

Prepared for: The Best Practices and Thematic Task Team

On the Current State of Pre-arrival Supports among Canadian Regulators

Final Report

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Executive Summary

Owing to the demographic realities of the twenty-first century, a strong and adaptive immigration strategy is essential to the continued growth and prosperity of the Canadian economy. Moreover the system which attracts, selects, and integrates skilled immigrants into the workforce must be competitive from an international perspective to ensure that the proverbial best and brightest choose Canada as their preferred destination.

In an effort to articulate the fundamental aspects involved in assessing the qualifications of skilled immigrants, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM) released “A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications”. The framework “describes the ideal steps and processes that governments aspire to build in order to address the current gaps to successful immigrant labour market integration”. A vital component of the Framework involves the provision of “pre-arrival” supports to prospective applicants who may be seeking to become licensed in a regulated profession; this component is the focus of the research described herein.

Few studies have examined the status and nature of pre-arrival supports in Canada and the benefits they afford both applicants and regulators. To this end, the Best Practices and Thematic Task Team (BPTT), a subcommittee of the Foreign Qualifications Working Group (FQRWG), has commissioned research on this topic.

While there are a number of organizations in Canada that may be involved in the provision of such supports (colleges, universities, employers, government, assessment agencies, settlement groups, etc.), this study focuses solely on the activities of the 14 “priority” or “target” occupations designated by the FLMM. These include: Accounting, Architecture, Dentistry, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Medical Laboratory Technology, Medical Radiation Technology, Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Nursing (Registered and Practical) and Teaching.

To this end, primary (interviews with key informants) and secondary research (a literature review) were conducted with the following overarching goals:

- To identify the range of pre-arrival supports currently in use in these 14 target occupations;
- To highlight and describe categories of innovative tools, supports and initiatives;
- To outline promising practices related to each of these categories;
- To identify any challenges or issues related to the administration of pre-arrival supports; and,
- To share this information with regulators and other stakeholders in order to help inform the refinement of existing programs and creation of new pre-arrival supports for skilled immigrants seeking professional licensure in Canada.

Based on an analysis of collected data, a number of categories of pre-arrival supports were identified. These include: clear and accessible information, self-assessment or readiness tools, mutual recognition agreements, personalized support, and other initiatives aimed at expediting the assessment process (i.e. documentation polices, certification exam preparation, offshore exam administration). While not

technically a type of support, a final category dubbed “a proactive philosophy” was also identified as an important aspect of the pre-arrival support process.

A review and analysis of selected examples taken from each category yielded a set of “promising practices” for each category. These selections were based on a number of factors including: maturity of the program, access to quality information, use of innovative/proactive practices, and applicability to other regulated professions. A summary of these promising practices are set out below.

I - Clear and Accessible Information

- Provides a single portal approach for international applicants – information and links in one place
- Offers information in both official languages where possible
- Is written using plain language principles and for an international audience
- Uses charts and diagrams to summarize and simplify information
- Provides context and explanation of how the profession is regulated
- Provides context and explanation of practice nature and environment
- Provides context and explanation of assessment and licensing process (guides)
- Sets out an estimate of application/assessment processing timelines, decision points and associated costs
- Provides applicants with a rationale for assessment/licensure requirements
- Includes information or links to relevant labour market information

II - Self-Assessment Tools

- Is linked to, and references the profession’s “Canadian” practice standard
- Includes links to related information (i.e. application forms, regulatory bodies, etc.)
- Provides applicants with a “reality check” in regards to their likelihood in becoming licensed in Canada
- Is sustainable and systematically maintained and updated
- Provides additional context (labour market and practice conditions in Canada, etc.)

III - Mutual Recognition Agreements

- Describes the nature of the agreement (i.e. legal MRA or unilateral research)
- Are clearly written and readily available for potential candidates to review
- Explains clearly which groups are eligible for licensure under the MRA
- Clearly describe the outcomes of the agreement to the applicant
- Employs a regular system for review and updating
- Expedites the assessment and recognition process in a meaningful way

IV - Personalized Support

- Offers clear information on the licensure and application process and other potentially relevant topics
- Allows for an approach customizable based on applicant needs
- Where possible, is carried out in real time (i.e. in person, over the telephone or via webinar)

V - Documentation Polices

- Allows applicants to complete as much of the assessment/licensure process in home country
- Provides clear details on documentation requirements (types of documents - transcripts, diplomas, etc.)
- Provides clear details on acceptable documentation (i.e. originals, certified copies) and translation requirements
- Employs a system where official documents only need to be provided once during the application and assessment process
- Has a practical and expeditious method of receiving, validating and housing documents

VI - Certification Exam Preparation

- Provides clear information on the structure, site, offerings, and cost of the exam
- Provides applicants with an exam blueprint or equivalent explaining the content of the exam
- Provides applicants with a series of sample questions based on the exam blueprint
- Orients applicants to the nature and purpose the exam (e.g. information on “what is a competency based exam” or “how to approach a multiple choice exam”)
- Provides reference materials and a textbook list for self-study

VII - Offshore Exam Administration

- Ensures that the exam and associated materials are secure
- Has appropriate onsite personnel to effectively invigilate the exam and arrange for any special needs
- Assesses to the same standards as Canadian-educated applicants
- Partners with appropriate organizations to administer the exam, whether it be third party examination organizations or accredited programs
- Is offered on a cost effective basis.

VIII – A Proactive Philosophy

- Has systems and people in place to resolve pre-arrivals issues early/quickly
- Continually analyzes and refines communications with applicants to make pre-arrivals materials clearer
- Puts “pre-arrivals” issues on the agenda of the organization
- Keeps statistics and track of results, including website visits, successful outcomes
- Creates solutions to issues of offering services overseas

Generally speaking, there are already excellent examples of pre-arrival supports currently being administered by regulators, associations and other groups involved in the recognition of international qualifications. It is hoped that the provision of both general information (i.e. regarding the various categories and types of supports that exist) coupled with a more granular analysis (i.e. of promising practices and illustrative, real-life examples) can be used to help inform the creation of new and beneficial pre-arrival supports for skilled immigrants. Successful execution of this aspect of the

Framework is critical in ensuring that Canada continues to attract and expeditiously integrate the world's most qualified skilled immigrants.

Introduction

The regulatory environment in Canada has changed markedly in the past decade. The inauguration of provincial “Fairness” legislation in certain jurisdictions requires that assessment processes employed by regulators adhere to the watchwords of: fairness, transparency, objectivity and impartiality. International legislation, such as the “Lisbon Convention”, necessitates that those organizations involved in evaluating and recognizing international credentials do so within a prescribed set of conditions. Chapter 7 of the “Internal Agreement on Trade” provides that any professional licensed/registered in one of Canada’s jurisdictions (including the internationally educated cohort), be registered in another without any further material requirement.

Equally significant, has been the implementation of the “Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications”. Released in 2009 and authored by the Forum of Labour Market Ministers (FLMM), the framework “describes the ideal steps and processes that governments aspire to build in order to address the current gaps to successful immigrant labour market integration”¹. A central component of this document involves the illustration of the discrete, “Pathways to Recognition in Canada” that exist as part of the framework (see Appendix A). The provision of preparation and “pre-arrival supports” is the first element of this pathway and is the focus of the research described herein.

The need for the provision of more enhanced pre-arrival supports to prospective applicants is a priority for many regulated professions in Canada. In a summary of a recent conference of regulators the creation of tools such as, “videos about practice in Canadian context; online practice exams, self-assessment tools”² were specifically cited as areas that could help to improve and expedite the applicant experience. This sentiment is echoed by similar research which states there is “a strong appetite for a variety of information products, self-assessment tools and for formal assessment processes and upgrading opportunities to be undertaken before arrival. This would help enable applicants to move more quickly through the recognition process once they arrive in Canada”³.

Few studies in Canada have been conducted which examine the structure and delivery of pre-arrivals supports and the practical benefits they afford both applicants and regulators. To this end, the Best Practices and Thematic Task Team (BPTT) a subcommittee of the Foreign Qualifications Working Group (FQRWG), has commissioned research on this topic. In an FQRWG consultation held in March 2013, regulators indicated that they would find it helpful to learn about different approaches current used and share information about their practices with other occupations.

There are numerous bodies in Canada involved in the assessment and recognition of international qualifications. These include colleges, universities, employers, government, assessment agencies, settlement groups and others. As a result, some or all of these groups may have also developed pre-arrival supports as part of their overall assessment/recognition strategy. With that said, this study focuses on the activities of the 14 “priority” or “target” occupations designated by the FLMM:

¹ Forum of Labour Market Ministers (2009), “A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications”.

² Canadian Network of National Associations of Regulators (CNNAR) – Conference Report (2010), “Focus on Qualification Assessment and Recognition”.

³ K. Cohl, N. Alboim, (2010), “Ideas & Issues for FQR Working Group Meeting”.

Accounting, Architecture, Dentistry, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Medical Laboratory Technology, Medical Radiation Technology, Medicine, Pharmacy, Physiotherapy, Nursing (Registered and Practical) and Teaching.

Interviews with representatives from national associations in each of these professions were conducted. Findings were complimented by a literature review of selected reports and publications.

The associated goals of this research are:

- To identify the range of pre-arrival supports currently in use in these 14 target occupations;
- To highlight and describe categories of innovative tools, supports and initiatives;
- To outline promising practices related to each of these categories;
- To identify any challenges or issues related to the administration of pre-arrival supports;
- To share this information with regulators and other stakeholders in order to help inform the refinement of existing programs and creation of new pre-arrival supports for skilled immigrants seeking professional licensure in Canada.

This report is divided into four broad sections. The first provides definitions related to what constitutes a “pre-arrival support” and the associated benefits to both the regulators and applicant. The perceived effect associated with this aspect of the FQR framework is summarized as well. In the second section an account of the various activities undertaken by each of the 14 priority professions is provided. A discussion and analysis section sets out the dominant categories of supports that have emerged as part of this research. In this section, promising practices related to each specific category are articulated and examples provided. Information related to the design, development, funding and delivery of these examples is also documented. A final, fourth section proffers a set of overarching recommendations for future action in this area.

Methodology

An iterative approach has been employed in regard to the research set out herein. Firstly, an inventory of current pre-arrival practices used by the 14 priority professions was undertaken through a series of interviews with various key informants. An initial set of contact names were provided by the BPTT, with other informants identified through referrals where more information was needed.

Interviews were based on a semi-structured format. A number of core questions related to the philosophical objectives and importance of pre-arrival supports as well as specific details related to any existing or planned initiatives were posed to interviewees. These included:

- How would you define “pre-arrival” support(s) in the context of internationally educated applicants?
- What tools and/or supports has your organization implemented in regards to pre-arrival for international applicants?
- Are there any supports /tools you are considering implementing in the future?
- Are you aware of any other “pre-arrival” practices and/or tools currently in use by other organizations in your profession?
- What effect has the existence of the FQR Framework had on your organization’s pre-arrival work?

General categories of pre-arrival supports were established based on the findings from this initial phase. Certain examples were identified as warranting further investigation. A series of follow-up interviews and additional secondary research were undertaken in this regard. The criteria which contributed to the identification these examples included:

- Programs that are regarded as “innovative” by informants;
- Mature programs that offer sufficient information for description and analysis;
- Programs that were designed to benefit both the regulator and the applicant;
- Programs espousing a proactive approach;
- Access to quality information and key informants who are able to provide a depth of information related to the program;
- Programs that are potentially transferable to other regulated professions;
- And, programs that have been recognized in the professional literature or received favourable mention in professional forums (e.g. International Qualifications Network (IQN) award, the Office of the Fairness Commissioner of Ontario (OFC) exemplary practice database).

Based on an analysis of these, a series of “promising practices” were distilled. An account of these practices is included for each category of pre-arrival support. A literature review was also undertaken to provide supplemental information and context related to both the general need/benefits of pre-arrival supports and additional detail on specific initiatives. Sources included academic journals, government reports, and studies undertaken by specific regulators. Citations have been interspersed throughout the report.

It is hoped that the provision of both general information (i.e. regarding the various categories and types of supports that exist) coupled with a more granular analysis (i.e. of promising practices and illustrative, real-life examples) can be used to help inform the creation of new and beneficial pre-arrival supports for skilled immigrants.

In total 29 interviews were conducted; a summary of these is provided in the table below.

