

# Standards of International Credential Assessment

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#### Agenda

- WES experience Ι.
- Global landscape on international credential recognition Π.
- **Documentation standards**
- Principles of credential evaluation methodology IV.
- Diploma mills and academic corruption V.
- VI. Credential evaluation and refugees





World Education Services (WES) is a non-profit social enterprise dedicated to helping international students, immigrants, and refugees achieve their educational and career goals in the United States and Canada. For more than 45 years, WES has set the standard of excellence in the field of international academic credential evaluation. Through WES Global Talent Bridge, the organization joins with institutional partners, community-based organizations, and policymakers to help immigrants and refugees who hold international credentials fully utilize their talents and education to achieve their academic and professional goals. Its philanthropic arm, the WES Mariam Assefa Fund, supports catalytic leaders and organizations working to build inclusive economies and to ensure that immigrants and refugees can achieve their aspirations and thrive.



We help people learn, work, and thrive in new places. We help society recognize the value of people's education and experience.



**Everyone** is able to put their education, experience, and skills to work **anywhere** in the world.



# **48 Years of Experience**

#### 1998



# **International Context of Qualifications Recognition**

Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (Lisbon Recognition Convention)

- Stipulates that recognition of international credentials should be granted unless a substantial difference can be demonstrated
- Commits nations to develop procedures for refugees' credential assessment, even when documents are incomplete

#### UNESCO Global Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education

- Commits nations to fairly evaluating credentials from other countries
- Principle: Individuals have the right to have their qualifications assessed fairly



# **Recognition of International Credentials**

- Credential evaluation is a vehicle for gaining the recognition for education gained abroad and is one of the most important aspects of global mobility
- Recognition of their academic credentials is a springboard to pursuing suitable employment, further education, and professional licensing.
- We also know that recognition of qualifications is critical to rebuilding the lives and identity of immigrants, refugees, and other newcomers in a new country.
- Both the individual and community benefit when employers make use of newcomers' education, training, and experience.



#### **Who Assesses**

- A government agencies (ENIC/NARIC)
- Professional registration or certification boards
- Professional accreditation organizations, for example, ABET
- Credential evaluation providers WES
- Individual universities or institutions

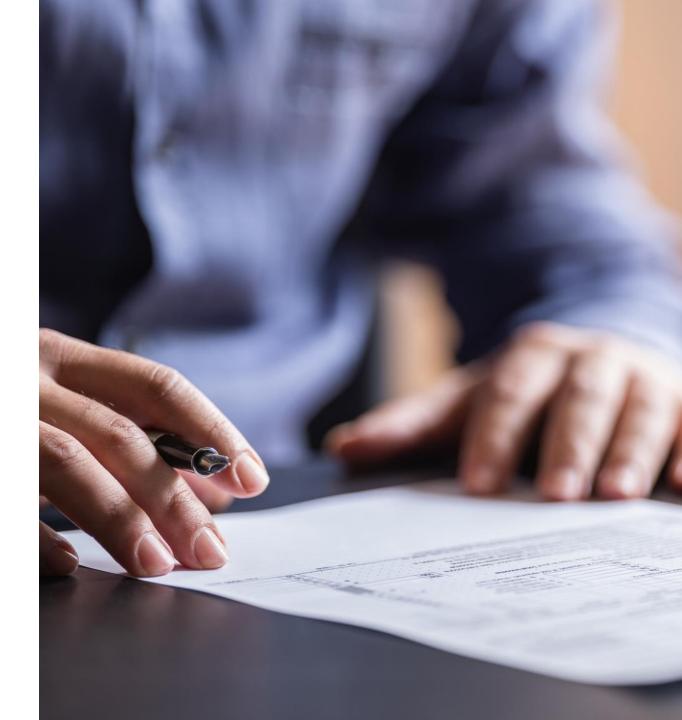
## **WES Methodology - Documentation Standards**



### What Constitutes a Valid Academic Document?

The legitimacy of the academic institution.

It should be recognized by the Ministry of Education or a comparable body.

