



Establishing Your Foreign Credentials

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Immigrant Professionals to the United States often feel frustrated in their efforts to find a professional job in their chosen career field in the United States. This fact sheet has been designed to help you with this endeavor.

Language Issues

It is important that you understand that American employers want someone who can effectively communicate with other staff, and who can effectively represent them at professional conferences, in interactions with vendors and with customers and stakeholders. It is important to learn English at a University level in order to be able to do this. The best place to do this quickly is at a doctoral degree granting research institution.

It is not that Community Colleges and local free ESL programs will not teach you English, but by taking English classes at a research based institution, you will typically get instructors who hold higher degrees, who have connections with others in your field, and additionally, you can practice your new English skills with other professionally minded individuals with the same level of literacy. Additionally, your fellow students will also become your friends and associates and may also be able to recommend you for future career opportunities. Further, these kinds of institutions (known as Carnegie I and II Ph.D. granting research institutions) will spend more time with accent reduction. They can also help you focus your English skills on words in your chosen field or profession. They can sometimes, for example, arrange for you to sit in on an entry level course in your field so you can become familiar with the English terms for words used in your field.

Credential Evaluations

It is useful for immigrants to get a foreign credential evaluation. This is a document which states what the US equivalency of your education or degrees are when the educational system of your country and the program you were in, is compared to a comparable program in the United States.

Most reputable credential evaluation services will ask to see your original documents. This is because they will not only evaluate your credentials, but will also verify the authenticity of your credentials. They are trained to spot fraudulent documents and if they see an inconsistency, they sometimes contact the issuing authority for verification. Although this may delay the evaluation, it means that the end result is one employers and institutions in the US can trust. It helps to establish your reputation as trustworthy as well. This is important because there is a high rate of fraud in foreign educational

credentials in the US, which is one reason employers are sometimes leary of hiring someone who earned their education abroad. This, although the evaluation from a reputable evaluator may take longer than anticipated, you will be able to establish your credentials and often obtain the needed recognition you need to pursue your career in this country.

The U.S. Government and most state governments in the United States do not accredit foreign credential evaluation services. Consequently, it is best to use one of the not for profit credential evaluation companies whose evaluations are considered acceptable to the USCIS and most employers. These are:

Education Credential Evaluators

www.ece.org

Phone: 414-289-3400

Fax: 414-289-3411

US Mail:

ECE

PO Box 514070

Milwaukee WI 53203-3470

USA

Courier Service

ECE

260 E. Highland Ave. Suite 300

Milwaukee WI 53202

USA

International Education Research Foundation, Inc.(IERF)

<http://www.ierf.org/>

Phone: 310.258.9451

Fax: 310.342.7086

IERF

Post Office Box 3665

Culver City, CA 90231-3665

World Educational Services WES

MAIN OFFICE

New York

tel: 212-966-6311

fax: 212-739-6100

CHICAGO

tel: 312-222-0882

fax: 312-222-1217

E-Mail:

info@wes.org

Postal Address

Bowling Green Station

P.O. Box 5087

New York, NY 10274-5087

Courier Address *

MIAMI
tel: 305-358-6688
fax: 305-358-4411

64 Beaver St, #146
New York, NY 10004

SAN FRANCISCO
tel: 415-677-9378
fax: 415-677-9333

* This is a courier mail handling facility
accepting DHL, FedEx, UPS, etc.
Documents should not be hand delivered.

WASHINGTON D.C.
tel: 202-331-2925
fax: 202-331-2927

Professional Organizations

Professional organizations are another way not only to establish your credentials in the USA, but also to network with colleagues, and to learn about professional development opportunities and position openings.

Most Professional Organizations charge between \$100 and \$500 for membership. Some require you to submit proof of your credentials for membership. Typically, most nationally based professional organizations have local chapters which meet anywhere from once a year to monthly, but they also usually have a large annual conference. Attending an annual conference will often cost with hotel, food, and transportation anywhere from \$1000 to \$2000. This can seem a huge amount for someone just starting off, but you can reduce your costs by staying in a non-conference hotel. Even if you cannot afford to go to the national conference, you may want to attend the state conference, or to join as a member anyway. This is because most professional organizations have professional publications which list job opportunities, and web site with member only sections.

To find out about professional organizations in your field, visit a professor who teaches classes in your specialization at a Ph.D. granting research university near you.

One web site that provides a searchable directory of a number of professional organizations in the United States is the American Society of Association Executives: <http://www.asaecenter.org/Directories/AssociationSearch.cfm?navItemNumber=16581>

Another is Associations on the Internet: <http://www.ipl.org/div/aon/>

Be sure to also use a search engine like google to search for a professional organization by typing in: "professional organization" and the field you are in. So for example, if you are a forester you would type in "professional organization forestry" in your search terms. A search would reveal a large number of organizations. Look for one that is National in scope such as the Society of American Foresters <http://www.safnet.org/> or the American Society for Public Administration www.aspa.org.

Please note that there is a difference between “industry associations” and “professional associations.” Professional organizations, seek to provide educational and networking opportunities, as well as information about the latest research in the field. Industry associations, such as the American Forest and Paper Association <http://www.afandpa.org/> for example, are usually organizations made up of commercial companies in the field. Sometimes, but not always, they are set up only to lobby for regulatory changes at the state or federal level. They may also, however, provide networking and educational opportunities as well.

Finding a job

The most important thing for a professional who is looking for work in the United States is to prepare a suitable resume or curriculum vitae, also known as a C.V. Resumes are usually used for non research positions, whereas C.V.s are used for positions requiring a Ph.D. or higher especially for teaching and/or research positions. C.V.s also tend to be more detailed than resumes and often follow a specific format. University of Illinois Urbana Champaign has excellent information on writing a curriculum vitae at: <http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/careerservices/academic/cvs/> Information on writing a cover letter, academic lingo, and other helpful information can also be found there. You can also find information on writing a resume at the UIUC web site at: <http://www.grad.uiuc.edu/careerservices/nonacademic/resumes/>

This information will hopefully help you get started. The UIUC Cook County Extension offers classes for immigrants on a variety of topics including how to look for a job. For more information on these classes, on information for immigrants, or to contact the author visit our website at: <http://web.extension.uiuc.edu/cook/immigrants.html>

Best wishes on your new career in the United States!