Profession	Interviewee	Position	Organization	Date
Health Professions				
Pharmacy	Carole Bouchard	Executive Director	National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities	December 13, 2013
Occupational Therapy	Kathy Corbett	Registrar	Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations	December 10, 2013
Medical Radiation Technology	Elaine Dever	Director of Education	Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists	November 27, 2013
Practical Nursing	Paul Fisher	Executive Director	College of Licensed Practical Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador	December 19, 2013
Dentistry	Jack Gerrow	Executive Director	National Dental Examining Board	December 11, 2013
Medicine	Yves Lafortune	Director, Evaluation Bureau	Medical Council Of Canada	February 28, 2014
Dentistry	Rob Lees	Manager of Registration	Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario	December 11, 2013
Medicine	Fleur-Ange Lefebvre	Chief Executive Officer	Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities	December 10, 2013
Medical Radiation Technology	Giulia Nastase	Project Manager	Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists	November 27, 2013
Medical Laboratory Science	Christine Nielsen	Chief Executive Officer	Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science	December 19, 2013
Registered Nursing	Mary-Anne Robinson	Chair	National Nursing Association and CEO, College and Association of Registered Nurses of Alberta	February 10, 2014
Health Care	Jasmine Singh	Associate Director, Access Centre	HealthForce Ontario	December 17, 2013
Physiotherapy	Diana Sinnige	Program Manager, Credentialling	Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators	December 17, 2013
Occupational Therapy	Elizabeth Steggles	Professional Affairs Executive	Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists	December 19, 2013
Medicine	Cindy Streefkerk	Consultant/Facilitator	Medical Council of Canada	January 14, 2014
Non-Health Professions				
Engineering	Kim Allen	Chief Executive Officer	Engineers Canada	January 14, 2013
Accounting	Anne-Marie Gammon	VP, Program Development	CMA Canada	December 18, 2013
Engineering	Gordon Griffith	Practice Lead – Assessments	Engineers Canada	February 18, 2014
Accounting	Lyle Handfiled	VP, International and Corporate Affairs	CGA Canada	November 27, 2013
Architecture	Mourad Mohamed-Said	Executive Director	Canadian Architecture Certification Board	January 8, 2014
Teaching	Natasha Sawh	CICIC Coordinator	Council of Ministers of Education, Canada	January 7, 2014
Engineering	Rick Tachuk	Director,	Canadian Council of Technicians	January 29, 2014

Technology		Communications and Government Relations	and Technologists	
Accounting	Doretta Thompson	Principal, Education Services	Chartered Professional Accountants of Canada	December 2, 2013
Other Interviewees				
Government of British Columbia	Kelly Best	Senior Program Manager	Ministry of Jobs, Tourism & Skills Training	January 9, 2014
Government of Ontario	Ursula Lipski	Manager, Global Experience Ontario	Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration	February 18, 2014
General	Kelly McKnight	Project Lead	Self Assessment Readiness Tools (SART), Atlantic Connection	February 28, 2014
General	Cynthia Murphy	Director, CIIP	Association of Canadian Community Colleges	December 16, 2013
General	Jane Wojcik	Research Consultant	Atlantic Connection	February 28, 2014
Government of Alberta	Patrick Yu	Senior Labour Mobility Advisor	Government of Alberta	December 17, 2013

Preliminary Comments and Findings

Roles and Responsibilities

There many types of organizations which have a role/stake in providing pre-arrival support to skilled immigrants. A brief mention of four groups referred to in this report (government, provincial regulatory bodies, national associations/alliances, and settlement agencies) is helpful at the outset.

Federal Government

Under Canada's Constitution, responsibility for immigration is shared between the federal and provincial/territorial governments. The Government of Canada provides strategic leadership to foster the development of common approaches to FCR through three federal departments Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Health Canada.

The federal government of Canada makes all final decisions about who is ultimately admitted and the number of immigrants coming to Canada each year. CIC is the primary body responsible for receiving and processing applications for immigration.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) is the primary body responsible for receiving and processing applications for immigration. From a pre-arrival perspective, CIC has a mandate to "actively guide, monitor and facilitate the implementation of foreign credential recognition processes by working closely with federal partners, provinces and territories, immigrant serving organizations, employers, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders to improve the foreign credential recognition processes in Canada and overseas⁴. CIC also provides contribution funding to third parties to deliver key services and tools to skilled immigrants overseas including: online self-assessment modules, mentoring initiatives and employer recruitment⁵.

This report also references Health Canada and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), two departments of the federal government which also play a role in supporting the development of pre-arrival tools and projects. Health Canada, through the Internationally Educated Health Professionals Initiative (IEHPI), provides contribution funding and support to provinces, territories and national stakeholders for a variety of activities related to foreign qualification recognition (FQR) processes for internationally educated health professionals. Health Canada projects cross the range of the FQR pathway and includes pre-arrival information on the pathways to licensure, assessments, training, orientation and other supports to facilitate the integration of internationally educated health professionals into the Canadian health workforce. A number of these tools and supports are available pre-arrival. For example, the development a number of Self Assessment Readiness Tools (SARTs) for health professions by the Atlantic Connection and online practice exams developed by the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT).

ESDC provides a range of supports to provinces and territories and stakeholders to advance the development of FQR systems under the Pan Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition

⁴ Citizenship and Immigration, Canada – "What we do", <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/what.asp> (accessed March 1, 2014).

⁵ Citizenship and Immigration, Canada – "Strengthening Canada's Economy – Government of Canada Progress Report 2011 on Foreign Credential Recognition" <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/resources/publications/fcro/progress-report2011.asp> (accessed March 1, 2014).

of Foreign Qualifications. Through contribution agreements, the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) provides financial assistance to streamline credential recognition processes of key in-demand occupations. Investments have included support for projects focused on the development of pre-arrival supports to assist in the pathway to licensure. The FCRP also supports provincial and territorial governments in building their FCR capacity.

New Requirement for Educational Credential Assessment for Immigration Purposes

Regulatory changes to modernize the Federal Skilled Worker Program (FSWP) came into force May, 2013. These changes included the introduction of a mandatory requirement that Federal Skilled Worker (FSW) applicants have their foreign educational credentials assessed and verified by designated organizations as part of their immigration application.

Four multi-purpose educational assessment organizations (World Education Services, International Credential Assessment Service of Canada, and Comparative Education Service) and two professional bodies (Medical Council of Canada and Pharmacy Examining Board of Canada) have been designated by CIC to provide ECA services for immigrant selection purposes.

An Educational Credential Assessment (ECA) is used to verify that a foreign degree, diploma, certificate (or other proof of credential) is valid and equal to a completed credential in Canada.

Provincial/Territorial Governments

The provincial/territorial governments share responsibility with the federal government for the settlement and integration of immigrants. Provincial/territorial government departments work in partnership with municipalities and community organizations to ensure services are available to newcomers. Services of particular importance to immigrants include: language training, settlement services, labour market integration services, educational, credential and skills recognition.

Representatives from provincial governments, who were interviewed as part of this exercise, indicated that their goal from a pre-arrival perspective is to provide information about working, living and settling in their particular provinces. This is often facilitated through the development (and/or funding) of profession specific fact-sheets, online self-assessment tools and other supports⁶.

Provincial Regulators

Typically, regulators or “regulatory colleges” are given their powers from provincial legislation allowing for self-regulation of a given profession. These organizations have “exclusive authority to determine eligibility for, and to issue, licences to practise a specific occupation or set of occupations. Regulatory bodies set the minimum standards of practice for many professions”⁷. As evidenced in this report, the extent to which regulators are involved in providing pre-arrival supports to prospective immigrant/suplicants is varied. At a minimum they are required to provide clear and accessible information on the application, assessment and licensing process. It should be noted that Quebec, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and Ontario have legislation that requires regulators to provide registration

⁶ Interviews were conducted with Kelly Best, Senior Program Manager, Government of British Columbia (January 9, 2014) and Patrick Yu, Senior Labour Mobility Advisory, Government of Alberta (December 17, 2013).

⁷ Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, “English Terminology Guide for Academic Credential Assessment in Canada – Regulatory Body”, <http://terminologies.cicic.ca/app/?id=157> (accessed March 1, 2014).

practices that are fair and transparent. With that said, many regulators have taken a more progressive approach in these areas and have developed extensive tools aimed at reaching and supporting applicants in their home country.

National Associations/Alliances

While the assessment of applicants for licensure is primarily the responsibility of the provincial regulatory college, some professions have devolved/shared some activities (including the provision of pre-arrival supports) to non-regulatory bodies. These groups are often national associations or pan-Canadian “alliances” of regulators. Such organizations often will work collaboratively with their members on the development of pre-arrival supports, tools and information on behalf of their entire profession.

In some professions, the assessment of internationally educated applicants has been centralized. For example, applicants seeking to become licensed as either physiotherapists or medical laboratory technologies will apply to a central body rather than a provincial regulatory college. These bodies conduct prior learning assessment to determine “substantial equivalency” (or “substantial difference”) of applicants and also administer certification exams on behalf their member regulators⁸. With that said, the final responsibility for all licensing decisions remains solely that of the provincial regulator.

As well, national associations or similar professional bodies are generally responsible for negotiating mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with overseas jurisdictions (i.e. Dentistry, Engineering, Engineering Technology, Accounting). In most cases, the terms of the MRA are developed by the national organization; subsequently individual provincial regulators will sign on at their own discretion.

Settlement Agencies

Settlement agencies and other immigrant serving organizations also play a role in providing pre-arrival supports. While much of their work is carried out once an individual has landed in Canada, interviews suggest that in many cases they work with governments and regulators in the development and dissemination of relevant pre-arrival information. Examples of these partnerships (specifically in the creation of self-assessment tools) are cited in this report.

“Pre-Arrival Support” Definitions

On the whole, informants interviewed as part of this research had a fairly similar understanding of what constitutes a “pre-arrival support”. The following characteristics appeared frequently in responses.

- Is accessible prior to departing for Canada ideally in an immigrant’s home country;
- Can be done, as a part of, or prior to submission of an “official” application for licensure;
- Can be related to any or all aspects of the assessment and recognition process;
- Helps immigrants determine which “Canadian” profession they most closely fit into based on their specific qualifications;
- Helps an applicant to decide to, or not to apply for licensure (and/or immigrate to Canada);

⁸ Reference here is made to the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators and the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science who administer PLAR and exams on behalf of all provincial regulators except for Quebec.

- Can also be considered as “pre-departure”;
- And instructs immigrants what they should do before you they leave their home country and what they will need to do once in Canada.

There was also a sense that pre-arrivals be administered “as soon as possible” in the application process and that as much information as the immigrant or applicant needs be provided at that time. A working definition of “pre-arrival support” is tendered below based on the views and feedback from key informants interviewed as part of this research.

Pre-arrival supports for prospective applicants of regulated professions are activities can be undertaken by government, regulatory bodies, national associations and other groups with a vested interest in ensuring the integration of skilled immigrants into the workforce. They are developed with purposes of informing, orienting and expediting entry into the relevant profession for qualified applicants. There are a few key goals of pre-arrival supports:

- To provide information that makes it easier for an immigrant to assess their career options and make informed decisions.
- To provide opportunities and supports which allow an immigrant to take as much action related to the assessment/licensing process as possible while in their home country, prior to arriving in Canada.
- To facilitate entry into the regulatory environment as efficiently and smoothly as possible. This may involve interacting with immigrants on a number of levels, while they are still in their home country.

Pre-arrival supports are founded on the premise that it is often easier and more cost-effective for immigrants to make key decisions and take relevant actions regarding entry into a profession while still in their home countries.

Perceived Benefits of Pre-Arrival Supports

Representatives of regulatory bodies were asked to comment on the overall benefits they feel are associated with the provision of quality pre-arrival supports both to the applicant and to the organization as a whole. Three categories of responses were identified and described below.

Managing Expectations: The most often cited benefit among interviewees was that appropriate pre-arrival supports help to manage applicant expectations. Many immigrants arrive in Canada with limited understanding of the licensing process that is required for many professions. As such, the types of assessments required, costs and timelines involved are often a shock to skilled newcomers. The provision of timely and accurate information at numerous points through the immigration and assessment process along with opportunities for self-assessment and personal reflection can help to align an immigrant’s expectations with the realities of the Canadian regulatory system. In this way the immigrant can make a more informed decision of whether to seek licensure in a given profession or perhaps consider an alternate career.

Getting the Right Applicants: Many regulators have noted that the pool of applicants seeking licensure in their profession is quite varied. That is to say some have qualifications that are very near to Canadian standards and others would require years of remediation before their skills and knowledge are considered substantially equivalent to that of a Canadian graduate. As a result, it is possible that the job of a licensed/registered practitioner may not be the most practical and fulfilling choice for these individuals. By enabling potential applicants to self-assess their qualifications relative to Canadian standards as early as possible, it is hoped that those with significant gaps may consider other opportunities. As a result, strong pre-arrival supports could help to “triage” individuals, helping those who are likely to be successful navigate the licensing process and providing others with of potential alternate careers options to consider.

Faster Turnaround Times: Many interviewees also felt that the provision of clear and accessible information coupled with an informed understanding of the licensure process and practice environment in Canada lead directly to a more streamlined assessment process and shorter overall processing times. This is of particular benefit to applicants who are often “underemployed” or working subsistence jobs during the assessment processes. A study conducted by RA Malatest & Associates on behalf of the Ontario Fairness Commissioner, demonstrates that a majority of the domestic professionals (58%) took less than a year to get licensed, compared to 21% of international professionals. The report goes on to show that half of the international professionals (50%) took 1-2 years... (29%) took three or more years to get their licenses”⁹.