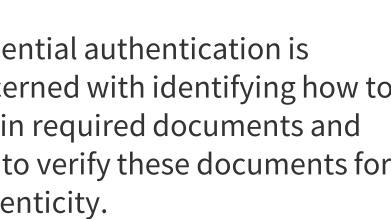


# Verify an Institution's Legitimacy

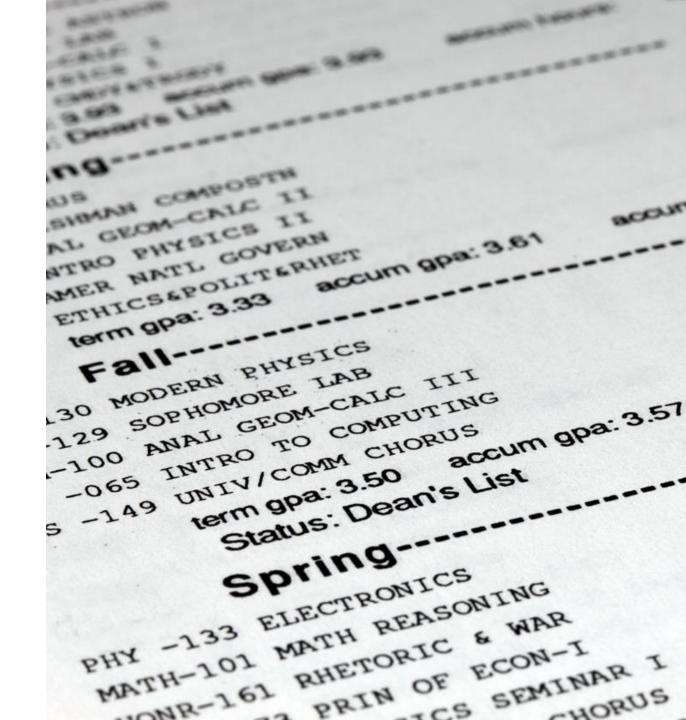
- Check the Ministry of Education website to see if the institution is listed in its directory as a recognized degree-granting institution.
- Consult a reputable resource such as the International Handbook of Universities.
- The International Association of Universities (IAU) offers an <u>online directory</u> of recognized universities.

### Credential **Authentication Process**

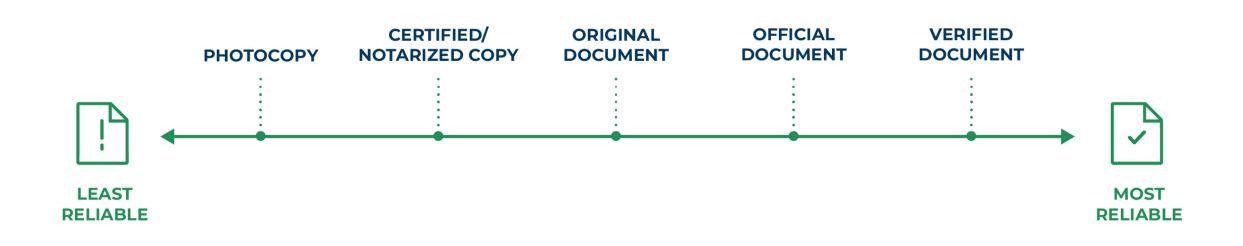
Credential authentication is concerned with identifying how to obtain required documents and how to verify these documents for authenticity.







# **Credential Authentication Process - Five Levels of Document Authenticity**



# **Official Document Transmission Procedure**

- Academic institutions require "official transcripts" as part of the admissions process.
- "Official" refers to the mode of transmission.



 "Original" documents sent from students would not be considered "official" documents since they were not transmitted directly from the institution.



#### WES Method: Taxonomy of Document Authentication

- Transmitted directly from institution to institution
- Issued directly in English
  - Egypt, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Scandinavian countries

#### • Ministry-verified

o China, Pakistan

#### • Diploma supplement

- Bologna Process signatory countries
- Documents cannot be verified
  - o Afghanistan, Somalia



#### Setting Document Requirements

- Communicate clearly what documents are needed.
- Use terms that applicants are familiar with. See the example below.

United Kingdom	India
Transcript is referred to as a Syllabus	Transcript is referred to as a State of Marks or Marksheet

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# **Principles of Credential Evaluation** Methodology



# **WES Methodology**

WES adheres to the principles of the Lisbon Recognition Convention on the recognition of higher education qualifications.

# WES credential evaluation methodology is based on:

- Level
- Scope
- Intent of the program completed

#### WES' equivalencies consider:

- Admission requirements
- Program length
- Curriculum depth and breadth
- Degree holder's options for further study

# Criteria for recognizing academic institutions:

- Proof of establishment
- In-country recognition or accreditation
- Operating and accrediting in same country
- Programs, degrees, and institution equally known and recognized
- Online and distance education programs

## Key Assessment Criteria: Course-by-Course

**In dealing with international credits**, it is important to understand the general principles of credit acceptance for domestic credits.

