

International Qualifications Recognition

Background

Many immigrants come to Canada with professional credentials that are not recognized here. The recent report by the Royal Society of Canada notes that “skilled immigrants lose over \$11 billion annually in earnings because their credentials are not fully recognized, resulting in lost tax revenues for the country as a whole.” (RSC, p. 18) These skilled immigrants represent doctors, engineers, pharmacists, teachers, many skilled tradespeople, etc.

Internationally, a more holistic approach is being adopted that looks at **qualifications**, which are considered a combination of academic credentials + training + work experience + knowledge. [The Global Convention](#) ensures immigrants have a legal right to have their qualifications assessed for admission to further study or to find employment in another country.

For more about the Global Convention and its importance, please see Brendan O'Malley's article for University World News, "[Global convention on recognising HE qualifications adopted.](#)"

Assessing qualifications can lead to critical analyses of gaps and barriers and to creating bridging programs that will allow immigrants to proceed along clear pathways to have their qualifications recognized and to work in their fields. Immigrant professionals' integration into the workforce holds numerous benefits for Canada as well as for immigrants and their families.

International Medical Graduates and International Qualifications Recognition

Immigrant physicians are commonly called International Medical Graduates (IMGs) or as recently named at a national level as Internationally Trained Physicians (ITPs). For many years, IMGs have been a significant ISANS client group, including family physicians and specialists, those with many years of clinical experience, and more recent graduates. IMGs also remain as ISANS clients longer than those in other occupations due to the difficult and lengthy licensure process.

Nova Scotia's need for physicians is well known. Currently, ISANS is working with more than 100 internationally educated immigrant physicians who are permanent residents or provincial nominees in Nova Scotia and who are eager to practise their profession. These physicians are settled in the province with their families and do not intend to leave, so Nova Scotia has already retained them. However, the opportunities for them to have their qualifications recognized were limited.

Recently, the College of Physicians and Surgeons of NS (CPSNS), Department of Health and Wellness, NS Office of Immigration and other major partners created new pathways to licensure that include clinical assessment, defined licenses, etc. to respond to the increased demand for physicians. These new initiatives are only beneficial for new IMGs coming to the province because they still have recent practice. Many IMGs who has been in the province for more than 5 years, are considered now out of practice, their chances for licensure and employment are very limited.

It is important that the NS government consider providing more opportunities for immigrant physicians to proceed along the pathway to licensure through the following steps:

- Remove the 2-year training requirement in family medicine, which is currently a prerequisite for the Practice Ready Assessment (PRA) for family physicians. The 2-year training program in family medicine is a program that exists in only a few countries around the world, and most IMGs in Nova Scotia have not had the option to complete it. If the province wishes to keep the two-year requirement, we advise they create a bridging program for IMGs who do not meet it, then move them into the PRA and place them in rural communities with a return-for-service agreement.
- Increase availability for the medical clerkship at Dalhousie – there are currently only two spots each year in this program.
- Increase opportunities for clinical assistant/associate roles across the province as an alternative career.
- Open new spots in the new Clinical Assessment pilot program

More on Why Nova Scotia Needs International Qualifications Recognition

Current examples of the resulting issues that stem from evaluating credentials rather than qualifications include:

- Internationally educated teachers are often not able to get a license because they don't have a B.Ed., even though they may have a master's degree in education and 10 years of experience. Their work experience and education won't be considered for teaching licence without completing the required credit.
- Internationally educated teachers with experience teaching 4 and 5-year-old children are not eligible for classification as ECEs because they don't have formal education in child development for 0–3-year-olds.
- Individuals who have worked as medical lab technologists in their own countries and who have bachelor's and master's degrees in science, plus many years of experience, are not eligible for licensure as they don't have a specific MLT degree. The MLT degrees are available in specific countries of origin, and our clients are arriving from many countries where they may not have this specific training.
- International Pharmacy Graduates who need to complete 2-3 exams to become licensed, which takes up to 2 years before being able to start practicing.
- Internationally Educated Dentists are facing many challenges including expensive examination fees and delayed examination scheduling due to backlog and reduced number of exams.