Labour Market Considerations: A final, less frequently cited benefit associated with quality pre-arrival supports relates to labour market conditions. Some regulators acknowledge that while meeting labour shortages in certain areas is not their primary responsibility, there is pressure from governments, industry and the public to get skilled immigrant working as fast as possible. An emphasis on the pre-arrival aspect of the FQR framework may help to address these pressured. By pushing as much of the assessment process “upstream” to the applicants home country, there is a greater likelihood that the individuals who successfully arrive in Canada will be: i) better informed with what is required in the Canadian work environment, and ii) further into the assessment process and therefore close to entering the labour market.

Perceived Effect of the FQR Framework

Interviewees were also asked to comment on the effect the introduction of the FLMM FQR framework in 2009 has had on their activities related to pre-arrival supports. Two schools (roughly equal in size) of responses were evident. In general, the first group felt that the introduction of the framework had little to no effect on their assessment models and practices. With that said, they did indicate that while the majority of the aspects set out in the framework were already in place for their profession it did give them the assurance that they were operating in line with best practices and therefore was of benefit. This finding echoes previous research in this area, where “national regulatory contacts indicated that it

⁹ R.A. Malatest & Associates Ltd. (2010), “Getting your Professional Licensing in Ontario: the experiences of international and Canadian applicants” Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

was not the framework that motivated them – they were already on their way – but it validated their activities, confirmed their directions, or reinforced their work”¹⁰.

In contrast, the second group, considered the establishment of the framework to have a more significant effect on their profession. Respondents indicated that it has forced them to consider all aspects of the assessment process including the provision of pre-arrival supports. For professions that were once fragmented in their approach to the assessment of international applicants, the framework has provided a single reference point. Many interview respondents indicated that it serves to galvanize cooperation and collaboration among provincial/territorial regulators.

In general, the Framework was seen as a positive addition in support of the assessment and recognition of skilled immigrants. For those organizations contacted, it either served to enforce and validate current practices related to the provision of pre-arrival supports or motivated the development of new and innovative practices.

¹⁰ K. Cohl, N. Alboim, (2012), “Preliminary findings from interviews with national regulatory and provincial fairness offices”, Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications – FQR Working Group.

Inventory of Pre-Assessment Tools

In the following section a summary on current and planned pre-arrival initiatives for each of the priority professions is provided. Each consists of a narrative overview and a tabular inventory of noteworthy tools and supports. The professions are listed in alphabetical order below.

Accounting

The profession of accounting in Canada is in a significant period of restructuring at the time of this report. A massive merger between three designations (Chartered Accountant – CA, Certified Management Accountant – CMA, Certified General Accountant - CGA) is underway at both the level of the provincial/territorial regulatory college and among national associations. At its conclusion, all members will hold a single designation: Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA). As a result, a collective account of pre-arrival tools currently available for the entire profession of accounting is provided. Note that during the course of the merger, some initiatives in this regard have been postponed, cancelled or altered to meet the new structures associated with the CPA designation^{11,12,13}.

The mechanisms employed by regulators to ensure overall competency and public safety are driven to a large extent by the particular pressures faced by that profession. This is very true in the case of accounting. Global financial markets and corporate structures have expanded and evolved markedly in the last few decades. As such, the focus of financial reporting and accounting become international in nature with Canadian regulators responding in kind. Well before the advent of the “Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications” international credential recognition, including the development of pre-arrival supports, has been a priority for regulators. Much of the efforts in this area have been directed at expediting the assessment and recognition process. While, many of the initiatives developed for the accounting professions are in a period of flux due to the merger process, extensive work has been done in the area of Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs).

By example, the International Qualifications Board (IQAB) (a group working on behalf of Chartered Accountants) has developed an extensive series of MRAs with international jurisdictions. Holders of specific qualifications from these jurisdictions are not required to pass the Uniform Evaluation (UFE) (i.e. the profession’s certification exam) as a condition of licensure. Significant research was undertaken by the IQAB to understand the education, skills and qualifications possessed by those with certain international credentials. Based on this work, the IQAB has recommended that those with one of 14 selected international credentials be granted exemption from the UFE. MRA agreements are re-assessed every five years. These agreements may persist through the unification process and are currently valid until 2015.

¹¹ Information on “pre-arrival” practices administered for the CA designation gathered from an interview with Doretta Thompson, Principal of Education Services at the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (December 2, 2013).

¹² Information on “pre-arrival” practices administered for the CMA designation gathered from an interview with Anne-Marie Gammon VP, Program Development at the CMA Canada (December 18, 2013).

¹³ Information on “pre-arrival” practices administered for the CGA designation gathered from an interview with Lyle Handfield, VP, International and Corporate Affairs at the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants (November 27, 2013).

Similarly, CMA Canada has negotiated three such agreements: two with associations in the United Kingdom and the third with CPA Australia. CGA Canada has four active MRAs with groups in: United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia and France. Approximately 1,000 individuals have made use of the CGA MRAs for mobility purposes in the past five years.

For those not covered by the agreements listed above, the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants has developed a web portal designed specifically for internationally educated applicants (<http://www.becomeacaincanada.ca/>). Another portal for international applicants representing all three designations can be found at: <http://www.accountantstocanada.org>. This site includes a self-assessment tool aimed at giving applicants a preliminary evaluation of their education and a way to learn if they are entitled to any educational program exemptions.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Accounting

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
MRAs – CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fourteen MRA agreements, 2 memorandum of understanding and six non-equivalent jurisdictions based on research http://www.cica.ca/becoming-a-ca/item55869.aspx
MRAs – CMA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three agreements (UK & Australia) http://www.cma-canada.org/index.cfm?ci_id=17431&la_id=1
MRAs – CGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four agreements (UK, Ireland, France, Australia) http://www.cga-canada.org/en-ca/International/Pages/International.aspx

Architecture

The Canadian Architectural Certification Board (CACB) is the organization that assesses international applicants' credentials for those seeking licensure in Canada. CACB Academic Certification is the first of three steps on the pathway to licensure in Architecture in Canada before Internship and the Exam. Provincial/Territorial regulator websites refer international applicants to the CACB website for this purpose. Canadian internships are a very important part of the certification process because candidates need exposure to and practical understanding of local building codes and practices. While CACB can implement a number of pre-arrivals supports, internships must be done in Canada because of their importance in the process.

In terms of pre-arrival Assessment, CACB allows for an individual to complete the entire application process while abroad. A form is available online and there is general contact information for applicants, but no specific person specified to directly assist an applicant through the process. CACB is working to launch an interactive online application as opposed to a downloaded form.

CACB Academic Certification Process assesses only academic credentials (no experience) against the Canadian Education Standard, which is attached to each application and also available on the website.

In 2012, the Regulators put in place an alternative path to licensure for foreign licensed Architects and mandated the CACB for its administration under the name of Broadly Experienced Foreign Architects (BEFA) Program. The BEFA Certification Process assesses experience against the Pan-Canadian standards of competency for practice in Canada. BEFA allows licensed Architects applicants who meet the

eligibility criteria to undergo a streamlined application process. Since the program started in 2012, 80 applicants have applied and 16 have become licensed architects¹⁴. The remainder are still working through the assessment process. Though the BEFA program is a more holistic approach based on experience to getting architects certified in Canada, there are a number of factors in the program that can be defined as a pre-arrival support:

- Part of BEFA is designed to give applicants comfort in the fact that there is a process in place that will recognize their experience towards helping them get certified.
- The CACB website offers an online BEFA application tool and the option of providing scanned documents to get the application process started (though originals are still required to be delivered via courier).
- There is a “Self-Assessment” document to help applicants through the process. There is also an email address provided for a BEFA co-ordinator who can specifically help with the application.
- The website also contains an area for financial assistance and success stories to give applicants a sense of how the program works.

It is important to note that BEFA program requires six months of Canadian experience which exposes applicants to the practice and regulatory requirements of architecture in Canada. This experience must be gained under the personal supervision and direction of a registered/licensed architect within the Canadian province or territory in which applicants intend to be licensed/registered. CACB invites individuals to contact the provincial/territorial regulators to begin the process of finding information that will help them to find a Canadian placement as it does not offer services in this area. Immigrant serving agencies may also assist in this regard. With that said, the fast-track process along with the information on the website gives individuals who are thinking about a career in architecture in Canada the opportunity to learn specific details about the program, read profiles about successful BEFA applicants and make better and informed decisions about a career in architecture in Canada.

CACB considers that pre-arrival assessment as well as the whole Assessment Process will be considerably enhanced and strengthened by an efficient and focused pre-arrivals support. To that extent, CACB suggests that in-person information sessions that can be held directly offshore to support the decisions to enter architecture is the best and efficient option. CACB has neither the mandate nor the budget to do that. However, it will be interested in collaborating with CIC in the future if solicited. CACB says that communication of relevant and timely material related to accessing the labour market is critical. Interviewees emphasized the need for greater CIC involvement in the information sharing process while applicants are overseas. The CACB feels that more accurate information needs to be given to applicants by CIC, particularly in regards to the difference between credential assessments as part of the immigration process (i.e. the Educational Credential Assessment requirement) and the required assessment and process related to professional registration and licensure. CACB does not accept any third party assessment towards licensure. Therefore, to avoid confusion and costly duplication, Interviewees should be provided with clear indication, that if they are interested in licensure in Canada,

¹⁴ Interview With Mourad Mohamed-Said, Canadian Architecture Certification Board (January 8, 2014).

they need CACB Academic Certification and the CACB is the sole organization recognized by the architectural profession in Canada to assess the educational qualifications of architecture graduates; this is an important distinction to sort out in terms of pre-arrivals support. CACB has brought this situation to CIC's attention.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Architecture

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Academic Certification Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of the BEFA program focusing on general aspects of the program, modes of certification and the application forms: http://www.cacb-ccca.ca/certification
BEFA Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An overview of the BEFA program focusing on general aspects of the program http://www.cacb-ccca.ca/index.cfm?M=3943&Repertoire_No=660386109&Voir=menu Eligibility requirement clearly discussed including seven years of practice in the home country and six months of practice under a Canadian architect - http://www.cacb-ccca.ca/index.cfm?Voir=sections&Id=16731&M=3943&Repertoire_No=660386109
BEFA Self Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows applicants to submit work and demonstrate competencies in a number of areas in support of their application. The following link shows the guide to the self assessment which can be completed overseas. https://befaonline.cacb.ca/HelpAndGuides/ENG/BEFA%20Self-Assessment-Guide-Eng-Final.pdf
Links To Provincial Regulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Linking to provincial regulators so that overseas applicants know that they must get in touch with provincial regulators as well for their final steps in licensing http://www.cacb-ccca.ca/index.cfm?Repertoire_No=660386109&Voir=liens_rech&Categorie_No=826

Dentistry

The National Dental Examining Board (NDEB) is responsible for establishing and maintaining a national standard of competence for dentists throughout Canada. At the direction of the Provincial Dental Regulatory Boards, the NDEB began an "Equivalency Process" in 2010. This process provides an alternate route to certification as a dentist in Canada for graduates of non-accredited dental programs. The Equivalency Process requires that international candidates from non-accredited programs pass three high-stakes assessments/exams: i) Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge, ii) Assessment of Clinical Judgement, iii) Assessment of Clinical Skills. The first two are written exams, with the third one being a practical simulation of dental techniques. Successful completion of these allows individuals to apply to take the NDEB Written and Objective Structured Clinical Examinations. Should a candidate wish to attend a Canadian dental school, Canadian Faculties of Dentistry will also use results of select assessments in the admission process for the purposes of determining advanced standing. At present, the exams associated with the Equivalency Process are offered at 10 locations in Canada. The first exam, the Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge is offered in London, England and there are plans to offer them in other locations throughout the world that have acceptable security, with a specific focus on

Hong Kong and New Zealand¹⁵. Information from both the interview for this project and from the NDEB website¹⁶ indicates that the NDEB will consider offering all three exams (including the practical clinical skills exam) outside of Canada if there are a minimum of 50 applicants and sites that have acceptable security with them.

The NDEB also offers an online self-assessment quiz so that individuals can prepare for the exams and make relevant decisions about challenging the exams while in their home country. Once the self-assessment is done, anyone who has completed a four-year dental program can apply. There is no formal assessment or equivalency of credentials that is carried out (though verification is done) which speeds up the process and is considered a pre-arrival support. Applications can be submitted electronically. According to the NDEB, approximately 600 graduates of non-accredited programs have obtained a license since the Equivalency Process began in 2010.