- Apply maximum term credit load for the highest number of credits allowed, and never exceed this for any given semester's credit.
- Apply the average credit load (usually the total number of credits required for a bachelor's degree divided by eight—the number of semesters in which a full-time student "normally" obtains a degree).
- For a 120-credit bachelor's degree program, the average semester load would be 15 credits; for a 128-credit program, it would be 16 credits.

**Defining a semester hour** is integral to a proper evaluation. A semester hour is defined as one 50minute period of classroom instruction for a duration of 15 weeks, totaling 750 minutes a term per credit.

Semester Credit Load:

For credit calculation purposes, WES uses the following guidelines:

Bachelor's degree: 120 - 128 credits

One academic year: 30 - 32 credits

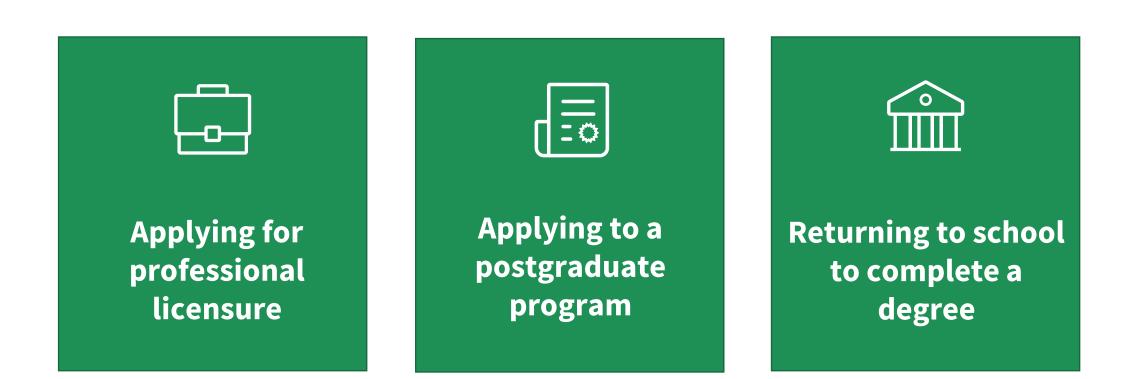
One semester: 15 - 16 credits

#### **Course-by-Course Assessment**

WES	This evaluation type is usually required for applications to post-graduate programs, students interested in transferring schools before completing their degree, and licensing board applications.					
CREDENTIAL EVALUATION AND AUTHENTICATION REPORT	COURSE-BY-COURSE ANALYSIS					
Name: SAMPLE, Sample Date: September 29, 2017 Date of Birth: Month 01, 1993 Page: 1 of 2	Name: SAMPLE, Sample Date: September 29, 2017 Date of Birth: Month 01, 1993 Page: 2 of 2					
	INSTITUTIONS - DATES - SUBJECTS Credits Grades					
CANADIAN EQUIVALENCY SUMMARY	Computer-Aided Machine Drawing Lab 1.0 B+					
Bachelor's degree (four years)	Manufacturing Technology Lab     1.0     B+       2013-2014     3.0     C       Environmental Science and Engineering     3.0     B       Dynamics of Machinery     3.0     B       Device of Machinery     3.0     B       Device of Machinery     3.0     B					
CREDENTIAL ANALYSIS	Engineering Metrology and Measurements 3.0 B Applied Hydraulics and Presenatics 3.0 B Thermal Engineering Lab 1.0 B					
Name On Credential: Sample Sample     Credential Authentication: Official transmipts were sent directly by the institution	Dynamics Lab 1.0 B+ Netrology and Measurements Lab 1.0 B CAD and CAM Lab 1.0 A Communication Skills Lab 1.0 B					
Countries Assessmentations India Color analogical with and uniting by the manufactor Codential: Bachairo of Engineering Year: 2015	Unconventional Machine Process 3.0 B Gas Dynamics and Jet Propulsion This report lists 3.0 B+ Dweign of Transmission Systems This report lists 3.0 C					
Awarded by: Anna University Status: Recognized institution	Finite Element Analysis each course you have 30 B Automobile Engineering 0					
Admission requirements: High school graduation Length of program: Four years Major Specialization: Mechanical Engineering	Thermal Engineering Lib. taken, a semester 1.0 A Design and Fabrication Project Principles of Management credit, and grade 3.0 C					
Canadian Equivalency: Bachelor's degree (four years)	2014-2015 Total Quality Management equivalent. 3.0 B Process Planning and Cost Estima 3.0 B					
	Robotics 3.0 B+ Nechatronics 3.0 B Computer-Integrated Manufacturing 3.0 C					
This report identifies and describes each credential, including: name of credential, requirements for entry and program length.	Power Flant Engineering 3.0 E+ Computer-Aided Simulation and Analysis Lab 1.0 A Mechatronica. Lab 1.0 E+					
and the equivalent degree in terms of Canadian education.	Maintenance Engineering Advanced Internal Combustion Engines Competension Project Work Engineering Economics and Cost Analysis Engineering Economics and Cost Analysis					
	(grade point					
	Total Undergraduate Semester Credits: 158.0 GPA: 2.81 •					
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING THEIR REPORT. An explanation of the terms used in this report can be found on the reverse side. This report is solid only when printed on watermarked paper and useled with an official WER stamp on each page.	RETRUCTIONS FOR VERICE THES REPORT. An explanation of the isensuand in this report can be found on the sevene table. This report is valid only when printed on matematical paper and outside with an official PES starsy on each page. WELL comparison for the exemute of these and is a default effective matter and an exemption for the exemption is the demant of these and Charde Exacts RED.					



