

DRAFT

AACRAO EDGE USERS' GUIDE

American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
Electronic Database for Global Education

June 2010 Edition

Table of Contents

Introduction

The EDGE Homepage
How to Navigate a Country Profile
Overview of the Education System
Educational Ladder
Grading Systems
Credentials
Description
Advice to Admissions Officers
Author Notes
Required for/Leads to
Sample Credentials
Institutions
Resources
Author
Glossary
Short-cuts and helpful hints

DRAFT

AACRAO EDGE USERS' MANUAL

Introduction

Welcome to the AACRAO Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE). The information contained in EDGE is meant to provide easy access to up to date information on the educational systems of the world. Every effort has been made to make the information comprehensive yet succinct. Links are provided for those who need more detailed information. Step-by-step guidance through the various sections of EDGE is provided in the sections which follow.

We have also added to this manual information which explains how decisions concerning grading scale conversions and placement recommendations are made. The information provided in this manual is meant to maximize the utility of EDGE to you, the user. It is our hope that this information makes your user experience with EDGE an enjoyable and productive one. Your feedback is always welcome.

The EDGE Homepage

The 231 country profiles contained in EDGE can be accessed in two ways. The EDGE Homepage contains alphabetical lists of countries divided into six geographical regions: Oceania, Europe, Asia, Africa, North America and South America. A drop down menu which contains an alphabetical list of all 231 profiles is also provided. Simply click on the name of the country you wish to visit.

How to Navigate a Country Profile

After you have selected a country, information contained in that country profile will appear under eight tabs which are aligned horizontally across the top of the page. The tabs are labelled as follows: Overview, Educational Ladder, Grading Systems, Credentials (including placement recommendations and sample credentials), Institutions, Resources, Author, Glossary. Simply click on the tab heading in which you are interested. What follows is a description of the contents of each tab, how to use the information found there and how decisions are made which influence the content of EDGE.

Overview of the Education System

Each country profile begins with a map and relative geographic location information. This is followed by a brief history of the country in order to provide context for the presentation of the education system which follows. Historical, political, economic and socio-cultural-religious background play a large role in the development of a country's education system, e.g., 15th century European exploration and colonization led to four major educational systems which permeate much of the globe to this day. The Portuguese, Spanish, French, British and Dutch systems account for __ percent of the current educational structures of the world. An understanding of these systems, therefore, will stand the user in good stead as he or she endeavors to appropriately place the educational documents received into the

proper context.

Although most countries have gained independence long ago, the educational systems they follow today remain allied to the former European systems. One need only consider the Bologna Process* to see that former European colonies, even though not signatories to the Bologna Convention, are beginning to change the titles of diplomas and degrees -- and, more importantly, the content and number of years of study required for each credential -- in order to remain in sync with their European counterparts.

It is for these reasons that historical background has been provided. Some countries have multiple legacies reflected in their educational systems, e.g., the titles of documents may be in multiple languages and the language of instruction and titles of documents earned may differ. Cameroon, while a Francophone (French-speaking) country offers both Francophone and Anglophone (English-speaking) curricula. Angola, while more recently allied with Cuba, remains a Lusophone (Portuguese-speaking) country, but both Spanish and Portuguese are seen in the educational terminology of Angola..

Countries which gained independence relatively recently may have chosen to follow the U.S. educational system. Malaysia, for example, while still following the British system, uses Bahasa Malayu as the language of instruction, and has a system of two-year private colleges modelled on the U.S. community college system, where English is the language of instruction. And many institutions in the Middle East follow the U.S. semester system and 4.0 grading system.

A brief overview of the educational system, when used in conjunction with the [Educational Ladder](#), provides a thumbnail sketch of the educational system. From these two sections of EDGE, the user should be able to locate the academic credential in question and place it in its proper chronology in the system. This is especially useful when students present multiple credentials. For example, even though one diploma follows another, it does not necessarily mean that the second builds on the first. Indeed, they may be parallel in nature. An example in the United States would be teacher certification for someone with a bachelor's degree in a field other than education. An additional, fifth year of education required for teacher certification in the United States does not represent graduate level study, but rather an additional year of study at the undergraduate level. That is, even though the bachelor's degree was required for admission to the teacher certification program, the additional year of study does not represent graduate-level education. Instead, it represents *additional study at the same level*.

Updates to the overall description of the educational system will be posted at the end of the overview section. So, if you are already familiar with the basics of the system, you may wish to scroll to the bottom of the overview section to check for recent changes.

*The Bologna Process resulted in a significant altering of the national systems of education in Europe. The goal of conforming to an agreed upon model, it is believed, will facilitate the movement of students and graduates from one country to another as the mutual recognition of diplomas and degrees is facilitated. For a thorough description of The

Bologna Process and a complete list of the 47 countries involved, see the EDGE country profile labelled [Bologna Process](#) under the Europe tab on the EDGE homepage.

Educational Ladder

The educational ladder is a graphical representation of the education system. It is presented vertically from the pre-school or kindergarden level at the bottom of the ladder through postdoctoral study at the top. This building block format includes *benchmarks* which represent completion of the following levels of education: primary/elementary school, middle school, secondary school, vocational programs, undergraduate education, postgraduate education, professional programs (such as medicine), doctoral programs and postdoctoral studies. These benchmarks correspond with the Placement Recommendations contained in the [Advice to Admissions Officers](#) section of EDGE.

More than one educational ladder may be provided when a substantial reorganization of the education system of a country has occurred. When this is the case, ladders will be labelled Pre 19xx and Effective19xx. Simply click on the ladder which corresponds to the years of study reflected on the educational document to be evaluated.