Another set of pre-arrival supports are Mutual Recognition Agreements that have been established by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada at the request of the CDRAF (Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation), with NDEB lending assistance. There is a sense that these may be the proverbial wave of the future in terms of international credential recognition. They are initiated and administered by the Commission on Dental Accreditation of Canada, again at the request of the CDRAF with support from the NDEB. There has been an agreement with the American Dental Association for decades. More recently MRAs have been signed with Australia for those who graduated on or after March 2010, New Zealand for those who graduated on or after December 14, 2011 and Ireland for those who graduated on or after December 5, 2012. About 500 graduates of accredited programs outside of Canada have also received licenses through MRAs, with about 200 receiving licenses every year through MRAs.¹⁷

Along with opening-up testing centres for its Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge exam and continuing to implement MRAs there are other pre-arrivals initiatives in which NDEB is engaging:

- The Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario (RCDSO) and the dental regulators across the country espouses a practice of “continuous improvement” attitude and championing the cause at senior levels of the organization.¹⁸ Each application, and in fact each communication with an internationally trained dentist is reviewed in light of how the registration process can be improved. That is to say they will look and see if internationally educated dentists understand the process and if not where those misunderstandings occur, and will then set-out to correct those errors and/or make necessary improvements with better communications or additional tools. The Canadian Dental Regulatory Authorities Federation and various provincial regulators reference the NDEB and the process/pathways for registration. These are accessible for internationally trained dentists in addition to CIC personnel. There is a sense that CIC personnel

¹⁵ Accessed through Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge Exam information - <http://www.ndeb.ca/nonaccredited/fundamental-knowledge/dates-fees>

¹⁶ <http://www.ndeb.ca/nonaccredited/clinical-skills/dates-fees>

¹⁷ Written statement provided by Rob Lees, Manager of Registration for The Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and Dr. Jack Gerrow, Executive Director of NDEB (December 11, 2013)

¹⁸ Interview with Rob Lees Manager of Registration for The Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario and Dr. Jack Gerrow Executive Director of NDEB (December 11, 2013).

need to better access this information so that they can better counsel applicants about their chances of becoming dentists in Canada.

The RCDSO produces information sheets about the assessment/licensing process that are refined on a continuous basis. A “Career Map” was developed in 2007 and a CIC information sheet in 2012. It is important to note that the RCDSO constantly reviews these sheets based on its interactions with international applicants. They are always looking to provide the most accurate and up-to-date information to applicants and will use their communications with them to hone the information. That is, if they find applicants do not understand a part of the process, or if the same questions or errors keep coming up, they will change the information accordingly. Client responsiveness appears to be one of the key factors in how the RCDSO operates. In response to some major misconceptions about the national process a new document was created in 2013 entitled *Assessing Training Completed Outside of Canada*. The RCDSO (there is also a version on the CDRAF national website) believe this very honestly, in a clear and transparent manner, explains the NDEB assessment protocol, methods and reasons for its development. It provides insight on immigration issues, appeals, the science behind assessments and validation and generally addresses the main contentious questions individuals have raised.

Funding for the national assessments and examinations including any pre-arrival supports is the responsibility of the NDEB and is based on a cost recovery formula. Expenses assumed by the RCDSO and the CDRAF associated with attending international conferences, making contacts with other regulators around the world, communications development and so forth are paid for through membership fees of the dental regulatory bodies. Neither the NDEB nor the RCDSO/CDRAF relies on funding from outside sources.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Dentistry

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Accredited Dental Programs (MRA’s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduates of Accredited Dental Programs, Accredited Qualifying/Degree Completion Programs, and individuals who have successfully completed the NDEB Equivalency Process are required to successfully complete the National Dental Examining Board of Canada Written Examination and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE) for certification as a general dentist in Canada. • General information about the process for an individual who graduated from an institution with which the NDEB has an MRA - http://ndeb.ca/accredited • Additional information about licensing requirements http://www.rcdso.org/sectionapplicants www.cdraf.org
Non-Accredited Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General Information about the process if an international dentist is from a non-accredited program – http://ndeb.ca/nonaccredited • Self-assessment quiz is offered online to help candidates determine their readiness to challenge the three Equivalency Exams (Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge/Clinical Skills/Clinical Judgment) http://ndeb.ca/nonaccredited/self-assessment-quiz • Details about Assessment of Fundamental Knowledge Exam. - http://ndeb.ca/nonaccredited/fundamental-knowledge/dates-fees • Information for those from non-accredited international programs http://www.ndeb.ca/nonaccredited

- | | |
|--|--|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Additional information about licensing requirements
http://www.rcdso.org/sectionapplicants www.cdraf.org |
|--|--|

Engineering

Broadly, Engineers Canada is responsible for the maintenance, enhancement and promotion of the Engineering Profession in Canada. This includes program accreditation (with provinces providing licensing) and responsibility for certifying International Engineering Graduates (IEGs). Engineers Canada has developed a comprehensive pre-arrival support system directed at the internationally educated cohort. A significant amount of information is provided on their website, and includes:

- Licensing requirements including the application process which focuses on academics, work experience, language, good character and professionalism and ethics;
- A tool that allows for a brief comparison of one's academic credentials to Canadian equivalents;
- Notices about how long it could take a provincial or territorial regulator to assess credentials;
- Information encouraging document gathering before coming to Canada.

Engineering is one of a few professions examined as part of this research that make use of formal mutual recognition agreements with international jurisdictions. Central is the Washington Accord, an agreement that helps speed-up the pre-arrivals process by instituting agreements on the equivalency of educational standards for the following countries – USA, Ireland, New Zealand, Australia, Hong Kong, South Africa, Japan and Singapore. The Accord indicates that education among signatories is considered to be “substantially equivalent”, so the evaluation process is sped-up, but the work experience component still needs to be completed, along with other factors such “good character” conditions. Even for those arriving from Accord jurisdictions, there are still a number of steps in the assessment process which need to be done in Canada before a license is granted.

Based on a recent Federal RFP Process designed to select organizations to evaluate credentials of candidates before they arrive in Canada, Engineers Canada is now in a position to assess academic credentials on a national level at the pre-arrivals stage. Certified assessors are in place to meet this requirement. Engineers Canada makes it clear that their assessment is not a license to practice engineering and that provincial requirements must be met in this regard. Engineers Canada, however, will inform an applicant of the gaps that need to be filled to meet the requirements of a provincial regulator. If the individual is overseas at the time of application, they may be a better position to fill gaps in their home country or make better decisions about whether to immigrate or pursue engineering within Canada. Engineers Canada considers this a very important step in the pre-arrivals support process.

The volume processed by Engineers Canada is quite high, with about 7,000 per year that apply to want to have licenses for engineering in Canada¹⁹.

Engineers Canada is working at addressing a number of issues that relate to pre-arrivals assessments and supports:

¹⁹ Interview, Kim Allen, Engineers Canada, January 14, 2014

- Ensuring that their website is clearly written and presented. They recognize that the issues involved in licensure can be very difficult for an immigrant to understand.
- Direct personal communication is possible. The website lists a direct person that can be contacted with any questions about pre-arrivals supports. Engineers Canada has about 4-6 individuals who are responsible for answering inquires and they realize that the process is an iterative one, where there are often many sets of communication involved in getting a particular question answered.
- All correspondence is analyzed to ensure that Engineers Canada’s website is continually improved so that common questions can be answered directly on the website.
- They have modified policy which originally required Canadian citizenship to become a licensed engineer in Canada. This speeds up the overall process and is an important piece of information for applicants to know when applying overseas.
- Engineers Canada recognizes that it is very difficult to reach engineers directly, so they are relying on communicating with consulates through CIC to help them communicate how individuals become engineers in Canada. As such, they are reaching out through various websites, including Working in Canada (www.workingincanada.gc.ca/).
- One unique initiative is that Engineers Canada has realized that IEGs often consult friends, family and peers that have previously immigrated to Canada in order to learn what is necessary to become an engineer in Canada. They realize that these peers are consulted before Engineers Canada itself or the regulators. Engineers Canada is reaching-out to grassroots associations that can assist in sending out their message. Such organizations include “Afghan Engineers in Canada” or “Ukrainian Engineers in Canada”. Engineers Canada has found that IEGs seek out these organizations for information on becoming engineers in Canada. Engineers Canada is working with these organizations to refer IEGs directly to it so that Engineers Canada can provide accurate information about the process.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Engineering

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Roadmap To Engineering In Canada	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Roadmap to Engineering (http://newcomers.engineerscanada.ca/) provides numerous resources to help with pre-arrivals supports • There is an online degree preview tool so that applicants will have a rough sense of whether they are equivalent or not - http://newcomers.engineerscanada.ca/academic-information-tool • Practical advice on timing of the application process, including the fact that it could take a year to become licensed - http://newcomers.engineerscanada.ca/licensing-canada • The Roadmap also offers the direct name and email of a person who will answer questions • Given that Canadian work experience is required for Engineering, the following provides some tips on how to find employment in Engineering - http://newcomers.engineerscanada.ca/find-work-engineering

Engineering Technology

With 50% of certified technologists and technicians expected to retire in next 10 years²⁰ there is an impending labour shortage in the field of engineering technology. As such, there has been a recent push by industry employers and professional associations to ensure that Canada is perceived as an attractive option for skilled immigrants. A key element of this strategy involves the development of a clear and expeditious process for assessing and recognizing credentials related to the field of engineering technology.

While the recognition of international credentials remains a responsibility of provincial regulators, the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT) plays a significant role in the provision of pre-arrival supports to would-be skilled immigrants.

The CCTT hosts a database of over 8,000 previously assessed applied science and engineering technology educational programs from 60 countries around the world. To access the International Qualifications Database (IQDB), applicants can use a simple pull down menu to see if their program of study has been previously evaluated. If this is the case, it is likely that their credentials will be recognized faster by CCTT and provincial associations/regulators. The CCTT also provides applicants with a preliminary assessment of their credentials which can be completed overseas.

Efforts have also been made to make as much of the official application/assessment process available online. The “International Qualifications Assessment”, (currently on hold as it is migrated to a fully electronic platform), provides a definitive decision of level of competence and summary as to gaps relative to Canadian benchmarks. The applicant can then take this assessment to a provincial association (once in Canada) to carry out any necessary remediation and work experience requirements.

A comprehensive online portal for the profession has been developed specifically for internationally educated applicants. The Canadian Technology Immigrant Network (www.ctin.ca) provides a host of pre-arrival supports including information on working in Canada, credential assessment and immigration/settlement. The site includes a “self assessment toolkit” which is based on the professions’ National Technology Benchmarks (NTBs) developed by the CCTT. This resource first directs individuals to the appropriate profession based on a set of preliminary questions (i.e. technologist or technician) and then provides them with an automated estimate of comparability of their qualifications in Canadian terms. The CTIN has also recently launched (2014) an “Engineering Career Pathways” site for applicants (www.engineeringcareerpathways.ca). This tool is intended to help internationally trained engineers and technologists better understand the relationship (and differences) between the engineering and engineering technology professions in Canada. It provides descriptive information on both professions, licensure requirements for each and identifies alternative career pathways in technology for individuals with international engineering training/experience.

²⁰ Information regarding the CCTT taken from an interview Rick Tachuk, Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (January 29, 2014).

Paralleling the “Washington Accord” agreements established for Engineering, a similar agreement was developed for Engineering Technologists or “Incorporated Engineers”. Signed in 2001, the “Sydney Accord”²¹ is a reciprocal agreement among a number of countries recognizing the equivalency of relevant professional education. Signatories include organizations in: Australia, Hong Kong, Ireland, Canada, Korea, South Africa, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States. Ongoing research and maintenance of this agreement has been bolstered by the development of International Engineering Technologist Agreement.

The “Dublin Accord” serves a similar function for Engineering Technician qualifications from: Australia, Canada, Ireland, Korea, New Zealand, South Africa, United Kingdom and the United States.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports – Engineering Technology

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
International Agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sydney and Dublin Accords have been established with multiple international partners to recognize academic credentials • The International Engineering Technologist Agreement further facilitates research and mobility among international jurisdictions
Database of educational programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IQDB holds information on over 8,000 programs from around the world (http://cctt.ca/template.asp?id=115A6377B2D14006AB5122FD3ABE4CB9). • This can expedite the assessment/recognition process for applicants with credentials pre-assessed in the IQDB
Websites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CTIN and CCTT websites are interconnected and host significant information of interest to prospective applicants - http://ctin.ca/en , http://www.cctt.ca/
Pre-Arrival Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The International Qualifications Assessment provides a definitive assessment of competencies and gaps which can then be taken directly to a provincial association

Medical Laboratory Science

From the perspective of assessing and recognizing international qualifications, the profession of medical laboratory science in Canada is relatively centralized. In order to practice in a regulated jurisdiction (with the exception of Quebec), prospective medical laboratory technologists must pass the certification exam administered by the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS). Most employers in the unregulated provinces and territories also require CSMLS certification for medical laboratory technologists as a condition of employment. Internationally trained individuals must first have their credentials assessed and deemed “substantially equivalent” to Canadian standards before they are able to challenge the exam. In most cases (90% of all assessments) internationally educated practitioners do not meet Canadian standards immediately; that is to say “Prior Learning Assessors” typically identify gaps in their education/experience which must be remediated before they become eligible to sit the certification exam. Each of these applicants receives a customized “Learning Plan”, detailing subject deficiencies and potential avenues of remediation.