## **Utility of a Course-by-Course Evaluation**





# **Diploma Mills and Academic Corruption**



#### International Academic Credentials – Risks and Challenges

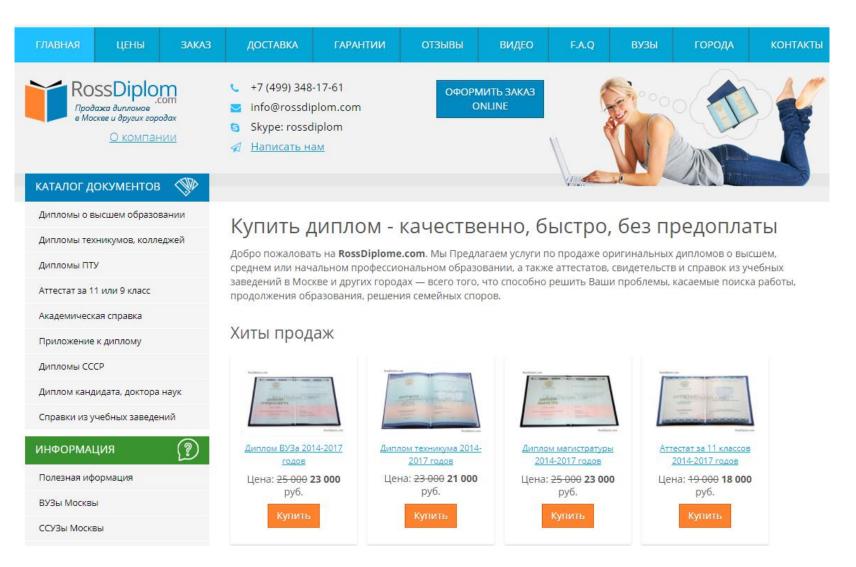
- Fraudulent academic documents
- Diploma mills
- Academic corruption



#### **Fraudulent Academic Documents**



#### **Fraudulent Academic Documents**



# Can I buy a diploma with an entry in the registry?

ГЛАВНАЯ	ЦЕНЫ	3AKA3	ДОСТАВКА	ГАРАНТИИ	ОТЗЫВЫ	ВИДЕО	F.A.Q	ВУЗЫ	ГОРОДА	КОНТАКТЬ
Прода е Мос	с. С. С. С. С. С. С. С. С. Компан		<ul> <li>+7 (499) 348</li> <li>info@rossdij</li> <li>Skype: rossd</li> <li><u>Написать на</u></li> </ul>	plom.com liplom		МИТЬ ЗАКАЗ NLINE				
КАТАЛОГ ДО	ОКУМЕНТОВ		Главная / Купить ди	плом с занесением в р	реестр ВУЗа. Возмож	но ли это?				
Дипломы о высшем образовании Дипломы техникумов, колледжей Дипломы ПТУ Аттестат за 11 или 9 класс Академическая справка Приложение к диплому			Можно ли купить диплом с занесением в реест, то есть с проводкой? Один из популярных вопросов – можно ли купить диплом диплом с занесением в реестр какого-нибудь Московского ВУЗа или ВУЗов других регионов, чтобы такой документ мог пройти любую, даже самую тщательную проверку подлинности. Абсолютно точно, некоторые компании могут предложить Вам такую услугу, но стоит помнить, что при покупке проведенного через реестр диплома существует много нюансов. Как заносят дипломы в реестр?							
	гр идата, доктора чебных заведен	-	В современном вузе учебный процесс построен так, что студент посещает множество семинаров, лекций. По их итогам он сдаёт разные экзамены и зачеты, проходит практики и защищает выпускную квалификационную работу. Вся жизнь студента в пределах вуза фиксируется в разных документах. Без этого не получить диплом о завершении высшего образования.							
ИНФОРМАL Полезная ифо	ормация	<b>?</b>	Диплом, конечно, можно получить, и не будучи студентом. Для этого нужно, чтобы Ваше имя попало во все архивные документы ВУЗа за определенный период. В результате, получится такой студент-призрак. На него будут заполнены экзаменационные и зачетные ведомости, у него будет своя зачетная книжка с оценками и индивидуальным номером. Он даже по бумагам защитит свой диплом, который будет храниться в вузе. По всем нужным документам студент будет существовать, но ни разу не посетит занятия.							