Educational ladders are attached as *pdf files*. Should you experience difficulty in opening the educational ladder pdfs, be sure your computer's *pop up blocker* is disabled.

Grading Systems

Grading systems for both secondary and tertiary education are provided. Where national standards apply, that scale is provided. Links to Ministry of Education web sites (and those of other ministries, where applicable) are provided if information concerning grade distribution is available. Such information is useful when establishing institutional policies concerning which grades are acceptable for admission and transfer credit. The International Education Standards Council (IESC) also uses this and other information in determining U.S. grade equivalencies (the IESC and U.S. grade equivalencies will be discussed later).

Where grading scales differ from institution to institution in a given country, that information is available under the name of each institution link provided under the [Institutions](#) tab of EDGE. The [Grading Systems](#) tab may also contain a sampling of these institutional scales where the number of postsecondary institutions in a country is small. If the grading scale on the document you have received differs from that posted in EDGE, we suggest that you do two things: (1) use the grading scale on that document, and (2) forward a copy of the document to AACRAO International Education Services, One Dupont Circle, Washington DC. ([Dale, can we use your e-mail address or should we set up a separate one where docs should be sent? Maybe David in Austin?](#))

Grade Distribution: Many countries have what we in the United States would consider to be severe grading practices. That is, in many countries, grades are allotted according to the statistical "normal distribution" which is represented, below, as a bell shaped distribution where 50% represents the average or "expected" value. Under the bell-shaped curve, 68% if all grades fall within one standard deviation of the mean, or average of 50%. This means

that, in these systems, a grade of C represents a solid level of achievement. If more than two-thirds of students (68%) earn grades of C, that leaves 32% to be distributed as grades of A, B, C and D (where that latter grade exists). Because 95% of grades in a normal distribution fall within two standard deviations of the mean, approximately 14% of students would earn grades of B and 14% would earn grades of D. The "tails" of the bell shaped curve are reserved for grades of A and F (about 2% each).

While this is the ideal upon which grading is predicated, in reality the practice is slightly more generous. For example,

In British-patterned education systems, such as India the following scale is used:

60 - 100 = First Division (or a U.S. grade equivalent of A)

50 - 59 = Second Division (or a U.S. grade equivalent of B)

35 - 49 = C Third Division (or a U.S. grade equivalent of C)

0 - 34 = Failure (or a U.S. grade equivalent of F)

A minimum passing grade of 35% would seem to indicate, from the American perspective, that standards are low. But the contrary is true because, with such a grading scale, grades in the 90s (and sometimes the 80s, or even the 70s) are exceedingly rare (perhaps less than 5% of grades allotted). Remember that 68% of the grades hover around the C range.

There are some exceptions to the above. The most notable being the difference between how grades are awarded in the sciences vs. the social sciences and humanities. By its very nature, scientific course content tends to be based on empirical evidence acquired via the scientific method. The student either gets the correct answer or he/she doesn't. While in the humanities and social sciences, there are numerous theories and schools of thought. That is, when grading an essay it is easier to award partial credit for the answer because it may be partially correct and a matter of opinion rather than scientific fact. Therefore, grades tend to be higher in non-scientific disciplines when a normal distribution of grades (represented by the bell-shaped curve, above) is used.

Whither the Concept of the D Grade? You will notice that the suggested U.S. grade equivalencies in EDGE often do not contain a grade of D. This is due to the fact that the grade of D -- and even the concept of a passing grade which does not qualify one to graduate -- does not exist in many countries. As indicated, above, the grade of C represents a solid standard of achievement in most countries. And, just like in the United States, the minimum grade average for graduation is a C. So, the concept of a grade of D is viewed as irrelevant in most countries because those who earn grades of A, B, C (or their equivalent in local parlance), graduate and those who fail (earning a grade of F, or equivalent) do not graduate. It is, essentially a pass/fail, all-or-nothing system.

On that road toward a degree, something vaguely similar to the U.S. grade of D (and the underlying concept of a passing grade which does not qualify one for graduation) exists. It is called a "provisional pass." This means that the student did not fail the class, but neither did he/she indicate that they had learned enough to receive a grade of C, which in most cases is the minimum passing grade, or, more significantly, the minimum grade for which one can *earn credit toward graduation*. When a student earns a "provisional pass," he/she usually has to repeat that class if they wish to graduate. In some cases, both the new and

old grades are counted in the overall average. But, in other cases, the new grade is substituted for the old grade of "provisional pass." You will recognize that the latter practice is common in the United States. The main difference between a provisional pass overseas and the grade of D in the United States is that one can graduate with the D on one's record in the United States (unless it is in a major course), while overseas the "provision" must be removed prior to graduation.

While strict grading is the norm, exceptions are possible if institutional policies so permit. For example, the following is a note which appears at the bottom of the secondary grading scale in the EDGE country profile on Cameroon (the same note appears in all countries which follow the French education system). Cameroon has a 0-20 point grading scale with 10 as the minimum passing grade.:

NOTES: Grades of 18 - 20 are rarely given. There is no grade of D in Cameroon. However, as with most countries that are patterned after the French educational system, grades of 8 and 9, which are normally failing grades, may be accepted as a "condoned pass" (U.S. grade of D) provided the overall grade average for the year (*moyenne general*) is 10.0 / 20, or higher. This is at the discretion of the institution's administrators, and, at the post-secondary level, students may be required to re-take, in a future term, the course for which they received a "condoned pass."

Since grading is crucial in the awarding of transfer credit, you may find useful the information contained in the [Transfer Credit](#) section of EDGE. Newcomers take heart! Transfer credit methodology is not nearly as complex or theoretical as the interpretation of grades from overseas.