Even after an internationally educated individual has remediated any and all identified gaps, anecdotal evidence and quantitative research suggests that they still experience difficulty passing the certification

²¹ International Engineering Alliance, “The Sydney Accord (2001), <http://www.washingtonaccord.org/sydney/> (accessed February 28, 2014).

exam and becoming fully integrated into the workforce. A CSMLS study shows that only 34% of international candidates pass the certification exam on their first attempt compared with 86% of those educated in Canada²².

Applications from internationally educated professional have averaged around 200 for the past few years. Many individuals who apply to the CSMLS have education and skills considerably different than that of a Canadian graduate. In some cases, significant (i.e. several years worth) remediation is required before these individuals become eligible to write the certification exam. As such, the provision of pre-arrival information and supports to prospective applicants is of paramount importance to the CSMLS in terms of setting expectations in regards to the extent of the prior learning assessment process and subsequent exam.

Over the past decade, the CSMLS has made significant efforts in providing online support to applicants in an effort to set appropriate expectations prior to the initiation of a formal application. As with many regulatory bodies, all information related to the assessment and admissions process is available on their website (<http://www.csmls.org/Certification/What-is-Certification.aspx>). According to CSMLS CEO, Christine Nielsen, 20% of applicants now apply from offshore; this has increased at a rate of 2% annually²³.

As part of the application form, applicants are required to complete a personal competency rating booklet. While a low-stakes form of assessment, applicants are forced to reflect on their personal skills and abilities relative to the Canadian national competency profile for the profession.

As well, an online self-assessment readiness tool (SART) has recently been developed in partnership with Atlantic Connection (funding available from Health Canada) and the Nova Scotia Community College. It is designed to help applicants assess their basic-level knowledge about medical laboratory practice and identify gaps in their knowledge relative to the exam blueprint and national competency profiles.

Finally, the CSMLS has created a series of online vignettes (in both official languages) to help candidates understand the composition and administration of the certification exam. Topics covered include: What is a competency-based examination, How to prepare for a competency-based examination, What is a competency profile, What is an examination blueprint, How to interpret your results, How a pass mark is determined, Top 10 exam myths, Recommended textbook list, What is the structure of the examination, What to expect during the examination.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports – Medical Laboratory Science

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
“Personal Competency Rating Booklet”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded internally – part of the application process for the past 10 years • A mandatory (but low-stakes) part of the assessment process • http://csmls.org/Certification/Exam-Information-and-Resources.aspx#Personal
CSMLS Online Self-Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in partnership with Atlantic Connection

²² “Determination of Factors Contributing to Exam Success for Prior Learning Assessment Candidates” Christine Nielsen, CSMLS, HSM Practicum Ryerson University. April 2004.

²³ Interview, Christine Nielsen, CEO, Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science. December 19, 2013.

Readiness Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 multiple choice questions related to the exam blueprint • \$50 cost to the applicant • http://csmls.protraining.com/faq.cfm
Exam Preparation Modules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded by MCI – developed in 2012 • 5 modules (available in English and French) <p>English:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yB6L4SSX00k • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RUKJtAD1OPo • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KTpswF5DrFo • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J8qDIzsidmk • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qWidQI6lpfE <p>French:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QEnEJfHB9IM • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FC9YBcZzeIg • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U2Y2rkGP-ck • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P9Hc0cuPNiA • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v= ON_E0IQmL0

Medical Radiation Technology

Over the past decade, The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) has carried a number of projects related to the assessment, recognition and integration of internationally educated medical radiation technologists into the Canadian workforce. The CAMRT develops and administers the national entry-to-practice certification exam and evaluates international credentials on behalf of British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Labrador and the northern territories²⁴. CAMRT has developed a suite of pre-arrival supports for international applicants²⁵.

The CAMRT website has a page dedicated to information written specifically for internationally educated applicants. Detailed information on the application, assessment and exam process is provided, along with links to specific tools and study resources.

As with other professions mentioned in this report, CAMRT has also partnered with Atlantic Connection and received funding from Health Canada to develop a self-assessment tool for potential applicants. Four such tools have been developed, one for each of the medical radiation technology disciplines: radiological technology, magnetic resonance, radiation therapy and nuclear medicine technology. Each Self-Assessment Readiness Tool is comprised of 7 parts:

- *Part 1* - Core Concepts of Canadian Medical Radiation Technology
- *Part 2* - Self Reflection
- *Part 3* - Registration Process
- *Part 4* - Living and Working in Canada

²⁴ Taken from the CAMRT website <http://www.camrt.ca/certification/international/> (accessed January 14, 2014)

²⁵ Information on “pre-arrival” practices were gathered from an interview with Elaine Dever and Giulia Nastase of the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (November 27, 2013).

- *Part 5 - Case Scenarios*
- *Part 6 - A Day in the Life of the Canadian Technologist*
- *Part 7 - Competencies of Practice for Medical Radiation Technologists in Canada*

The online readiness tool is not used for licensure; it is intended to provide international applicants with an overview of the profession and competency requirements for practice in Canada, and to allow for a self-assessment of their own skills and knowledge relative to Canadian licensure standards.

Practice exams and preparation guides for each of the four disciplines have been developed by CAMRT in 2009. The practice exams were revised in 2013 according to the current competency profiles. The practice exams serve as a preparation tool for the certification exam. The exams include 100 multiple choice questions, with rationales for correct and incorrect answers and with specific references to textbooks and the national competency profile. The exams can be purchased online at a cost of \$55.

There is consistent disparity in exam pass rates between Canadian and internationally educated applicants. A study of exam results from 2001 to 2006 showed that while 90% of exam attempts by graduates of a Canadian program resulted in a pass, only 28% of those by internationally educated applicants did²⁶. The study identified gaps in exam performance; based on this report, three online exam preparation courses (which can be accessed overseas) were developed. The national competency profiles were used in the development of the exam preparation courses, to ensure that the curriculum covered reflects current practice in Canada. The courses cover over 70% of the core competencies for Radiological Technology, divided into three areas: Radiographic Procedures and Pathology, Radiographic Equipment and Imaging, and Patient Management. The Patient Management course can be taken by candidates from the other three disciplines, as well. A pilot project funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) covers the course fees for approximately 200 free course registrations per year available to internationally educated candidates whose credentials were assessed and who were deemed eligible to write the national certification exam. At the end of the pilot project, CAMRT will charge a course fee.

As part of the same ESDC-funded project, CAMRT is also developing an online learning module on how to write a competency-based exam. The module will include an interactive component to demonstrate to users the fundamental differences between a knowledge-based and competency-based exam questions. Another project deliverable is an online module designed to provide information on and orient international applicants to employment-related resources.

In addition to 29 sites in Canada, the CAMRT certification exam is also offered in Doha, Qatar. This is at the location of a CMA internationally-accredited program and serves 12-15 individuals annually. Several years ago, the certification exam was offered in multiple locations overseas, but was discontinued in 2009 following a comprehensive report detailing critical exam security and integrity issues.

²⁶ P. Blais & P. Darling, (2009), "An analysis of the performance of Internationally Educated Medical Radiation Technologists (IEMRTs) on the CAMRT Radiological Technology Certification Examination", The Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports – Medical Radiation Technology

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Website information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Section specifically devoted to internationally educated applicants • Information on the licensure process and links to supports and resources http://www.camrt.ca/certification/international/assessmentprocessforinternationallyeducatedmedicalradiationtechnologists/
Online Readiness Self-Assessment Tool	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in partnership with Atlantic Connections (funded by Health Canada) • Divided into 7 sections aimed at providing a realistic appreciation of the Canadian practice environment http://www.camrt.ca/certification/international/readinessselfassessmenttools/oriemrts/
Online Practice Exams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 100 multiple choice questions & guide available for all MRT disciplines https://ww2.camrt.ca/cpd/index.php?page=catalogue&course_type=R
Online Exam Preparation Courses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Three online modules in a pilot phase are offered to international applicants; these are focused on areas of the exam that are often unfamiliar to those not educated in Canada. • Funded by ESDC
Overseas exam administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CAMRT certification is administered in Doha, Qatar as part of a CMA accredited program.
Online module: How To Write A Competency-based Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aimed at helping international candidates better prepare for writing a competency-based exam • Funded by ESDC – to be launched in 2014
Online module: Employment resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on professional practice and the Canadian workplace, and employment-related resources • Funded by ESDC – to be launched in 2015

Medicine

The process of becoming a physician in Canada is exceptionally complex. The profession has well over 100 different licenses that can be granted to practitioners²⁷, significantly more than most other professions. Moreover, applicants are also required to explain any three month absence from practice.²⁸ There is a considerable amount of testing and work that needs to be done directly in Canada before a full license can be given to an international medical graduate (IMG) to practice medicine. The focus of pre-arrivals support is focused towards informing applicants about the likelihood of becoming a physician in Canada, providing self-assessment tools, giving information about the exams that need to be done and attempting to transfer some aspects of the process to online modules.²⁹

Interviewees discussed a number of initiatives and factors involved in pre-arrivals supports for physicians given the stringent requirements of practice. As such, the most important pre-arrival support for IMGs is about managing expectations. This is often a difficult message for an association or regulator to deliver as they should not be perceived as biasing the assessment process. There is a strong desire for CIC and other in-person services to provide this type of information, impartially to applicants as early on as possible in the immigration process (i.e. before they have been approved to come to Canada).

²⁷ Interview Cindy Streefkerk, Medical Council of Canada, (January 14, 2014)

²⁸ Interview Fleur-Ange Lefebvre, Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities (December 10, 2013).

²⁹ Interview Fleur-Ange Lefebvre, Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities (December 10, 2013).

In terms of actual pre-arrivals supports, The Medical Council of Canada (MCC) which administers both credential assessments and qualifying examinations has a number of pre-arrivals supports and initiatives including:

- An overall process for starting the application process to become a physician in Canada. Information about that process can be found here - <http://mcc.ca/about/mcc-and-route-to-licensure/licensure-process-for-imgs/#Step-2>
- The MCC offers a self-assessment examination that gives a candidate a sense of their readiness to challenge the Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Examination, and the Qualifying Examination Part I. The Self-Assessment can be taken on line and is meant strictly for the use of candidates to evaluate their readiness to move forward with the qualifying examinations.
- Candidates are invited to submit their credentials for review at www.physiciansapply.ca. It is a necessary step to move forward in the application process, and the Medical Council of Canada has been granted CIC approval to conduct credential assessments as part of the ECA process. This helps streamline the application process for IMGs and makes the process easier than having credentials assessed by third party organizations.
- The MCC-EE (Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Exam) can be taken online from over 500 sites in 80 countries.

Key informants indicated there were preliminary discussions around creating orientation modules for IMGs to access online in their home country. This module would focus on what it is like to practice medicine within a broad Canadian context. Participants would learn about issues such as patient-centred care, including family members in the decision-making process about patient care and general licensure issues among many others. Emphasis would also be placed on cultural and communication issues within the Canadian context as well as ethical and legal issues. The goal of this material would be to educate IMGs about the Canadian context of medical practice and how to prepare for those sections on the MCCQE Part I, which is one of two qualifying exams necessary to practice medicine in Canada.

MCC is working to explore the international delivery of the MCCQE Part I As the MCCQE Part I contains Canadian content, support for IMGs wishing to write it overseas would need to receive support and preparation in order to challenge the exam. This support would assist an IMG in preparing for, and determining their readiness to challenge the qualifying examination and understand the nature of working in Canada. Discussion about this module and the challenges in creating it also highlight the general difficulties in offering pre-arrivals supports for IMGs. The challenges involved in both include:

- A large number of stakeholder organizations own some responsibility in the medical licensure process in Canada. There is a sense that these organizations can come to various agreements, but getting them around the table is a significant logistical challenge.
- Practicing medicine in each province/territory is different and it would be difficult to create a module that captures the jurisdictional nuances, as such pan-Canadian content is a focus area.

- IMGs currently need to write the MCCQE Part I & Part II in Canada, and they either need to complete a residency and/or practice-ready assessment within Canada itself to enter-into-practice. As such, there is limited amount of pre-arrivals support that actually assists in speeding-up the process beyond what is being done already with the physiciansapply.ca website, offering the MCCEE online and the initiative to move the MCCQE-Part I online.

It is also important to note that residency positions are extremely limited in Canada and competition for them is high. This speaks to the fact that offering pre-arrivals support and preparation for such positions is a challenge. However in a broader sense it speaks to the challenges IMG’s face in general in entering into Canadian practice.