ВУЗы Москвы

# **Diploma Mills and Accreditation Mills**

- A diploma mill is a fraudulent entity that issues credentials not backed by appropriate academic work.
- An accreditation mill is an illegitimate entity that provides "accreditation" to fraudulent education institutions diploma mills.
- Why do degree mills exist?

# **Diploma Mills**

- What is the extent of the problem?
- Why does the existence of degree mills matter?
- Axact Pakistan



# **Diploma Mills and Diploma Mill Credentials**

Preventive Strategies - Warning Signs

- The institution's website provides little or no information about the location.
- Credential attainment requirements involve little if any coursework or few assignments and little if any student attendance, either on-site or online.
- There are claims about "accreditation" by one or more fictitious "national," "international," "worldwide," or "global" accrediting agencies.



# **Fighting Academic Corruption**



## **Overview – Credential Evaluation for** Refugees



# Why Assess the Credentials of Refugees?

- International conventions require that displaced people without documentation be given a fair assessment of their qualifications. (Lisbon Convention, 1997, sec.7)
- Assessing educational credentials for refugees empowers individuals to utilize their education.
- Recognition of their academic credentials is the springboard for pursuing suitable employment, further education, and licensing in Canada.
- Again, we know that both the individual and society benefit when newcomers' education, training, and experience in recognized

# Challenges Assessing the Credentials of Refugees

- Refugees often flee suddenly, and as a result lack the ability to take much with them.
- Institutions in conflict zones may be destroyed, damaged, closed, or not functioning normally.
- Even when open, some institutions may be unresponsive or refuse to issue documents for various reasons.
- Some individuals may have good reasons for not directly requesting documents from institutions.
- Refugees may arrive with full documentation, partial documentation, or nothing at all.

## Barriers to Recognition of Credentials Held by Refugees: Institutional Challenges

- Institutional policies and practices in the U.S. and Canada rely on official documents for recognition of academic and professional credentials.
- With an "all-or-nothing approach" there is little flexibility.
- Working with incomplete documentation requires deep knowledge of the country's education system, course syllabi, current institutional status, and more.
- Assessment may require extra resources to lead to conclusive results. Further steps may be necessary to corroborate the findings.

# **How to Evaluate Non-verifiable Credentials**



### What Our Research Tells Us

Alternative methods are in use or being developed. Institutions and countries are innovating, sharing best practices, reconsidering document policies, and assessing risks and opportunities.

#### **Summary of best practices:**

- Create an academic profile from available documents and claimed history.
- Assess based on the portfolio of evidence, fill in gaps based on knowledge, and interview.
- Conduct further assessments to corroborate findings.



### **Best Practice: Assessing Competencies**

Institutions have additional methods and means of assessing whether the applicant has the necessary skills to succeed in education or employment.

### **Types of competency assessments:**

- Examinations
- Interviews
- Sample work, thesis review
- Special projects
- Skills assessments/audits



## **Best Practice: Determining Recognition**

Institutions have options when deciding whether to recognize refugee credentials.

- **Full recognition**: Recognize the applicant's full claimed background.
- **Alternative recognition**: Recognize the applicant as eligible for a different credential than the one on the application.
- **Conditional recognition**: Recognize the individual's claimed background on the condition that the applicant meets certain future requirements.
- **Partial recognition**: Recognize part of the individual's claimed background.