Credentials

When you click on the **Credential** tab, a chronological list of credentials will appear along with a brief description for each credential. Click on the name of the credential to proceed, or, since some credential lists contain multiple pages, you may wish to click on the dropdown menu labelled **Select a Credential**. A chronological list of all credentials will appear. Simply highlight the credential you wish to review and click **Go**.

Each credential page contains five tabs on the left side of the page: Description, Advice to Admissions Officers, Author Notes, Required for Admission /Leads to, and Sample Documents.

Useful Tip: Instead of clicking each of the five tabs one-at-a-time, simply click on **Print Credentials** and the information contained in the five tabs will appear on one page. This short-cut avoids having to click back and forth between tabs. Many users proceed directly to **Advice to Admissions Officers** to obtain the placement recommendation, but *it is recommended that the Print Credentials short-cut be used to obtain not only the placement recommendation, but the other information which places both the credential and the recommendation in the proper context.*

The Placement Recommendations contained in [Advice to Admissions Officers](#) is the most often consulted section in EDGE. Before elaborating on how those placement recommendations are developed, and how best to use them, a brief explanation of the tabs

contained in the credentials section of EDGE is in order.

Description: The name of the credential in the local language and an English translation are provided along with the number of years required to earn that credential. If the number of years required to earn the credential in question has changed, the effective date of that change will be provided. And, if the credential was phased out or is new, replacing a previous credential, that information will also be provided.

Advice to Admissions Officers: This tab includes the academic placement recommendation. Benchmark credentials are described in terms of their U.S. counterparts. If the credential in question falls short of a U.S. benchmark, advice concerning the amount of transfer credit (where applicable) will be provided. Users should beware of false cognates, e.g., the *baccalaureate* represents completion of secondary school in France, and the *bachiller* or *bachillerato* are awarded upon completion of secondary school in several Latin American countries. Similarly, the bachelor's degree in several Latin America is *titulo*. Most bachelor's degrees in these countries qualify the graduate to practice a profession; thus, the *titulo de ingenieur* (title of engineer) qualifies one to work as an engineer.

EDGE placement recommendations are proposed by country profile authors and reviewed by the International Education Standards Council (IESC).

Author Notes: This section allows the author of the EDGE country profile to provide additional discussion concerning the credential in question. One of the author's notes from the EDGE country profile on Costa Rica follows:

Credential Diploma de conclusion de estudios de educacion diversificada or Bachillerato	
--	--

Author Notes:

Admissions officers must require the record of courses as well as the record of examination results. Prior to 1973 *Bachiller* was the term used to describe the completion of secondary school. Review credentials carefully.

Required for Admission /Leads to: This section places the credential in its natural sequence by providing the name of the credential required for admission to the program which leads to the credential in question. Once earned, the credential leads to the next level of study and/or employment. Credentials which are terminal in nature lead only to employment.

Sample Documents:

Sample credentials are attached as pdf files. Should you experience difficulty in opening the sample credential pdfs, be sure your computer's pop up blocker is disabled.

We have included as many benchmark credentials as possible, but continue to search for legible copies to include in EDGE. Your assistance as a user would be greatly appreciated. Please forward..(see EDGE home page for wording).

Useful Tip: To select another credential from the same country, it is not necessary to return to the credentials page. Simply click on **Select a Credential** for a drop down menu of all credentials for that country.

How to navigate the credentials tabs: Instead of clicking on five different tabs, simply click on **Print Credentials** and the information contained in the five tabs will appear on one page. This short-cut avoids having to click on each tab to obtain additional information. Many users proceed directly to **Advice to Admissions Officers** to obtain the placement recommendation, but it is recommended that the Print Credentials short-cut be used to obtain not only the placement recommendation, but the other information which places both the credential and the recommendation in the proper context.

Institutions

The Ministry of Education (MOE) in most countries provides comprehensive on-line lists of educational institutions at all levels. Links to these MOE lists are provided and supplemented through other sources. In many countries, specialized institutions are supervised by ministries *other than the Ministry of Education*. The Ministry of Health, for example, may be responsible for nursing and public health education; the Ministry of Interior may be responsible for military academies and police training; the Ministry of Agriculture responsible for agricultural education; and, the Ministry of Religion (or Religious Affairs) for theological education.

Resources

Both print and on-line bibliographic resources are provided. Every effort has been made to include the most up-to-date resources. The comprehensive resource lists included in EDGE are a reflection of the painstaking research efforts of the dozens of authors, reviewers and editors who worked so diligently on the AACRAO Electronic Database for Global Education.

Author

This section contains a short biographical sketch of the author(s) responsible for each profile. The date information in the profile was last updated is also listed at the bottom of the author section.

Glossary

Users may be surprised to discover that glossaries for English-speaking countries are included. If you don't know what a *bursary* is, see the glossary in New Zealand. Or, if you want to know the difference between SQA Intermediate I (Standard Grade) and SQA Intermediate II (Credit Standard), you should consult Scotland. And, if anterior and posterior qualifications, you will want to consult the glossary for the United Kingdom. By defining these unusual educational terms in American English, it is our sincere hope that we no longer be "divided by a common language."

END OF DOCUMENT

Dear EDGEadmin Group,

I thought a short version to be people up and running would be useful; something like the following. What do you think?

Short-cuts/Mini Users' Manual (pictures of each page would help)

1. The EDGE home page contains a list of the 231 country profiles and a profile on the Bologna process. You may click on the name of the country in question or use the drop down menu labelled **Select Country**. To select another country, it is not necessary to return

to the home page. Simply click on **Select Country**, highlight the name of the country and click **Go**.

