



# Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada

## Guiding Principles for Alternative Assessment and Authentication Policies in Times of Crisis

### Policy Appendix to the Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials (QAF) for Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) Members

TORONTO, June 18, 2020 — Members of the Alliance of Credential Evaluation Services of Canada (ACESC) adhere to the [Pan-Canadian Quality Assurance Framework for the Assessment of International Academic Credentials](#) (QAF). This is a pan-Canadian guide to the quality considerations involved in policies and procedures for international academic credential assessment, and which fully embraces Canada’s international obligations under the Lisbon Recognition Convention (LRC).

In early 2020, and most markedly in March, as authorities in Canada and abroad enacted measures in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, ACESC members either restricted or entirely suspended their in-person operations.

As a result, ACESC members have limited to no access to their physical resources and reference materials, as well as to hard copies of academic documents used for assessment, thereby impeding their ability to receive and review paper correspondence from other institutions or to issue hard copies of assessment reports to applicants. Furthermore, the limiting of operations of higher education institutions worldwide has impacted their ability to issue official documents to ACESC members or to respond to verification requests. [The Recognition of foreign qualifications in times of COVID-19: A reflection document for the ENIC-NARIC Networks and their stakeholders](#) was published in May 2020 to recommend areas of collective actions within the ENIC-NARIC Networks to address recognition challenges.

In collaboration with the ENIC-NARIC Networks, ACESC members seek to mitigate the negative impact of the constraints on the effective upholding of the policy document in the context of regional, pan-Canadian, or international emergencies, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, in upholding ACESC members’ shared commitment to quality, consistency, and accountability of credential assessments, and at the same time ensuring that requirements and procedures do not result in lack of “adequate access” and “undue complications” (cf. QAF Fundamental Principles 3 and 5) for holders of international academic qualifications, the following measures are adopted in principle to extend the grounds for eligibility of alternative procedures as outlined in QAF articles 44 to 47.

#### A. Official electronic academic records

Official academic records issued electronically and transmitted via established, secure inter-institutional means may be accepted and encouraged.

#### B. Alternative verification resources

In cases when official academic records are inaccessible for ACESC members as a result of their or the issuing institution’s operational limitations, assessing organizations may employ alternative authentication resources, including, but not limited to, public registries of graduates/credentials or other digital depositories of student records provided by recognized institutional or governmental authorities.

### C. Inter-institutional verification procedures

In cases when neither physical academic records nor electronic alternatives are available, the assessing organization may contact an authorized official of the issuing institution directly to verify student records.

### D. Provisional assessment reports

As a last resort, until circumstances allow for appropriate documentation to be obtained, provisional assessment reports may be issued based on copies of academic records. Such reports provide the comparability outcome for international credentials in the Canadian context without the typical assertion of authenticity of documents submitted for assessment. In alignment with QAF articles 21 and 25, the organization must note the provisional nature of such reports, include the type of documents used, and keep a record of the grounds for accepting the applicants' submissions, including precedents, document analysis techniques, and other justifications.

Provisional assessment reports may have a limited period of validity and may be superseded by standard, final assessment reports upon authentication.

In accordance with QAF and the LRC, members of the ACESC issue [assessment reports for general purposes](#) to outline expert, non-binding opinions on the assessment of academic credentials issued outside Canada. These reports are widely used by competent recognition authorities in Canada that require assistance with document authentication and comparability procedures. In turn, competent recognition authorities use the ACESC reports to inform their binding decisions on internationally educated applicants seeking to settle in Canada to work or study. Five ACESC members also issue Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) for applicants under skilled immigration programs administered by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). The ACESC has supported millions of internationally educated individuals seeking fair evaluation of their academic credentials in Canada.

The ACESC has six members: 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 Francisation et Intégration du Québec (MIFI); and World Education Services (WES) Canada.

CICIC is a unit of the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC), and is Canada's national information centre under UNESCO conventions related to the recognition of qualifications. It assists in the adoption of best practices set by these conventions and functions as the ACESC's Secretariat. The precursor of the ACESC was the Provincial Assessment Committee (PAC), a CMEC committee formed in the mid-1990s to assist in fulfilling Canada's obligations under UNESCO conventions.

For more information, visit the ACESC website, at [CanAlliance.org](http://CanAlliance.org). CICIC also provides [FAQs](#) on the LRC.

### Information

Michael Ringuette  
Coordinator, CICIC  
Secretariat of the ACESC  
Tel.: 416-962-9725  
Email: [m.ringuette@cmecc.ca](mailto:m.ringuette@cmecc.ca)