Another support (both pre-arrival and once IMGs arrive in Canada) is administered by HealthForce Ontario. This is an agency of the Ontario government created in 2006, that has the mandate to help ensure the Province has “the right number and mix of qualified health-care providers, when and where they are needed, now and in the future”³⁰. Similar bodies exist in other provinces. Much of the work involved at HealthForce communicating with internationally educated health professions, many of which are IMGs. Much of the information on the licensing and assessment process described above is offered through the HealthForce Ontario website and in person through its “Access Centre”³¹. Since 2010, the organization has been offering a series of information sessions which focus on various aspects of the registration process including:

- Medical Council of Canada (MCC) examinations
- The Canadian Resident Matching Service (CaRMS) application process
- The Centre for the Evaluation of Health Professionals Educated Abroad (CEHPEA) assessment process
- Services available at the HealthForce Ontario Access Centre

The hour-long sessions are held in person and via webinar with cohorts of approximately 20 individuals. This allows individuals still abroad, who are considering in applying to become a physician in Canada, access to details on the licensing process in real-time. The interactive quality of the webinar format, allows for information to be customized to the specific needs of the applicant pool.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Medicine

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Pre-Arrival Credential Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The result of the MCC being designated by CIC to evaluate credentials of IMG’s. The goal is to help support the Federal Skilled Worker Program for physicians http://physiciansapply.ca/services/educational-credential-assessment/
Overview of application process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Medical Council of Canada’s overview of the application process for physicians http://mcc.ca/about/mcc-and-route-to-licensure/licensure-process-for-imgs/#Step-2
On-Line Self-Assessment Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-Assessment exam to help candidates know whether they are ready to challenge the MCC exams. It is a self-completed exam where the candidate can

³⁰ HealthForce Ontario website, “About Us”, http://www.healthforceontario.ca/en/M4/About_Us (accessed, January 19, 2014).

³¹ Information on HealthForce Ontario “pre-arrival” practices gathered from an interview with Jasmine Singh, Associate Director of the Access Centre (December 17, 2013).

	<p>judge for themselves about moving forward in the process http://mcc.ca/about/mcc-and-route-to-licensure/licensure-process-for-IMGs/#Step-2</p>
List of Countries MCCEE Is offered in	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are three exams that IMG's must pass from the MCC. The first is the MCCEE, or Medical Council of Canada Evaluating Exam, which tests general knowledge. This website lists where the MCCEE exams are offered in up to 50 countries http://mcc.ca/examinations/mccee/list-of-countries-for-prometric-centres/ • It is important to note that there are two other exams that IMG's must pass which are only offered in Canada, although exploration is underway to explore international delivery of the MCCQE Part I. There are also residency requirements, speciality certification requirements and provincial/territorial regulatory requirements that are very rigorous.
HealthForce Ontario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agency of the government of Ontario which operates an "Access Centre" for internationally trained health professionals and offers pre-arrival webinars http://www.healthforceontario.ca/en/M4/Access_Centre/Information_Sessions/International_Medical_Graduates_%28IMGs%29

Registered Nursing

The regulatory bodies for the three disciplines of the nursing profession in Canada have completed a major harmonization of registration processes that will impact pre-arrivals activities and supports. The regulatory bodies are now implementing these changes. There are three disciplines of regulated nursing in Canada – Registered Nurses, Registered Practical Nurses and Registered Psychiatric Nurses. Each branch has its own set of provincial regulators. This can make things confusing for internationally educated nurses (IENs) in a number of ways. Firstly, the three disciplines of the profession in Canada may not align with other international categories of nursing, so applicants are left wondering where and how to apply. Secondly, it was found that the provincial approach to the regulation of professions in Canada can be confusing for applicants, and is made even more so when the three different disciplines of nursing are taken into account. Thirdly, there was no harmonization of requirements and assessment methods among provincial regulators until now

An initial national study published in 2005 identified many barriers to IEN registration in Canada, including the lack of consistency in the requirements for registration and the processes to support timely and transparent responses. Impelled by this research, a harmonization process was initiated among individual regulators and the three branches of the nursing profession in Canada. According to individuals interviewed as part of this research, the harmonization effort has resulted in a greater than 90% consistency across all application requirements for the three disciplines of nursing. The remaining 10% that are not harmonized are largely due to regulatory or statutory differences between provinces.

Following the harmonization effort, the participating 22 regulatory bodies set out to define a new vision for IEN applications to Canada, resulting in the implementation of the National Nursing Assessment Service, an incorporated, non for profit national organization, (www.nnas.ca), which is slated to go live in August, 2014. The stated goals of the service are:

- To be a single national web portal for the IEN applications to all three nursing disciplines in Canada (outside Quebec);
- Have a common approach to initial document collections, authentication, validation and fraud screening;
- Create a consistent education and competency based assessment of the IEN application file;
- Implement consistent format advisory reports to regulatory bodies to inform eligibility assessments;
- To be bilingual customer care centre for IEN applicants;
- And, implement a national IEN database providing enhanced reporting and analysis capabilities.

The NNAS has partnered with an external credential assessment service that provides much of the infrastructure for these features and services. NNAS has worked with this provider to create customized solutions and initiatives to meet the needs of the nursing profession in Canada. Central to the initiative is the development of electronic images of original documentation that will be accepted by any regulator in Canada. The third-party credential evaluation service will authenticate original documents and then send them electronically to NNAS who can distribute them to any regulator that the individual candidate wishes to apply to. This helps fill the role of the NNAS as being a clearinghouse for IEN applications. Also, it was felt that such a system would improve quality standards throughout the country and ensure a consistent approach in regards to the assessment process.

Another key feature of the NNAS as it relates to streamlining the process for IENs is that of managing “evaluation/assessment capacity” throughout the system. The number of nursing applications can fluctuate significantly from year to year and jurisdiction and jurisdiction, and part of the goal was to create a system that would be more responsive to the number of applications that came in regardless of volume. In total, across the system, NNAS anticipates 7,000 applications when it opens in August, 2014.

Other key features of the NNAS system that will address pre-arrival support issues:

- The entire application can be done overseas;
- NNAS will house and then forward all documents, assessments and outcomes electronically to the relevant regulators.
- Applicants will have full access to the advisory reports provided to the regulators.

The goal of an NNAS review is to take applications to a specific decision point with three potential outcomes so that the applicant knows whether or not to proceed with pursuing nursing in Canada. Those four decision points are: I) Requirements are not met and remediation is not possible. II) Requirements are met and the applicant can proceed forward in the process; III) Remediation is required, and the regulator will provide a specific remediation plan to give applicants full information; IV) Further assessment is needed such that a candidate must be observed in a simulated clinical setting before moving onwards.

Overall, the goal is to ensure that nurses coming to Canada have the direction and information they need to make informed choices. It is recognized that there is significant financial cost to nurses that lose currency because of delays in the system, and the NNAS is doing its best to avoid this kind of delay.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Registered Nursing

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
NNAS Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> www.nnas.ca Note that the site and service are not scheduled to be running until August 2014.

Occupational Therapy

The creation of new pre-arrival supports have occurred both at the regulatory and association level. In 2011 Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) received \$2 million in funding from ESDC to carry out a number of initiatives aimed at harmonizing the processes member regulators employ in assessing and licensing internationally educated applicants. From a pre-arrival perspective, this project is of great benefit to applicants, resulting in a clearly articulated and centralized process of assessment. At its conclusion in 2015, applicants will be able to complete the “Profession-Specific Credential Assessment” (PCSA) tool (a key component of the evaluation process) and provide important document (such as language proficiency results) entirely from their home country³².

In 2012 the profession completed a comprehensive website directed at providing international applicants with clear and current information on licensure and practice in Canada. A variety of regulatory, immigration and settlement information can be found at: www.gocanadaot.com. This portal, funded by ESDC, is a joint initiative of CAOT, ACOTRO and the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP). This site includes the stories of international applicants from around the world (Britain, Australia, South Korea, Brazil & Belgium) who successfully navigated the assessment process and now are practicing in Canada.

The website also links to a self assessment tool which was developed in 2009-2010 in partnership with Atlantic Connections and funded by Health Canada. It is a low-stakes assessment which consists of 7 parts covering: the nature of practice in Canada, how to apply for licensure, a series of case scenarios and a questionnaire for applicants to self-assess their knowledge and skills in relation to Canadian occupational therapy competency requirements.

A suite of innovative pre-arrival supports have also been developed with funding from the government of Ontario through the Occupational Therapy Examination and Practice Preparation (OTepp) project at McMaster University in Hamilton, ON; many of these are now being offered through the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT)³³. This includes a practice exam has also been developed

³² Information on “pre-arrival” practices administered by ACOTRO gathered from an interview with Kathy Corbett, Registrar at the College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia (December 10, 2013).

³³ Information on “pre-arrival” practices administered by CAOT and OTepp gathered from an interview with Elizabeth Steggles, Professional Affairs Executive at the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (December 19, 2013).

with the goal of providing applicants with a realistic appreciation of the level of knowledge required to pass the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam (NOTCE). The Trial Occupational Therapy Exam Manual (TOTEM) and the Trial Occupational Therapy Exam (TOTE) are available to applicants at a cost of \$159 CAD. Collectively they include detailing information on the NOTCE as well as a total of 200 practice multiple-choice questions. This resource is accessible in Canada and abroad.

Additionally, a number of online videos have been developed which feature the experiences of a variety of individuals practicing as occupational therapists in Canada. These videos, hosted on the CAOT website, are available in both English and French and provide internationally educated occupational therapists with insight into the range of clinical settings where occupational therapists in Canada work.

As well, OTepp in collaboration with the CAOT have developed educational modules (available in person and online) directed at the internationally educated cohort. These include resources related to exam preparation, work-readiness, understanding and integrating into the Canadian work culture and mentor/mentee opportunities. Much of the content and functionality of these modules can be accessed online and therefore potentially useful from a pre-arrival standpoint.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports – Occupational Therapy

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
“Harmonization” project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Centralized application and assessment process led by ACOTRO – completed in 2015 Will allow for a significant portion of the assessment process to be completed overseas
Website portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive information on all aspects of the immigration, licensing and settlement process for newcomers www.gocanadaot.com Links to a self-assessment tool: http://access.nsc.ca/cgi-bin/perl/CAOT/index.pl Includes “success story” videos: http://www.gocanadaot.com/en/success-succes?ref=main
“TOTE”/“TOTEM”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offered through CAOT – a practice exam and manual based on the same format as the licensing exam http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=4247
Clinical setting videos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A series of videos accessible online which detail the various OT practice settings in Canada http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=4083

Pharmacy

A significant portion of those who seek licensure as pharmacists each year are internationally educated. A per their 2012 “Fair Practices Report”, the Ontario College of Pharmacists received a total of 515 new applications in the calendar year; 135 of these or 26% of these were from individuals educated outside of Canada³⁴. As such, the assessment and recognition of international credentials is now, and has been a priority for this profession.

The National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (NAPRA) provides a “platform to discuss issues and to take a national approach in addressing common issues in the practice of pharmacy in

³⁴ Ontario College of Pharmacists (2012) “Fair Practice Report” prepared for the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, Ontario.

Canada”³⁵. The organization which was established in 1995, works on behalf of the provincial and territorial pharmacy regulatory bodies as well as the Canadian Forces Pharmacy Services. As a result, much of the recent efforts related to the development of pre-arrival support have been led by NAPRA on behalf of its member regulators.

In 2009, NAPRA received \$3.7 million in funding from ESDC to develop a number of tools aimed at providing international pharmacy graduates (IPGs) with a single point of access to information they need on how to apply for a license to practice pharmacy in Canada. This, “IPGs Gateway to Canada Project” includes a number of components, some of which have a pre-arrival dimension.

At its core, the Gateway project will include detailed information directed at the internationally educated audience accessible at “www.pharmacistsgatewaycanada.ca”. Topics covered are likely to include³⁶:

- How to obtain a license to practice pharmacy in Canada
- Who regulates pharmacy practice in Canada
- What pharmacy practice is like in Canada – roles, responsibilities, key players, types of practice
- The importance of clear communication and language skills to support pharmacy services with patients and with other health care professionals
- Details on working conditions for pharmacists – salary, hours of work, job opportunities
- The potential costs and time required to obtain a license
- The average cost of living in Canada – food, lodging, transportation, utilities
- What documentation you need to work in Canada – visa, immigration requirements
- What you can do to improve your skills before emigrating or starting the application process
- How your credentials will be evaluated and what programs are available to upgrade or “bridge the gap”
- The importance of planning before you start

Work has also been done on developing a national repository to allow the secure storage of documents required at certain stages of the application process. In addition, two “self-assessment tools” would be available for overseas applicants. These tools, which are now in the testing phase, are aimed at helping individuals determine if they have gaps in their pharmacy skills compared to Canadian requirements, and whether they are ready to start their application for licensure. The tool pertaining to pharmacy practice skills and knowledge will be comprised of a series of multiple choice questions (some presented in videos) based on the profession’s national entry to practice competency profile. Upon completion of the pharmacy practice skills and knowledge self-evaluation tool, individuals will be given feedback on

³⁵ National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, “About NAPRA” website. <http://napra.ca/pages/About/default.aspx> (accessed January 12, 2014).