2. Once in a country, click one of the 8 tabs across the top of the page or, if you wish to see all the tabular information on one page, you can click on the dropdown menu labelled **Print Country Details**. A chronological list of all credentials will appear. Simply highlight the credential you wish to review and click **Go**. Overview of the educational system, educational ladder, grading systems, a list credentials (including placement recommendations and sample credentials), institutions, bibliographic resources, information about the author of each EDGE country profile, and a glossary. The contents of each of these tabs are described in the EDGE Users' Manual..

3. When you click on the **Credential** tab, a chronological list of credentials will appear along with a brief description for each credential. Click on the name of the credential to proceed, or, since some credential lists contain multiple pages, you may wish to click on the dropdown menu labelled **Select a Credential**. A chronological list of all credentials will appear. Simply highlight the credential you wish to review and click **Go**.

4. Each credential page contains five tabs on the left side of the page: Description, Advice to Admissions Officers, Author Notes, Required for Admission /Leads to, and Sample Documents.

Useful Tip: Instead of clicking each of the five tabs one-at-a-time, simply click on **Print Credentials** and the information contained in the five tabs will appear on one page. This short-cut avoids having to click back and forth between tabs. Many users proceed directly to **Advice to Admissions Officers** to obtain the placement recommendation, but *it is recommended that the Print Credentials short-cut be used to obtain not only the placement recommendation, but the other information which places both the credential and the recommendation in the proper context.*

5. To select another credential from the same country, it is not necessary to return to the credentials page. Simply click on **List of Credentials** for a drop down menu of all credentials for that country.

6. Use of the search box on the home page: Narrow the focus of your search by first selecting the country of the credential in question. For example, if one enters the term *bachiller* without first choosing a country, the search yields 16 pages of results. When one chooses Mexico first and then enters *bachiller* in the search box, the result is IT DOESN'T WORK, NOT EVEN WITH BOOLEAN ALGEBRA (*bachiller* + Mexico). **David, maybe you can explain the search function?** It yields prodigious results, but isn't easy to narrow the search.

History

In 2001, the joint agreement between NAFSA and AACRAO regarding research and development of international publications was dissolved at the request of NAFSA directors. The inter-segmental committee, known as PIER (*Projects for International Education Research*) was accordingly disbanded. The inter-segmental committee which reviewed placement recommendations for PIER publications, the *National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials (The Council)* continued to function.

In response to the recognized needs of international publications for AACRAO members, the 2001 AACRAO Board of Directors established a new committee, *International Publication Advisory Committee (IPAC)* reporting to the AACRAO Vice President for International Education. At the same time, there were questions regarding the viability of the continuation of the inter-segmental Council. In response to this concern, the same 2001 AACRAO Board of Directors voted on the establishment of an additional committee, the *International Evaluation Standards Council (IESC)* reporting to the AACRAO VP for International Education with authority to replace functions of the inter-segmental National Council. A membership to this committee was not appointed at that time with the understanding that it would be available in case of the demise of the already established Council. The inter-segmental *National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials* was disbanded in 2006.

EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education)

During this same period, EDGE, a software project which outlines foreign educational systems including placement recommendations was under development for the benefit of AACRAO members. Authors for the country profiles were recruited among the many experts in international evaluation throughout the U.S. The developers of EDGE determined that a team of three experts should be appointed to review and validate the placement recommendations.

IESC (The Standards Council)

Three experts in international admission, who are highly regarded and recognized for their long experience in international education, were appointed to the AACRAO *International Education Standards Council*. Each of these experts had served on the previous inter-segmental national council, one having served as its chair. The other two members had also served as AACRAO Vice

Presidents for International Education. All three have written publications sponsored by AACRAO and NAFSA on international education.

It was agreed that these three appointees would continue to serve in this capacity during the development of EDGE in order to assure consistency in the product. Once EDGE is well established, the Vice President for International Education will appoint other experts to the Standards Council maintaining a membership of three.

It was also agreed that an effort would be made to rotate the Standards Council members so that only one new member would be appointed at a time therefore further assuring consistency to the product. No decision has been made as to the length of time new members would serve, but three to five years for a term has been recommended once again to assure consistency. IESC will also serve as the review board for future AACRAO international publications that contain placement recommendations.

International Education Standards Council

(IESC)

The Role of the IESC

The *International Education Standards Council* (the Standards Council) is an AACRAO appointed committee, which reviews and approves placement recommendations for foreign educational credentials for use in U.S. institutions that are contained in AACRAO publications and profiles. The Standards Council also reviews and approves placement recommendations for AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education.).

The approval of the placement recommendations by the Standards Council is based on a review of the information contained in the publication which validates and supports the recommendations of the author. The placement recommendations are to be considered as guidelines for evaluators in determining foreign credential equivalencies to U.S. degrees and diplomas. They are written to allow flexibility on the part of the users depending on the focus and programs offered at U.S. institutions.

The Standards Council members are a team of three experts in international admission who have long experience in the field. They are appointed by the Executive Director of AACRAO in consultation with the Vice President of International Education.

The Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE) is an American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admission Officers (make this a link to AACRAO) project that is designed to provide contemporary and ongoing information and standards for the evaluation of foreign credentials for applicants seeking to be admitted to

educational institutions in the United States. EDGE is also an effective tool in the evaluation and placement for individuals presenting foreign credentials for visa screening, professional licensure, and immigration attorneys.