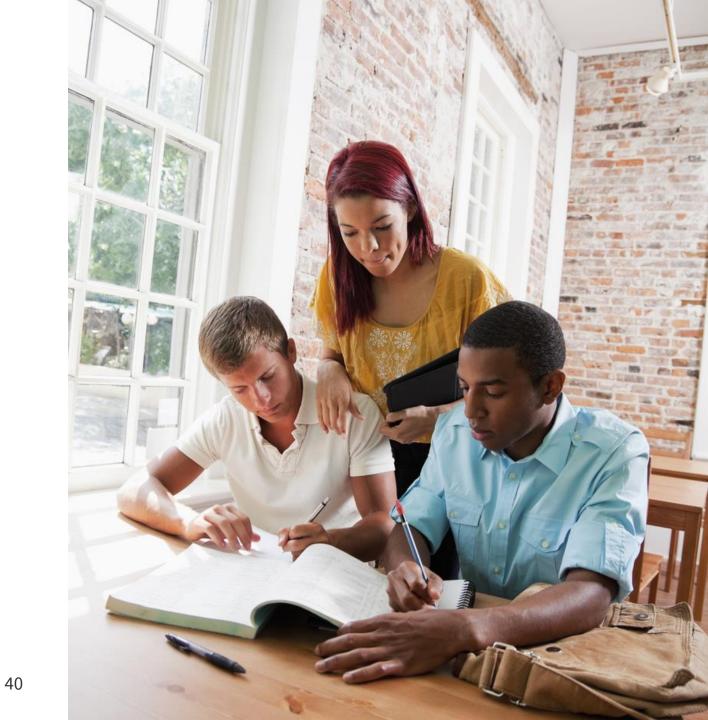
### What Can Organizations and Institutions Do?

- Consider more flexible policies that address the barriers facing refugees.
- Find ways to assess competencies or prior learning that complement or ratify the academic credential assessment.
- Award temporary, provisional, or partial recognition to allow a refugee to demonstrate competency or prior knowledge.
- Offer alternatives that provide a path forward.



## What Is WES Doing?

- WES programs
- Research and share best practices
- Assess refugee credentials



### **WES' Approach**

- Due to the inability of many refugees to obtain verifiable documents, the assessment of a refugee's qualifications calls for a different approach than is normally used
- An "alternative assessment" is based on available evidence of educational attainment and professional achievements when official documents cannot be obtained.
- Information and documentation provided by the candidate along with the knowledge of global educational systems to reconstruct the candidate's academic history.
- WES piloted a new alternative assessment methodology in collaborating with partners in select locations in Canada which scaled to become the WES Gateway Program



### **6 Steps for Credential Assessment for Refugees**

- 1. Determine when an alternative method is needed
- 2. Gather information and available academic documents
- 3. Develop a portfolio of supporting evidence
- 4. Assess the documents and the supporting evidence to produce an assessment report
- 5. Assess the applicant's competencies after receiving the assessment report if needed (by the institution)
- 6. Make a determination regarding recognition and placement (by the institution)



### **WES Alternative Credential Assessment**

### In the report:

- WES **advises on the equivalency** of academic credentials, indicating what evidence and methods were used to complete our assessment.
- WES **provides access to the information and documents submitted** with the application to facilitate corroboration and further assessment.
- WES **provides contextual information** on the educational system to assist in interpreting results.



## **WES Alternative Credential Assessment**

### **Possible Documentary Evidence:**

- Academic:
  - Academic transcripts
  - Diplomas and certificates of completion
  - Student ID cards
  - Published class, examination, or graduation lists
- Non-academic:
  - Professional licenses or certificates
  - Statements of professional standing issued by a regulatory body
  - Professional association membership
  - Official appointment letter
- Claimed history, even when uncorroborated

### **WES Alternative Credential Assessment**

### What the final product includes:

- Equivalencies where possible
- What has been corroborated and what evidence was used
- Information on the system of education
- Information about the school (recognition status)
- Information about the program/degree (admission requirements, LOP, requirements to graduate, the structure of the program)
- Courses (and credits if available)
- Information regarding what this degree gives access to in the home country
- How end users can use this product, including further assessment where there are gaps (for example, through examinations, interviews, etc.)