³⁶ National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities, “Pharmacists’ Gateway Canada” website <http://napra.ca/pages/IPGsGatewaytoCanada/whatsnew.aspx> (accessed January 13, 2014).

their results along with a recommended reference list based on their area(s) of weakness. Both tools, along with other aspects of the Gateway project are expected to be completed in 2014³⁷.

Finally, the Gateway project allows for new functionality aimed at streamlining the assessment process. Applicants will be able to begin the application process for licensure overseas by enrolling in the Gateway. Original documentation as well as their language test results once submitted will be securely stored. This information will be housed by NAPRA and accessed by PEBC and provincial/territorial regulator(s) as necessary. This single portal approach is a boon to applicants as it will eliminate the need for applicants to supply documentation more than once during the entire process for becoming licensed to practice pharmacy in Canada.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Pharmacy

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Detailed online information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All listed initiatives are part of the IPGs Gateway to Canada Project – managed by NAPRA funded by ESDC General information on the Canadian requirements, pharmacy practice, steps to follow, assessment process, labour market, remediation resources, licensing information and links to provincial regulators When active will be located at: www.pharmacistsgatewaycanada.ca
Self-assessment tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two interactive tools to help individuals reflect on their readiness to begin the application process as well as identify their potential pharmacy practice skills and knowledge gaps and possible references/resources to consult
Gateway document repository	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows applicants’ documentation and language test results submitted during the application process to be securely stored in the “Gateway” managed by NAPRA

Physiotherapy

The profession of physiotherapy is relatively centralized from the perspective of the assessment and admission of internationally educated applicants. All applicants (save for those looking to practice in Quebec), must apply to have their credentials reviewed by the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (“the Alliance”). If these credentials are found to be “not substantially different” from the education offered in Canada’s 14 accredited physiotherapy programs, the applicant is allowed to sit the Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE) – this is a standardized exam that Canadian educated candidates must pass before becoming fully licensed to practice independently.

The Physiotherapy Competency Examination (PCE) is comprised of two parts: Part 1 - a written 200 multiple choice question Qualifying Exam (QE) and a clinical performance exam. The written exam is offered six times annually at locations across Canada and is administered in both English and French. Candidates are required to pass the QE before sitting the clinical performance exam. The current cost to write the QE is \$845 CAD. The PCE Part 2 - clinical performance exam is an objective structured clinical

³⁷ Information on “pre-arrival” practices gathered from an interview with Carole Bouchard, Executive Director at the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities (December 13, 2013).

examination (OSCE) consisting of 16 stations where candidates interact with standardized clients. The exam lasts approximately between 5 to 6 hours from start to finish and costs the candidate \$1,425³⁸. Once an applicant has successfully passed the QE Part 1 and are registered to take the next available clinical exam, they can apply for interim or provisional registration to their provincial regulator and begin working as a physiotherapist resident. They must however, pass the PCE Part 2 - clinical performance exam in order to be granted a full and independent practice licence and become eligible to use the title of physiotherapist.

Much of the work around the development of pre-arrival supports has been led by the Alliance as they are often initially primary contact point for internationally educated applicants³⁹. Recent efforts have been made to make as much of the assessment process accessible overseas. Now applicants can complete the entire credential assessment portion of the process in their home country, including the requirement to gain knowledge and understanding of the Canadian health care system. To this end, the Alliance will often refer applicants to online courses, for example the University of Toronto's "Orientation to the Canadian Health Care System, Culture and Context". The course topics are divided into three broad themes, focusing on the patient, the health care system, and the role of a health care professional. The entire 11 unit course can be completed online⁴⁰.

Detailed information related to both aspects of the admissions process (credential assessment and exams) is available through a set of comprehensive guides: the "Credentialling" and the "Physiotherapy Competency Examination: Candidate Handbook". Each of these provides information on the steps an applicant must take to move through the system as well as associated costs and decision points. Applicants have access to several PCE preparation materials such as the PCE Exam Blueprint, Key Reference List, Essential Guide for Candidates to the PCE, FAQs and the Candidate PCE Orientation Video⁴¹. Collectively these resources give the applicant a clear understanding of how to apply for an assessment and the type(s) of skills and knowledge they are expected to have in order to be successful in the Canadian practice environment.

In partnership with Atlantic Connections and funded by Health Canada, the Alliance has also developed an online self-assessment tool for prospective applicants to the profession. The Self-Assessment Readiness Tool (or "SART") describes physiotherapy practice in Canada and outlines the competencies, that Canadian physiotherapists are expected to possess. The tool is divided into three sections:

- *Part 1* provides an overview of the Canadian model of physiotherapy practice and the professional and lifestyle experiences you need to consider.
- *Part 2* provides a number of scenarios and practice descriptions that you may encounter when working as a Canadian physiotherapist.

³⁸ The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, "Physiotherapy Competency Examination: Candidate Handbook". Revised 2014.

³⁹ Information on "pre-arrival" practices gathered from an interview with Diana Sinnige, Program Manager of Credentialling at the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators (December 17, 2013).

⁴⁰ University of Toronto, "Orientation to the Canadian Health Care System, Culture and Context".

<http://www.iehpcanada.utoronto.ca/overview.html> (Accessed January 11, 2014)

⁴¹ The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators, "Physiotherapy Competency Examination Blueprint 2009"
http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/exams_candidate_blueprint_09_eng.pdf (Accessed January 11, 2014)

- *Part 3* provides a questionnaire for you to self-assess your knowledge and skills in relation to Canadian physiotherapist competency requirements⁴².

This is a low-stakes assessment (i.e. it has no impact on the formal credential assessment process) but is designed to give international applicants a more informed appraisal of their likelihood of becoming licensed to practice in Canada.

Summary of Pre-Arrival Supports - Physiotherapy

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Detailed online information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Guides available for both the credentialing and exam process Credentialling: http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/CredentiallingApplicationProcessGuide_eng.pdf Exam: http://www.alliancept.org/pdfs/exams_candidate_registration_guide_2014_13072_9_eng.pdf
Credentialling Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The functionality exists for all aspects of the assessment process including learning about the Canadian health system to be conducted in an applicant’s home country • The applicant must be in Canada to sit the PCE
“Self-Assessment and Readiness Tool (SART)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developed in 2011-2012 by the Alliance and Atlantic Connections – funded by Health Canada and hosted on the Nova Scotia Community College website

Teaching

In most jurisdictions, regulation of the teaching profession is the responsibility of the various provincial/territorial Ministries of Education. At the time of this report, the only self-regulated college is the Ontario College of Teachers (OCT). While regulation occurs at the provincial/territorial level, the Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada is an intergovernmental body founded in 1967 by ministers of education to serve as:

- a forum to discuss policy issues;
- a mechanism through which to undertake activities, projects, and initiatives in areas of mutual interest;
- a means by which to consult and cooperate with national education organizations and the federal government; and
- an instrument to represent the education interests of the provinces and territories internationally⁴³.

Since 1999, registrars of teaching certification from all 13 jurisdictions have met on a regular basis as a CMEC committee, the Registrars for Teaching Certification Canada. Some of the information that is relevant from a pre-arrival perspective is coordinated and/or developed through this mechanism. Since 2013, CMEC’s Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) has been

⁴² Taken from, the “Canadian Physiotherapy Practice, Self-Assessment and Readiness Tool”, <http://access.nsc.ca/cgi-bin/perl/physio/index.pl> (accessed January 12, 2014).

⁴³ Council of Ministers of Education (CMEC), Canada – website <http://www.cmec.ca/11/About/index.html> (accessed January 7, 2014).

coordinating the work of this committee. The majority of efforts made to date are related to providing applicants with clear information (available on-line through CICIC’s Web site and through the CIC Foreign Credential Referral Office(FCRO’s) recently published fact sheet on the teaching profession) regarding the regulatory landscape in Canada, the process involved in applying for registration and information related to the labour market.

CICIC has developed a package of information for international applicants available on their website. These “occupational” profiles” have been prepared for both applicants seeking to become to elementary and secondary teachers and include fact sheets detailing key elements of the assessment and licensing process⁴⁴.

All jurisdictions in Canada provide some information on the certification process in their jurisdiction on their respective web sites. For example, the Québec Ministry of Education has developed a comprehensive primer specifically geared towards the needs of international applicants. In addition to information detailing the assessment and admissions process, it provides an overview of the education system in the province which is instructive as it may differ greatly from the system a prospective applicant is accustomed to.

The (OCT) offers similar information but does so based on the specific source country from where the individual is applying. Information related to academic records, statements of professional standing and teaching certificates for over 100 countries is provided.

The OCT has also recently initiated an innovative policy related to the application process. Unlike the majority of regulatory colleges which require an individual to complete an application before accepting any documentation, the OCT now allows prospective applicants to submit relevant documentation (i.e. degrees, transcripts, etc.) even if no official application has been initiated. This move has the potential to significantly cut turnaround times as the sourcing of appropriate documentation is typically one of the most time-consuming aspects of the assessment process and is most easily completed in the country where the applicant studied. In this way, an individual can gather the necessary paperwork pre-arrival and then decide whether to complete an official application once in Canada.

Finally, CICIC and its partners are working on a collaborative initiative which aims to determine the feasibility of creating pan-Canadian credential assessment centres (currently, internationally educated teachers must apply to each jurisdiction separately). This project which began in February 2013 (funded by ESDC), consists of a number of components including a series of focus groups with internationally educated applicants to determine the barriers to labour market integration.

Some examples of Pre-Arrival Supports - Teaching

Pre-Arrival Support	Notes
Occupational Profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information for international applicants and fact sheets with specific application and licensing information

⁴⁴ Information on “pre-arrival” practices gathered from an interview with Natasha Sawh Coordinator at the CICIC (January 8, 2014).

	<p>Elementary: http://www.cicic.ca/684/Teachers_Elementary_School.canada?noc=4032</p> <p>Secondary: http://www.cicic.ca/684/Teachers_Secondary_School.canada?noc=4031</p>
<p>“Terms and Conditions for Obtaining a Quebec Teaching Permit: For holders of a teaching licence issued outside Canada”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on the Quebec education system and details on the application and admissions process • Developed by the Quebec Ministry of Education <p>http://www.mels.gouv.qc.ca/fileadmin/site_web/documents/publications/EPEPS/Eorm_titul_pers_scolaire/PermisEnseignerHorsCanada_Juillet2012_a.pdf</p>
<p>Country-specific Information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information detailing the assessment process and necessary documentation requirements based on the applicant’s home country • Developed by the OCT <p>http://www.oct.ca/becoming-a-teacher/internationally-educated-teachers/country-info</p>
<p>Document housing service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional documents (i.e. degrees, diplomas, transcripts, certificates) can be sent to the OCT prior to initiating an application. An individual can decide at a later time whether to submit a formal application.

Discussion and Analysis

Types of Pre-Arrival Supports

Analysis suggests that the inventory of tools and support gleaned from the interview phase can be organized in a few broad categories. Some of these are directed at offering customized services based on the specific needs of a given individual others are broader in nature, focused on improving the entire system.

Identified categories include: i) clear and accessible information; ii) self-assessment or readiness tools; iii) mutual recognition agreements; iv) personalized support; v) initiatives aimed at expediting the assessment process. While not actually a type of support, a final category dubbed “a proactive philosophy” also warrants mention and is included below as well. A description of each these categories based on the interviews conducted with the 14 priority professions and literature citations are set out below. As described in the methodology section of this report, a review and analysis of selected examples have yielded a set of “promising practices” for each category. These selections were based on a number of criteria including: maturity of the program, access to quality information, use of innovative/proactive practices, and applicability to other regulated professions.

Also note that the examples provided are not intended as an exhaustive list. As evidenced in the inventory provided above, there are many more tools in use by the 14 target occupations than catalogued in the analysis below. The descriptions provided are intended to illustrate the use of promising practices in the various categories of pre-arrival support.

A word on the nature of measurement as it pertains to the net effect of pre-arrival supports is instructive at this point. At present, determining the relative “success” of a given initiative in any objective way is problematic. This is due to the following interrelated factors and realities.