An overview of the country's educational system;

An educational ladder;

Credentials offered by country;

The degrees or credentials required for access to each level;

What each credential leads to;

The grading scales associated with a country and tips on how to evaluate coursework from that country for transfer credit to U.S.

institutions;

A listing of the resources utilized for the profile;

An advice to admissions officers placement recommendation for each credential based on a review by three senior credentials analysts appointed by the Executive Director of AACRAO and reporting to the AACRAO Vice President for International Education

A listing of the accredited institutions in country or a link that lists them;

A glossary containing terms unique to a country's educational system.

With the demise of The National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Academic Credentials (The Council) the placement recommendations in EDGE are the only standards reviewed and approved by a higher education organization that is non-profit, voluntary, and broadly representative of American higher education membership. AACRAO was a charter member of The Council and is comprised of over 10,000 higher education and registration professionals who represent approximately 2500 institutions in more than 30 countries.

**TEMPLATE for
EDGE Placement Recommendations
and Advice to Admissions Officers**

A. Below high school:	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to less than completion of senior high school in the United States. May be placed in Grade ().
B1. High school, vocational/technical	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to completion of a vocational or other specialized high school curriculum in the United States.
B2. High school, academic	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to completion of senior high school in the United States.
B3. High school with credit, academic education	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to completion of senior high school in the United States with the possibility of awarding up to one year of advanced credit.
B4. High school with credit, vocational/technical education	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to completion of senior high school in a vocational or other specialized high school curriculum in the U.S. with the possibility of awarding up to one year of advanced standing credit if the technical/vocational subject matter is deemed acceptable.
C. Postsecondary	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to x year/s of university study in the United States. Credit may be awarded on a course-by-course basis.
C1. University Prep (India, Middle East)	The [qualification] represents completion of a university preparatory program with no advanced standing or transfer credit.
C2. Supplement (Russia, NIS), <i>título</i> (Latin	Regardless of the number of years of study, this document is insufficient to determine

America)	degree completion. Always require the submission of the [qualification] or degree certificate which shows that the degree was awarded. If the student cannot provide such documentation, credit may be awarded on a course-by-course basis.
D. Bachelor's	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a bachelor's degree in the United States.
E. Graduate level coursework	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to x years of graduate study in the United States.
F. Master's	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a master's degree in the United States.
G. Doctorate	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to an earned doctoral degree in the United States.
H: Professional	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to a first professional degree in [field] in the United States.
I. Teacher Certification	The [qualification] is comparable to completion of teacher certification in the United States.
J. A-levels, AS-levels, ECTS, BTEC, CNAA	<p>Each A-level subject passed represents completion of the introductory sequence of that subject in the United States. Credit may be awarded for academic subjects on a course-by-course basis.</p> <p>[Link to explanation of how to convert credits]</p> <p>Two AS-levels = one A level</p> <p>60 ECTS credits = 30 semester credits, i.e. ECTS/2 = semester hours</p>

K. Post-doctoral	The [qualification] represents attainment of a level of education comparable to post-doctoral study in the United States.
L. Vocational/non-academic qualification (no academic credit/advanced placement)	The [qualification] represents attainment of a vocational/non-academic qualification. Admission and placement should not be based on this credential alone.
L1. Professional vocational qualification (secondary)	The [qualification] represents attainment of a professional vocational qualification obtained at the secondary level of education and is comparable to a similar secondary level qualification in the United States.
L2. Professional vocational qualification (post-secondary)	The [qualification] represents attainment of a professional vocational qualification obtained at the post-secondary level of education and is comparable to a similar post-secondary qualification in the United States.
L3. Advanced Professional Specialization	The [qualification] represents advanced, highly-specialized education in a professional field, following the first professional degree in that field.
M. Graduate admissions with deficiencies	Depending upon the breadth and depth of courses completed, and depending upon institutional policy, may be accepted for graduate study contingent upon completion of undergraduate courses determined by academic department review.

Updated January 29, 2010

IESC (International Evaluation Standards Council)

History

In 2001, the joint agreement between NAFSA and AACRAO regarding research and development of international publications was dissolved at the request of NAFSA directors. The inter-segmental committee, known as PIER (*Projects for International Education Research*) was accordingly disbanded. The inter-segmental committee which reviewed placement recommendations for PIER publications, the *National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials (The Council)* continued to function.

In response to the recognized needs of international publications for AACRAO members, the 2001 AACRAO Board of Directors established a new committee, *International Publication Advisory Committee (IPAC)* reporting to the AACRAO Vice President for International Education. At the same time, there were questions regarding the viability of the continuation of the inter-segmental Council. In response to this concern, the same 2001 AACRAO Board of Directors voted on the establishment of an additional committee, the *International Evaluation Standards Council (IESC)* reporting to the AACRAO VP for International Education with authority to replace functions of the inter-segmental National Council. A membership to this committee was not appointed at that time with the understanding that it would be available in case of the demise of the already established Council. The inter-segmental *National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials* was disbanded in 2006.

EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education)

During this same period, EDGE, a software project, which outlines foreign educational systems including placement recommendations, was under development for the benefit of AACRAO members. Authors for the country profiles were recruited among the many experts in international evaluation throughout the U.S. The developers of EDGE determined that a team of three experts should be appointed to review and validate the placement recommendations.

IESC (The Standards Council)

Three experts in international admission, who are highly regarded and recognized for their long experience in international education, were appointed to the AACRAO *International Education Standards Council*. Each of these experts had served on the previous inter-segmental national council, one having served as its chair. The other two members had also served as AACRAO Vice Presidents for International Education. All three have written publications sponsored by AACRAO and NAFSA on international education.

