



EQUIVALENCIES - CREDENTIAL EVALUATIONS WHEN ARE THEY NEEDED? QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Many new Mainers come to the US with college degrees and years of experience. They may be accountants, engineers or some type of medical professional. Most people are interested in knowing the value of their degrees or diplomas.

- Will an employer or school consider their previous education?
- Is their degree equal to a US degree? What is the equivalent degree?
- When is an evaluation of their degree necessary and who should do it?

The answer to these questions is **IT DEPENDS**.

Determining the US equivalent of a degree is a complicated process. It depends on:

- The individual
- Educational background and profession
- Type of job they are looking for
- English level
- Country where education was obtained
- Access to documents

Why do I need an evaluation?

- Work
- School
- License

Who is requesting the evaluation – is someone asking me for an evaluation of my degree?

- Employer

- School
- Professional Licensing Agency

What evaluators do they use, i.e. different professions, different licensing bodies, different schools, different employers have different requirements for who does the evaluation?

Whether it is a school, employer or licensing agency they will tell you how they want the evaluation done and who should do the evaluation.

There are different companies that do evaluations. There is a national association of some evaluation companies, NACES – National Association of Credential Evaluator Services - <http://www.naces.org/>. Most schools and employers will accept an evaluation done by one of the companies that belong to this group. Licensing entities for professions like doctors, nurses and engineers will have their own procedures and, agencies and requirements. Each agency will have different costs and requirements for how you will need to submit proof of your education.

If you think you want to go back to school how ready are you for entering a program?

- Why?
- What is the program?
- What are the English proficiency requirements?
- What is your English proficiency level?
- What are the other requirements for getting into the educational program?
- How close are you to meeting those requirements?
- What is the cost of the program, what are your financial resources for school, what other financial obligations do you have?
- What is the completion rate, graduation rate and financial burden (loans) people who enter the program leave with?
- **Be a smart consumer!**

What is your professional background?

If you have a technical background in engineering, computers or some science, it may be useful for you to have an evaluation done just to show an employer that you have the technical training to do the job. But if you are in a field that relies more on soft skills, your experience, your ability to communicate – your verbal and written communication skills and computer skills may be more important than what you studied in school.

What types of jobs will you be applying for?

Is it an entry level position or one that will require you to use your professional skills? For an entry level position, you will probably not need to show the equivalency of your degree. You may need to show that you have at least a high school diploma. This does not need to be a US

diploma. Many employers will not require proof. Of those that do, you could likely just show them an English translation of your diploma.

What is your English level?

If your English level (and computer skills) are not at the level necessary to do professional work in your field, you may first want to focus on improving these skills before you worry about an evaluation.

Do you have work authorization and if not, when do you expect to get it?

If you are not able to work yet, you may not need to have an evaluation done until you can work.

Can you afford to cover the cost of the evaluation and translation or can ASPIRE, WIOA or someone else cover it?

An evaluation, depending on the company that will do the evaluation and how many reports you order, this could cost between \$250 – 350.

Are your transcripts or diploma in English or will they need to be translated?

If your transcripts and diploma are not in English, you will need to have them translated by a certified translation service. This will cost about \$50/page. Transcripts and diploma could cost \$250 – 350.

Do you have a complete set of your transcripts and diploma? If needed could you get them sent from your school to the company that will do the evaluation?

It may not be worth having an evaluation done if you do not have a complete set of your transcripts and diploma. Some companies will accept copies, other require originals be sent to them, others require that your school send your transcripts and diploma to the evaluation company. For some licensing bodies they will only accept transcripts and diplomas sent from your school. Some also require that course descriptions be provided and of course these will need to be in English.

What information is provided in an evaluation report?

Most evaluation reports will include information about the school you attended and the entrance requirement into that school. It will list the dates you attended, the courses you took, the US equivalent of your grades for each course and the number of credits. It will discuss the length of your program and the grading scale from your school. It will provide your grade point average and the number of credits you took according to US standards. If your degree is the equivalent of a US degree, it will say something like – US Educational Equivalent – Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering from a regionally accredited college or university in the US. This means that this degree would be the same as if you graduated from University of

Southern Maine with a Bachelor's degree in electrical engineering. The degrees should be considered equal.

If your degree is not the equivalent of a US degree, it might say that you have the equivalent of 3 years or 4 years of study from a US regionally accredited college or university.

What are the main questions I should ask myself if I think I want to have an evaluation done?

The main questions to ask yourself are:

- **Why am I having it done?**
- **Who wants the evaluation report?**
- **How do they want the report done?**
- **Do I have or can I get the documents they need for the evaluation and submit them the way they want them submitted?**

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