### **Assessing Credentials of Refugees**

#### I. Complete Academic Documents:

Documents Presented	Reconstruction (outcome)	What we need to reconstruct
Full academic transcript (photocopy)	No reconstruction (List full program based on the applicant's transcript)	No reconstruction needed

#### **II. Partial Academic Documents:**

Documents Presented	Reconstruction (outcome)	What we need to reconstruct
2 <sup>nd</sup> year academic transcript (photocopy)	<ul><li>High school graduation</li><li>First year of study</li></ul>	Detailed curriculum/study plan for the program
Student I.D. indicating 3 <sup>rd</sup> year enrollment	<ul><li>High school graduation</li><li>First and second year of study</li></ul>	Detailed curriculum/study plan for the program
Refugee has only a copy of the degree certificate	Reconstruct the full program	Detailed curriculum/study plan for the program

#### **III. Professional Documents/Records:**

Documents Presented	Reconstruction (outcome)	What we need to reconstruct
Professional License to Practice/Professional Membership	Reconstruct the full program	<ul> <li>Knowledge of the education requirements for each license</li> <li>Detailed curriculum/study plan for the program</li> </ul>
Teaching Appointment	Reconstruct the full program	<ul> <li>Knowledge of the education requirements for each teaching position</li> <li>Detailed curriculum study plan for the program</li> </ul>

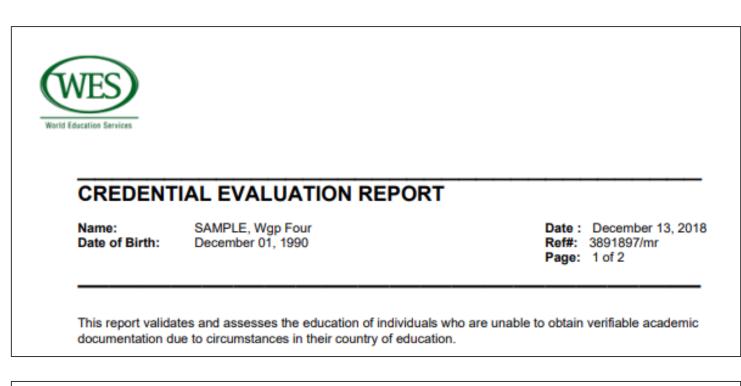


### **WES Gateway Program File Sample**

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ducation 1	lervices				
CR	EDENT	IAL EVALU	ATION REPORT		
Nam Date	e: of Birth:	SAMPLE, Wgp F December 01, 19		Ref#:	December 13, 2018 3891897/mr 1 of 2
_					
			e education of individuals wi in their country of education		verifiable academic
degr prog	ee certificate ram of study.	or professional licer WES corroborates	quires at least one officially- ise, which serves as credibl the applicant's claims using t are specified in remarks be	e evidence that they ha the best information ar	ave attended or comp nd resources available
	evaluation re entials.	port is offered as a i	non-binding advisory opinior	n to support the recogn	ition of international
CAN	ADIAN EQU	IVALENCY SUMMA	ARY		
		Bachelor's degree	e (four years)		
		This is an equiva	lency comment		
CRE	DENTIAL AN	ALYSIS			
1.	Name on (	Credential:	Wop Four Sample		
	Country: Credential		Afghanistan Bachelor of Arts		
	Year:		2014		
	Awarded E	By:	Al-Beroni University		
	Status: Admissior	Requirements:	Recognized Institution Doreyeh Aali		
			(Higher Secondary Educ	ation)	
	Length of Major/Spe	Program: cialization:	Four years Chemistry		
	Canadian	Equivalency:	Bachelor's degree (four )	/ears)	
	Remarks:		Documents reviewed for applicant's possession. F applicant's possession.		



### **WES Gateway Program File Sample**



	Remarks:	Documents reviewed for this credential: Photocopy of transcript in the applicant's possession. Photocopy of the degree/diploma certificate in the applicant's possession.
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### Hands-On Exercise – Assessing Refugee Qualifications



### **Scenarios**

 The applicant has an Ukrainian bachelor's degree that can't be verified, making the applicant eligible for the Alternative Credential Assessment. However, this individual also has a postgraduate diploma and a master's degree from UK, which can be authenticated and verified.
 How would you assess this individual's credentials? And would you admit this individual at the end of the

How would you assess this individual's credentials? And would you admit this individual at the end of the process?

- The applicant claims to have a bachelor's degree but cannot obtain documents from the institution that issued it. The applicant left in a hurry so all they have with them is their degree certificate and a student ID. They were not able to get their transcripts. How would you assess this individual's credentials? Would you be able to reconstruct the applicant's academic history based on the degree certificate? And would you admit this individual at the end of the process?
- 3. The applicant claims to have completed a bachelor's degree and a master's degree after completing secondary school. They have photocopies of documents that show they completed a bachelor's and a master's degree. They are not able to contact the institution.