It was agreed that these three appointees would continue to serve in this capacity during the development of EDGE in order to assure consistency in the product. Once EDGE is well established, the Vice President for International Education will appoint other experts to the Standards Council maintaining a membership of three.

It was also agreed that an effort would be made to rotate the Standards Council members so that only one new member would be appointed at a time therefore further assuring consistency to the product. No decision has been made as to the length of time new members would serve, but three to five years for a term has been recommended once again to assure consistency. IESC will also serve as the review board for future AACRAO international publications that contain placement recommendations.

International Education Standards Council

(IESC)

The Role of the IESC

The *International Education Standards Council* (the Standards Council) is an AACRAO appointed committee which reviews and approves placement recommendations for foreign educational credentials for use in U.S. institutions that are contained in AACRAO publications and profiles. The Standards Council also reviews and approves placement recommendations for AACRAO EDGE (Electronic Database for Global Education.).

The approval of the placement recommendations by the Standards Council is based on a review of the information contained in the publication which validates and supports the recommendations of the author. The placement recommendations are to be considered as guidelines for evaluators in determining foreign credential equivalencies to U.S. degrees and diplomas. They are written to allow flexibility on the part of the users depending on the focus and programs offered at U.S. institutions.

The Standards Council members are a team of three experts in international admission who have long experience in the field. They are appointed by the AACRAO Vice President for International Education in conjunction with the Executive Director of AACRAO for a term of three to five years.

International Credential Placement Recommendations:

An Historical Sketch

Creation of the Council:

In 1955 the US Government convinced several key organizations dealing in international education to form an inter-associational committee to review publications produced through these entities and predicated on funding from the Government. The National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials was created and representatives of each of the participating organizations began meeting to deliberate on the proper placement of holders of the country credential in question in the US system.

The organizations were AACRAO, NAFSA, Institute of International Education/IIE, Council of Graduate Schools/CGS, College Board, American Council on Education/ACE, American Association of Community Colleges/AACC, with New York State Dept of Health and AACRAO-AID as Observers.

Council representatives were selected by the leadership of the various organizations involved and served specified terms. Council reviewed drafts of forthcoming publications produced by another inter-associational committee (of AACRAO and NAFSA) called the WES (World Education Series) Committee and books were published by AACRAO with funding from USIA. Simultaneously, a joint committee of AACRAO and NAFSA called JCOW (Joint Committee on Workshops) met to decide country selections for group country studies. By the 1980s, WES and JCOW merged and evolved into PIER (Projects in International Education Research) which oversaw both single country volumes and country groups, single and group authors. Placement Recommendations continued to be approved by the Council.

Classic Placement Recommendations:

The Council generally reviewed the author placement recommendations in the drafts of the publications for approval or change. Over the years, the Council began to compile template language for the recommendations that eventually came to be published by NAFSA as NAFSA Working Paper #23. After its inception in the late 1980s/early 1990s, authors were required to use these PR templates and no others. Only the Council could make new ones during a review process. Placement recommendations generally followed a fairly standard format: what was the entry qualification to the credential in question? How long was the credential program? What did the credential lead to in-country? From those three questions, and a liberal dose of the quantitative method (sometimes referred to as year-counting), Council make its recommendations that were then printed in the book at the back or later buried in the text itself.

Changing the Rules of the Game:

In 1996, somewhat in response to European grumblings about US credential evaluation methodology, the Council convened a Symposium in Milwaukee to attempt to come up with a methodology that was better than simply counting years. The result was a methodology that compared the foreign credential to its supposed US counterpart by examination of the constituent elements of the credential program, adding those up and drawing a conclusion. Certainly a more transparent method, it had the drawbacks of being a bit lengthy to be included in a book (template charts were needed, levels charted, a requisite number of elements cited, etc.) as well as being a bit too complex for quick and easy reference, especially for those relatively new to the field of international evaluation. Nevertheless, the Council moved forward on interposing the new methodology into the PIER process.

A Funding Dilemma and Crisis of Confidence:

By the middle to late 1990s, as USIA was folded into the State Department, funding for international education began to dry up and PIER died a lingering death coinciding with the end of the century. The old way of doing publications was now too expensive and the Council had no books to review as NAFSA changed its focus and AACRAO moved forward with its own publication plans. Finally, in March of 2006, the Council was dissolved, more or less by mutual consent of the constituent organizations.

Others Fill the Gap:

There had always been efforts to provide placement guideline advice. AACRAO has published FOREIGN CREDENTIALS REQUIRED for many years and the current edition is the fifth and it offers placement advice. NAFSA produced the HANDBOOK ON THE ADMISSION AND PLACEMENT OF FOREIGN GRADUATE STUDENTS in 1990 and it contained placement advice and was quite popular (guidelines came from the ADSEC Team, now RAP). It was updated in 1999 but WITHOUT placement recommendations. World Education Services produces a newsletter that offers advice

on credential evaluation. International Education Research Foundation has produced three versions of the COUNTRY INDEX, latest in 2005 containing their recommendations on country credentials. Occasional solitary books offered advice, such as IRELAND by Solveig Turner of the Center for Documentation Research published in 1994.

AACRAO Moves Ahead:

AACRAO anticipated problems with Council placement recommendations and began to prepare alternatives in two ways. First, the International Publications Advisory Committee/IPAC received approval from the AACRAO Board to form its own Council equivalent if ever the need arose. At present, that committee uses a review group concept wherein a small group of experts are brought in to review drafts of publications and approve author placement guidelines on a publication by publication basis. Secondly, AACRAO has brought out EDGE which has its own review group called the International Education Standards Council (IESC) and uses a template for placement recommendations for each of the entries that now includes 232 countries. This model has been followed to some extent by IPAC in its review group concept for two recent publications on France and Central Asia. It remains to be seen what the future holds with the Council now a thing of the past and AACRAO moving rapidly into the future!

