

A Guide For Graduate Students Educated Outside the US

By Sandy Womack, Ed.D., Director of *EduPlan*, Educational Planning for Working Professionals

My counselors and I see many employees of high-tech firms who have been educated in countries other than the US. Sometimes these employees need more education, but are confused about where to start and unsure if their college credentials translate into a US degree.

Employees educated outside the US who come into the country for jobs usually have their credential evaluated by private companies. These “educational evaluations” usually show that the employee’s college credits, plus their work experience equals a degree in the US. This evaluation is to **obtain a job**, only, not to be used to gain admission into a local graduate program.

If you are employed, desire a graduate degree and have been educated outside the US, here are some suggestions for obtaining a US degree:

- 1) Have your overseas credentials evaluated by an accredited school or agency to see if your degree is equivalent to a US bachelor’s degree. There are 2 ways to obtain that information. One way would be to pick a college that offers the graduate program you desire and apply. The college, as part of the admission process, evaluates prior courses and credentials. The advantage is: There are no extra fees for the Foreign Transcript Evaluation. The disadvantage is: You may have to complete the entire admission process before getting the results and may be rejected if your transcripts show your degree is not U.S. equivalent.

Another way to see if you are eligible to apply to a graduate program would be to have your credentials evaluated before you apply. The National Association of Credential Evaluation Services, Inc. (NACES) has accredited private companies to perform this evaluation service. Most colleges will acknowledge the results by these private companies. The advantage of using a private evaluation service: You will know beforehand if your foreign credentials are U.S. equivalent. The disadvantage: There is a fee attached to this service of approximately \$100-\$150.

Some of the credential evaluation service providers are:

Educational Credential Evaluators, Inc. P.O. Box 514070; Milwaukee, WI 53203-3470; Telephone (414) 289-3412; <http://www.ece.org>

Academic Credentials Evaluation Institute; P.O. Box 6908; Beverly Hills, CA 90212; Telephone (310) 275-3530; <http://www.acei1.com>

Academic & Professional International Evaluations, Inc.; 2991 Brimhall Drive; Los Alamitos, CA 90720; Telephone (562) 594-6498

American Education Research Corporation; P.O. Box 996; West Covina, CA 91793-0996; Telephone (626) 339-4404; <http://www.aerc-eval.com>

World Education Services: 568 Broadway, Suite 301; P.O. Box 745; Old Chelsea Station; New York, NY 10013; Telephone (212) 966-6311; <http://www.wes.org>

- 2) Plan to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). Beginning in October 2000, the TOEFL test will be offered on computer. Results are immediate, instead of waiting the usual two months for results. Almost all graduate programs require the TOEFL for students educated outside the US. There are several good books and software available to study for the TOEFL. Check the website: <http://www.toefl.org>
- 3) Plan to take the Graduate Management Admission Test (GMAT) if applying for the MBA degree or the Graduate Record Exam (GRE) for non-business degrees: computer science, engineering, psychology, history, biology, etc. Information on taking those tests can be found on these websites: <http://www.gmac.com> or <http://www.gre.org> Check to see if your chosen college requires these admission tests or others, such as the Miller's Analogies Test.
- 4) Once you have your overseas transcript evaluated and it is declared "US equivalent" and you have taken the TOEFL, the application process to graduate school becomes the same as anyone educated in the US. Colleges will admit you from a combination of several criteria: undergraduate grades (or marks), GRE or GMAT scores, reputation of undergraduate institution, type of major, work experience, written recommendations and other factors.

If your overseas education is not equivalent to US standards, you may have to take courses required for a bachelor's degree. Academic advisors at your local college may be able to help you, or sign up for counseling with one of the *EduPlan* Counselors. Information on educational planning is found on the *EduPlan* Web site:
<http://www.eduplan.org>