from a preferred evaluation agency.

In some instances, alternative evaluations may be accepted for purposes such as applying to degree programs or for certification exams. Check with your educational institution or credential-issuing organization to find out whether a World Education Services (WES) evaluation is recognized and accepted. If it is, you can apply for a **WES credential evaluation**.



**You can also preview the U.S. equivalency of your international education by using the free equivalency tool from WES.**

Note: This preview does not replace a formal credential evaluation that may be needed for official purposes, but you may choose to use this free service to estimate whether your degree will be found substantially equivalent to a U.S. degree before investing in an official evaluation. It may also be helpful to have an idea of the U.S. equivalency of your international credentials if you are exploring a new career pathway.

Before requesting a credential evaluation from any agency, contact the institution that needs the evaluation to understand its requirements. The institution is responsible for the final recognition decision.

## Field-Specific Evaluation Resources

### Accounting:

- The preferred credential evaluation service in the accounting field is NASBA **International Evaluation Services (NIES)** offered by the National Association of State Boards of Accountancy (NASBA) specifically for internationally educated accountants. NIES is the *only* approved evaluation service for 21 U.S. jurisdictions, although NIES does *not* perform evaluations for New York licensure.
- The NASBA/AICPA International Qualifications Appraisal Board (IQAB) has mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with Australia, Canada, Hong Kong, Ireland, Mexico, New Zealand, Scotland, and South Africa. If you are a licensed professional accountant in one of these jurisdictions, you may be eligible to take the International Qualification Examination (IQEX) as an alternative path to CPA licensure.

### Allied Health:

- The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) has an MRA with Australia, Canada, Ireland, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom regarding the certification of speech-language pathologists.

### Architecture (unless you qualify for the NCARB Foreign Architect Path):

- Architectural licensing boards may require that evaluations be performed through Education Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA), depending on the applicant's education and foreign licensure status.
- The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) has MRAs with Australia, Canada, Mexico, and New Zealand.

### Dentistry:

- All U.S. dental schools that offer advanced standing dental programs for internationally educated dental graduates require a credential evaluation from either WES or Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE). Some programs accept both evaluations, and some only accept one of them, so always check with the program you wish to attend to determine which evaluation you should obtain.

## Engineering:

- For licensing purposes, the engineering industry prefers that credential evaluations be performed by NCEES Credentials Evaluations, offered by the National Council of Examiners for Engineering and Surveying (NCEES). This is the only evaluation service accepted by all state licensing boards.
- If you graduated from an engineering program in one of the 19 jurisdictions covered by the Washington Accord (an MRA between engineering organizations in multiple countries to recognize each other's accredited academic qualifications), then your engineering degree may already be considered substantially equivalent to a degree from a U.S. program. However, although the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) in the U.S. is part of the Washington Accord, it is individual state licensing boards, not ABET, that have the final authority on whether or not a particular degree meets their specific requirements for licensure.
  - In addition to the U.S., the jurisdictions that have signed on to the Washington Accord are Canada, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, India, Ireland, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Russia, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Turkey, U.K., Pakistan, and Peru.
- There are also MRAs that cover two- and four-year engineering technology degrees: the Dublin Accord and the Sydney Accord.

## Law:

- Most U.S. states and territories require that internationally educated lawyers obtain either a Master of Laws (LLM) or an advanced standing Juris Doctor (JD) degree from an American Bar Association (ABA)-approved program in order to take the bar exam for licensure. Most ABA-approved law schools require that internationally educated applicants to LLM programs use the LLM Credential Assembly Service (LLM CAS), including the International Transcript Authentication and Evaluation Service (ITAES); and applicants to advanced standing JD programs use the Credential Assembly Service Authentication and Evaluation (CAS A&E).
- While the ITAES evaluation is required for most LLM and other graduate law programs, and the CAS A&E is required for most advanced standing JD programs, those evaluation services are *only* available to applicants to those law programs. Alternative evaluations may be accepted for other purposes, such as determining eligibility for certification exams.

### Medicine:

- IMGs must obtain ECFMG certification as a prerequisite for U.S. licensure, and ECFMG performs its own credential evaluation as part of the certification process. In cases where an IMG requires a credential evaluation outside of the ECFMG certification process, ECFMG also offers it independently through its Electronic Portfolio of International Credentials (EPIC) service.

### Nursing:

- Some states may prefer credential evaluations performed by the Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS). CGFNS is also the only organization approved by the United States Department of Homeland Security to validate nursing credentials for occupational visa applications, through the VisaScreen program.
- Puerto Rico is the only U.S. territory that is *not* a member of the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). Therefore, any nursing education completed in Puerto Rico must be evaluated for licensure purposes the same as it would have to be for any education completed in a country other than the U.S.

### Pharmacy:

- If you are a graduate of a pharmacy school in a country other than the U.S. and are applying for the required **Foreign Pharmacy Graduate Examination Committee (FPGEC) certification** before applying for a U.S. pharmacy license, then you *must* obtain your credential evaluation through **Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE)**.