Robert Watkins

The University of Texas at Austin

October 1 2010

EDGE Update Request

Country: _____

Date: _____

Please provide a brief summary of your concern.

1. Name of Credential:

2. Required for admission, i.e., what credential precedes the credential in Box#1:

3. Leads to, i.e., what level of study or credential follows the credential in Box#1:

4. Suggested Advice to Admissions Officers, i.e., suggested placement recommendation for credential in Box #1:

5. Documentation attached (if any):

6. Submitted by (please include your name, institution and e-mail address or telephone number):

EDGE Official Use Only:

Received by

Received on

Forwarded to Editor on

Forwarded to IESC Chair on

Placed on IESC Agenda for

Change approved by IESC
on

Change posted to EDGE on

Opening Paragraph

Approximately 1,000,000 people a year need to have their foreign academic credentials evaluated for many varieties of reasons for placement, licensure , admissions etc. in the United States. The people who do this work and set the standards often work in obscurity and have almost completely unregulated authority to do this work. Since the standards they employ and the work that they do affects critical moments and opportunities in so many lives a careful review of how this work is done and who develops placement recommendations for how individual foreign credentials should be evaluated is actually quite important. This chapter will discuss how this field of Applied Comparative Education came into being and what it's future might be.

What is the state of the field today?

Training for those practicing Applied Comparative Education can be found at the annual

AACRAO and NAFSA conferences and at local and regional conferences of those organizations. Workshops are offered by AACRAO and some of the larger credential agencies. AACRAO has continued to retain a Vice President for International Education who is also a Board member. This individual also presides over four active committees dedicated to the field including on publications committee. NAFSA has recently eliminated the Admissions Section and subsumed its activities into RAP. The ADSEC Chair used to sit on the Board of Directors of NAFSA but that seat has now been eliminated. A newsletter is still put out by a group of dedicated NAFSA credentials professionals and country profiles are still being developed and published electronically. Both AACRAO and NAFSA recently supported the decision to eliminate the National Council. Several other members of the Council had ceased sending representatives prior to the Council's demise. Major publications by both organizations have steadily dwindled over the past ten years and likely was a contributing factor in the decision to end the Council's existence. The exception to this is AACRAO's EDGE which is a major research effort with over 230 country profiles and more than 10,000 pages in length.

As mentioned earlier the field of Applied Comparative Education originated in Universities in the postwar period to deal with foreign students. With the demise of the Council for the Evaluation of Foreign Credentials there is no widely recognized set of standards. AACRAO, as it had done in 1955 when it created the Council by asking others to join it in its ongoing work, has addressed this deficiency by developing the Educational Database for Global Education (EDGE) which is comprised of educational profiles of all the countries of the world (the first time that has ever been done) with credentials advice offered for all major credentials. The formation of EDGE and the creation by the AACRAO Board of the International Education Standards Council (IESC) (IESC Charter appended) is the only example of a refereed set of national standards by an independent, member based, nonprofit higher education organization, AACRAO. The U.S. government has chosen to utilize EDGE as a referential standard in its work and many large University systems in the country rely on it for their daily work.

Describe the field as it exists today?

In its infancy the field of Applied Comparative Education consisted mainly of relatively senior people working in Admission Offices at Universities, often Research 1 institutions. Today, while University based international admission offices still play a major role many universities refer their work out to credential agencies. The United States also now attracts many foreign trained immigrants who come here to be Engineers, Doctors, Nurses, Architects etc. The U.S. government issues visas in the tens even hundreds of thousands to foreign trained individuals who come here to work, conduct research, study and obtain training.

Clearly the need to evaluate foreign academic coursework extends well past University admissions. This will continue to be a major factor in the future and should expand as our economy becomes more globalized and more transnational structures develop. The need for competent credential agencies that employ reasonable standards and are characterized a commitment to excellence and transparency will clearly be required.

The major problem facing the field of Applied Comparative Education is the lack of regulation and consistency. A secondary problem, and a direct consequence of the first problem, is that anyone can evaluate a foreign credential and write a letter stating their opinion. These twin problems have created a situation where two competent agencies can evaluate the same credential (and often do) and come to different conclusions. For the end user, be it a government entity or a University or a State Board this presents a real quandary. Most end users often do not know that this will be the situation or have a good idea of how to address it. Given the decentralized nature of the work and an ongoing dispute with the field as to the nature and use of placement recommendation/comparability statements the development of a universal referential standard will be elusive but will eventually be necessary.

Experienced professionals in the field are generally aware that large and well developed agencies as well as premier Universities often evaluate the same credential differently. A

good example of this is when one graduate school will admit a candidate with a three year Indian degree while another will award 90 hours of credit and place an individual in the undergraduate program. Or better still (and a worst case situation but quite real) a credentials agency will evaluate a secondary credential as a tertiary one, declare that the individual has a bachelors degree equivalent when in fact most would agree that the credential in question was the equivalent of high school graduation. Further complicating the situation the agency or individual in question may possess little or no training, retain no professional reputation and their main interest in writing such an evaluation is financial. At present there are no consequences for this type of thing but for the end user this presents a real dilemma.

What is needed?