How would you assess this individual's credentials? And would you admit this individual at the end of the process?



- 4. The applicant claims to have completed three years of undergraduate study after secondary school; however, they were not able to bring with them all the documents for their three years of study. How would you assess this individual's credentials? Which years of study would you reconstruct, if any? And would you admit this individual at the end of the process, or would you consider any transfer credits?
- 5. The applicant stated that they have a bachelor's degree from Syria, and they have been working as a teacher in their home country. They were able to bring a letter of appointment by the Ministry of Education, a certificate of experience as a teacher, and their transcripts.

How would you assess this individual's credentials? Would you consider it a complete degree? And would you admit this individual at the end of the process?



### **Questions for the Audience**

What are the most important concepts you learned from the training? What other steps can you take in order to learn more about this topic? Will you share what you learned today with members of your organization and explore possibilities?

What is the one question you still have about this topic? What challenges do you foresee that would affect this process?



### **WES Results**



### **WES Refugee Pilot Project Results**

- WES was able to prepare an assessment for every applicant who submitted at least one piece of documentary evidence.
- Seventy (70) percent of applicants had transcripts; the remainder required "reconstruction" of the program of studies based on our knowledge of the curriculum.
- Processing times were the longest for reconstruction.
- Outreach (often in native language) was important where documents were incomplete or missing.
- Degree analysis may suffice for most purposes.



## **WES Refugee Project Findings – End Users**

- Methodology used in assessment gave end users confidence in results.
- WES' expertise in authenticating and evaluating credentials enhanced the validity of the report.
- Institutions expressed gratitude that WES was helping to mitigate the risk their organizations were taking.
- Over half said they were formulating policies of their own.
- Many institutions are in the process of determining the validity of the assessment for their licensing or admissions requirements.
- Some are already accepting the assessment as "equivalent to the WES standard assessment" for admission to colleges, universities, and regulated professions.

## WES Refugee Project Findings – End Users

- Regulatory bodies, universities, and colleges report that they are using the WES Assessment to:
  - Reference prior educational background
  - $\circ$   $\,$  Benchmark for admission consideration  $\,$
  - $\circ$   $\;$  Fulfill course prerequisite or advanced standing
  - Meet degree and official transcript requirement
  - o Bypass certain exams
- WES will continue to survey applicants, referral partners, and end users to track outcomes.
- WES will report findings and plans when the analysis is complete.



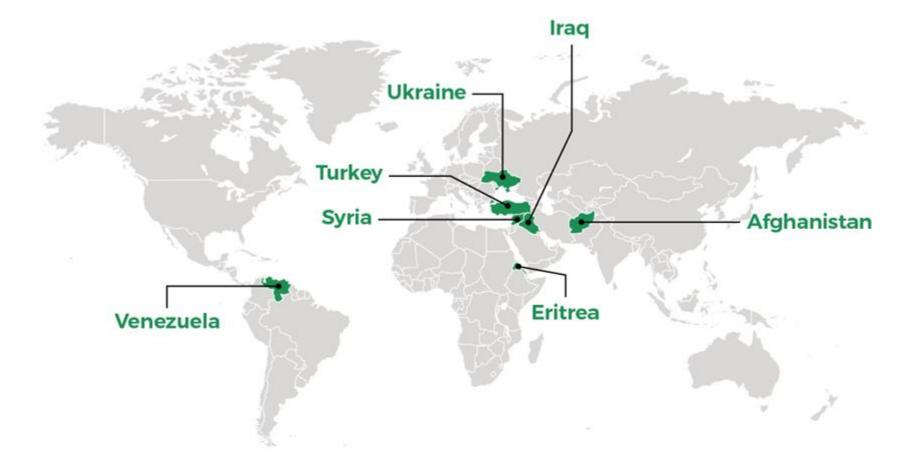
### WES Gateway Program Goal



To help refugees and other displaced individuals who lack verifiable academic credentials move forward with their lives.



### **Eligible Countries of Education**



Limitations apply



- Can we innovate and be more flexible to address these barriers to recognition?
- Can alternative assessment processes be put in place to serve the needs of refugees?
- How can different actors collaborate on behalf of refugees?
- What additional research and resources are needed?

# Thank you!

Need more information?

Visit: wes.org