Most Universities and Credentials Agencies resist the notion of being regulated by a government office or department and wish to retain their independence to evaluate credentials without oversight. This extends to certifying agencies or individuals to do this work. There have been some attempts to verify competency but these reviews are not conducted by an independent entity but are done by other agencies evaluating each other. Think Toyota evaluating Ford and deciding if they are good enough to make cars. This is clearly not the way ahead and what is equally clear is that the field will eventually be called into question because there are no real standards to do the work (again think Doctors with no M.D.) and there are no real guidelines for how to evaluate a credential or utilize at the very least a referential standard. The best way to determine if an individual or agency is qualified to do the work is to investigate the training and the background of the evaluators in question and that determination should be conducted by the person or agency utilizing the evaluation or by an independent entity completely free of financial or professional conflicts.

With the adoption of EDGE as a referential standard the United States Customs and Immigration Service (USCIS) has taken a first step. Here is how it works. USCIS receives a credentials report from Agency X stating that a four year Engineering degree from India (B. ENG.) is the equivalent of a Bachelors degree in Engineering from a U.S. regionally accredited institution. The officer at USCIS looks up the degree in EDGE and verifies that that is what EDGE states and the IESC has reviewed the credential and verified that it is the equivalent of a U.S. Bachelors degree in Engineering. The officer approves the petition and moves on.

However there is a reason that EDGE is a referential database and not an absolute. A good example is the long running discussion involving how to evaluate three year bachelor degrees versus four year degrees. Some Universities admit foreign students presenting three year degrees to their graduate programs. Some credentials agencies state that three year degrees from India from some universities and with good performance are the equivalent of the four year U.S. bachelors degree. These are reasoned decisions by senior people in the field with plenty of training and background. In such cases it is incumbent upon the admissions officer or credentials agency to justify why they believe their decision is justified. In the end it is up to the end user to accept the advice and issue the licence or admit the student or approve the visa etc.

Clearly this approach favors those who are well trained, levels the playing field by eliminating obviously bad practice and forces people doing the work to operate transparently and without financial factors driving the evaluation. The inherent weaknesses in how the field operates today will eventually become widely known. All it will take is the exposure of some of the worst practices and practitioners and reform will be mandated. At present the relative obscurity of the field is the reason this has not yet occurred but relying on that to continue is improbable.

The Role of Technology

The advance of technology, particularly web based applications, is making the job of research, production of evaluations and consistency much more manageable. There is no question that much of the work that previous generations of evaluators gleaned from the libraries they built now find that information readily on the web. Templates and one time

many uses evaluations are now ubiquitous and have reduced workload considerably. Databases such as EDGE, which rely on very high end and talented professionals, help to resolve difficult credentials and come up with placement recommendations that can now be widely shared. Institutions and agencies that do not have the resources to handle complex credentials now have tools to resolve the most difficult situations they encounter. In the future we can anticipate that consortium's of institutions and agencies may draw on central data banks of evaluations. Why, for example, would large University systems continue to operate individual foreign credential evaluation offices at each campus. Eventually cost cutting will lead to the consolidation of offices as evidence mounts that money can be saved. Technology will play a big role in helping that to happen. Only agencies and institutions that keep up with technology will be operating in 20 years.

Future Role of National Organizations

The major national member based organizations with interest in this work are AACRAO and NAFSA and to a lesser extent CGS, the College Board, and the American Association of Community Colleges. Of these only AACRAO has a seat reserved for someone with direct ties to the field on their Board. Training, sessions, and workshops will continue to be found at AACRAO and NAFSA and their regional affiliates. The publication of books is almost completely moribund and will remain so due to the low numbers of volumes bought and the expense of publishing them. Electronic books, articles, and data bases will convey the new research developed. Training, publications and access to services will become more costly as these organizations recoup their costs. As the field consolidates and the number of highly trained people decline other venues (small ones) may develop to meet the relatively narrow needs of the professions. Our participation in larger organizations will continue not only because we need access to the resources of larger groups but because, even though our work is relatively unknown, what we do affects many institutions (those enrolling foreign students, a number likely to grow) and the government (people will be coming from all over the world to work here). We also need their support to help us put in place a recognized set of standards and provide a mechanism requiring individuals and entities to meet a set of minimum professional standards developed within the context of the larger organization.

Outsourcing

CONCLUSIONS AND PROGNOSTICATIONS

1. Changes in technology are addressed elsewhere. But one low-tech change is the movement within the European Union to provide a common academic transcript as a means of facilitating the movement of students and professionals from country to country. We have seen a 10 page list of data elements which are proposed for said common transcript. Ironically, the more detailed the information provided on standardized European transcripts the greater need to distill that information to manageable portions. The need to summarize essential bits of information for busy university administrators and faculty members, licencing boards and government agencies responsible for immigration, visas, and labor certification will also increase. Whether this work will be done by private credential evaluation services, professional associations or some government entity remains to be seen. Some combination of these, such as government or professional association oversight to insure consistency and minimal standards is our best guess for the future (witness the health insurance debate of 2010).
2. More U.S. students are studying abroad. In fact, there has been a 25% increase since the traumatic events of September 11, 2001. This welcome increase in our learning about other cultures and them learning about Americans will also increase the demand for evaluation of foreign educational credentials among students who do not participate in programs transcribed by U.S. institutions. The increase in short-term study abroad and increase in the number of countries where students choose to study will also increase the demand for interpretation of foreign educational credentials in U.S. terms.
3. Universities will continue to outsource credential evaluation and general interest in the field from senior management -- in both academic institutions and professional organizations which represent higher education -- will continue to wane. Whether the credential evaluation agencies will assume greater control over the process of evaluation

and the setting of standards seems unlikely. Recent problems in student financial aid and study abroad have led to legislation which limits abuses in these fields. Do private credential evaluation agencies possess enough enlightened self-interest to reform, set and follow standards before state or federal government does it for them?