- Many of the pre-arrival initiative that have been developed are aimed at getting “the right candidates” to apply and informing those that may not have the skills and education required for registration in a regulated profession to seek out alternate career options. As such, a successful pre-arrival tool may in fact turn individuals away from submitting an application for licensure. This group is nearly impossible to track or quantify.
- The core functions of most regulators as it relates to the internationally educated cohort involve the assessment and recognition of qualifications. At present, the vast majority of data collected, tracked and analyzed pertaining to international applicants relates to these core functions. Pre-arrival initiatives, while a priority to most of the groups interviewed, are still comparably peripheral. Fewer analytic resources are dedicated to determining the effect of these interventions.
- The majority of pre-arrival supports identified are still in their infancy (i.e. existence for fewer than 3 years). Therefore historical or longitudinal data is not available for any meaningful level of analysis to gauge their success.

- Many of organizations interviewed make use of more than one type of pre-arrival support. As such, even if “outcome” data can be gathered it may be very difficult to attribute its relative effect to a single given support.

As a result, reference in this report is made to “promising” practices rather than “successful” ones. Additional data gathering over time and the establishment of mechanisms designed to evaluate the efficacy of specific pre-arrival supports may help to quantitatively determine the drivers of success in this area.

I) Clear and Accessible Information

Perhaps the largest and arguably most important type of pre-arrival supports is clear and accessible information. In nearly all the interviews conducted, key informants cited the provision of timely and accurate information to prospective and active applicants as a key component of their pre-arrival strategy.

In most instances, professions have attempted to develop single (often pan-Canadian) portals directed at the internationally educated cohort. The portal is often linked to related organizations including regulatory bodies, which also reciprocally links back to the portal. This practice is in line with the “no wrong door” approach cited as a best practice by the Ontario's Expert Roundtable on Immigration. In a recent report, they recommend that, “immigrants get the support they need, regardless of where they initially access services”⁴⁵. Typically a range of information is provided via these portals, including:

- Details on how to apply to immigrate to Canada with appropriate links;
- Guides related to the assessment, examination (if necessary) and licensing processes;
- Examples of immigrant “success stories”;
- Estimated processing times and associated costs;
- Policies related to the need for, and use of, third-party assessment reports;
- Links to exam supports, practice tests, study aids, resources and blueprints;
- Information on the Canadian practice environment, required skills/knowledge and professional competency profiles;
- Details on language fluency requirements and policies; and,
- Links to other support tools including “pre-assessment” and “readiness” exercises.

The majority of information hosted on these portals have been either written using so-called “plain language principles” or have undergone a third-party “plain language” review/rewrite of pertinent information. This approach aims to ensure that information is provided economically and easily comprehended by those with varying degrees of official language proficiency. A number of interviewees stated that it can serve to reduce the number of telephone inquiries related to misunderstood concepts and can therefore improve the productivity of staff involved in the assessment process.

In some cases these portals include functionality which allows individuals to submit an application and supporting documents centrally; this information is then forwarded to the appropriate

⁴⁵ Ontario's Expert Roundtable on Immigration (2012), “Expanding our Routes to Success”.

provincial/territorial regulator. In others, individuals are given general details on the application process and then directed to contact their local regulatory college.

For most regulators, the provision of clear information really means providing the applicant with a true understanding of how practice in Canada works; this may differ from what they are used to in their home country. To this end, many organizations have developed a series of video vignettes which provide cases studies and examples of practitioners working in a variety of typical practice settings. This gives applicants an initial sense of how prepared for the day-to-day type of work they will be expected to perform once in Canada.

Promising Practices – Clear and Accessible Information

- Provides a single portal approach for international applicants – information and links in one place
- Offers information in both official languages where possible
- Is written using plain language principles and for an international audience
- Uses charts and diagrams to summarize and simplify information
- Provides context and explanation of how the profession is regulated
- Provides context and explanation of practice nature and environment
- Provides context and explanation of assessment and licensing process (guides)
- Sets out an estimate of application/assessment processing timelines, decision points and associated costs
- Provides applicants with a rationale for assessment/licensure requirements
- Includes information or links to relevant labour market information

Examples– Clear and Accessible Information

There are numerous excellent examples of clear and accessible information among those professions examined in this report. On the whole, this is a category where nearly all professions are excelling. A few selections have been highlighted below:

- A unique URL name, such as www.physiciansapply.ca gives applicants overseas a true sense of what the website is about and how it can help them. In this regard, the site “bundles” together a number of services that immigrants can use such as credential evaluations, translations and viewing exam results. The website itself allows for a number of pre-arrivals services to be carried-out, including a credential repository that can be shared, requesting a credential evaluation and requesting translation for a medical credential in a language other than English or French.
- The Engineers Canada site is fairly robust and includes a process to improve the website and FAQs based on questions it receives through various forms of communication. It also lists the name of a person who is a direct contact for immigrants, so that individuals do not feel as if they are just sending their queries to a general mail box. Engineers Canada also makes use of a

microsite URL (newcomers.engineerscanada.ca) that houses all the information newcomers may need to enter the profession. This allows the site to take on its own character separate from the Engineers Canada website. The site contains roadmaps and an academic information tool, as well as video links that indicate success stories.

- Many organizations have developed materials aimed at providing prospective applicants with a glimpse of the practice environment in Canada. The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) offers series of short videos which describe the various settings in Canada where occupational therapists work⁴⁶. Similarly, the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) provides testimonials from previous applicants on the process of integrating into the Canadian workforce⁴⁷.
- Global Experience Ontario (GEO), an access and resource of the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration provides information to skilled immigrants looking to become licensed in one of Ontario's "non-health" regulated professions. In partnership with regulatory bodies, GEO has developed "career maps" for each one of these professions⁴⁸. These outline the various steps involved in the assessment and recognition process, including provisions that may exist for advanced standing, language proficiency, exam requirements or mutual recognition agreements. In many cases, infographics and flow charts are used to facilitate understanding of the key decision points involved in becoming licensed. These are available in both English and French.
- The Canadian Technology Immigration Network (CTIN -which serves the engineering technology sector) provides information and links related to the assessment and licensing process but also to other areas prospective immigrants may be interested in. This includes information on labour market conditions in all provinces and territories and potential "alternate career" pathways.
- The College of Physiotherapists of Ontario (CPO) has developed a document called "Rationale for Registration Requirements"⁴⁹. It sets out the various aspects of the registration process and explains why each is necessary and relevant. This has been recognized as an "exemplary practice" by the Office of the Fairness Commissioner of Ontario⁵⁰.

⁴⁶ See Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists <http://www.caot.ca/default.asp?pageid=4083> (accessed March 8, 2014)

⁴⁷ See Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists <http://www.camrt.ca/certification/international/iemrtstestimonials/> (accessed March 8, 2014).

⁴⁸ See Global Experience Ontario http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/working/OI_HOW_WORK_CAREER_MAPS.html (accessed March 8, 2014).

⁴⁹ College of Physiotherapists of Ontario, "Rationale for Registration Requirements", <http://www.collegept.org/assets/registration/rationaleforregistration.pdf> (accessed March 7, 2014).

⁵⁰ See Office of the Fairness Commissioner, "Exemplary Practices", http://www.fairnesscommissioner.ca/index_en.php?page=practices/view&op=view&search_id=cprp_search_id_1394206678&practice_id=8 (accessed March 7, 2014).

II) Self-Assessment Tools

A second area of focus for many of the regulators has been the development of so-called “self-assessment” or “readiness tools”. A majority of the professions studied as part of this research have implemented some type of mechanism in this regard. The overall purpose of these is to provide an individual with an opportunity to compare and reflect their own personal skills and education which those required for practice in Canada. Typically, these tools are tied to some form of Canadian assessment standard such as a national competency profile or certification exam blueprint. While the form and structure of these tools differ, individuals are usually asked to respond to multiple choice cases studies and/or questions. An automated response is generated which lists the various strengths and weaknesses of an individual (based on their answers) and may suggest certain textbooks, articles and other resources that should be consulted. In many cases, these tools are also bundled with other relevant information related to the nature of Canadian practice, details on the competencies required to work in Canada and the expectations of employers.

With some exceptions, this stage is not a mandatory step in the assessment process. It is intended as another opportunity for prospective applicants to make an informed choice on whether to apply to a certain profession for licensure and a general appraisal of their likelihood of becoming licensed in Canada based on their current professional skill sets.

Promising Practices - Self-Assessment Tools

- Is linked to, and references the profession’s “Canadian” practice standard
- Includes links to related information (i.e. application forms, regulatory bodies, etc.)
- Provides applicants with a “reality check” in regards to their likelihood in becoming licensed in Canada
- Is sustainable and systematically maintained and updated
- Provides additional context (labour market and practice conditions in Canada, etc.)

Examples- Self-Assessment Tools

- Many of the self assessment or “readiness” tools cited in the inventory above were developed through Atlantic Connection. This organization hosts a website aimed at the expeditious integration of skilled health professionals into the workforce. Information is directed at four distinct audiences including: internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs); employers and potential employers of IEHPs; communities that want to attract, integrate and retain IEHPs; and regulatory organizations, health care educators, and others who support IEHPs. As part of this suite of information, IEHPs are currently able to access self-assessment and readiness tools (SARTs) for 15 health care professions⁵¹ with 2 more in development (sonography and respiratory therapy). All SARTs are available in both English and French.

The SARTs are low stakes assessment and have no direct bearing on official assessment/licensing outcomes. Instead, they offer a view of the life and practice of a specific professional through:

- authentic case scenarios

⁵¹ See Atlantic Connection’s website, <http://www.atlanticcanadahealthcare.com/default.asp?mn=1.20.326> (accessed March 6, 2014).

- actual day in the life experiences
- employer identified core skills and technical competencies

As per the SART brochure, each tool “provides clear and accurate information about practice standards and eliminates possible career misconceptions before immigration. IEHPs may assess their own competency while working through the tool using a self reflective approach. They may identify gaps in knowledge or skills and make informed decisions about career options”⁵².

Atlantic Connection will seek out partnerships with regulators, associations, education institutions and subject matter experts to help create and populate the resource. On average, it costs \$150,000 to develop each tool. Major areas of expenditure include: fees paid to content experts, translation and travel costs⁵³. Project funding provided by Health Canada (until 2016) allows for continual updating of content to ensure that the tool reflects current licensing requirements and standards. At present the tool is offered to individuals at no charge and can be completed online in 40-45 minutes. Answers are not recorded or evaluated by anyone other than the person who accesses the tool.

- A second, promising-practice example of self-assessment tools comes by way of the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS). Unlike in most professions where completion of this type of activity is voluntary, CSMLS requires that applicants fill out a self-assessment booklet as part of the application process. The “Personal Competency Rating

SAMPLE

Number	Competency
4.20	<p>Performs tissue preparation techniques to produce paraffin or frozen sections for microscopic examination</p> <p>Operates and maintains common instruments/ equipment</p> <p>Assesses the quality of the preparation and initiates corrective action as required</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(Low) 1 2 3 4 5 (High)</p> <p style="text-align: center;"> <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education <input type="checkbox"/> No education <input type="checkbox"/> Work experience <input type="checkbox"/> No work experience </p> <p style="font-size: small;">My initial MLT program was in the US and did not include histotechnology. I completed a course in histology and five weeks of clinical practice at LSU Medical Centre, Shreveport, Louisiana, USA.</p>

Booklet” is a paper-based form in which candidates rate themselves in their ability and knowledge for each competency (based on a national competency profile) on a scale of one to five. Candidates indicate whether the knowledge or experience was obtained through education or work experience and there is some space for additional notes or clarification if required. A sample response from the “General Medical Laboratory Technologist Competency Rating Booklet”⁵⁴ is above. While trained assessors verify and assess applicants via reference letters and transcripts, forcing applicants to reflect on their personal skills, knowledge and abilities in a structured format can help to set realistic expectations on the competencies required to become licensed in Canada.

⁵² Atlantic Connection for Internationally Educated Health Professionals (2013) “Self Assessment and Readiness Tool – Brochure”, Nova Scotia Community College.

⁵³ Information on the Atlantic Connection’s SART tools provided via an interview with Kelly McKnight and Jane Wojcik (February 28, 2014)

⁵⁴ CSMLS, “Personal Competency Rating Booklet,” CSMLS website, <http://csmls.protraining.com/faq.cfm> (accessed January 18, 2014).

III) Mutual Recognition Agreements

One method that has been used by some professions to push the assessment process “upstream” has been the development of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs)/ memorandums of understanding (MOUs). The most formal version of these agreements allows for reciprocal recognition of like credentials between participating international jurisdictions. Arguably, this type of recognition mechanism at a profession-specific level is still in its infancy in Canada. According to the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials, few professions have implemented these types of arrangements⁵⁵.

Essentially, an MRA is a proactive approach to foreign qualification recognition. Instead of responding to an individual’s application to conduct research on a given program of study or professional body overseas, research is carried out in advance, and the comparability of a given credential in a given jurisdiction is determined in “Canadian” terms. The benefits of such an approach are fairly self-evident. Qualification recognition times can be decreased markedly (or effectively eliminated) for those applying from MRA jurisdictions. As a result, immigrants are theoretically able to work in their chosen profession more quickly than via other methods of assessment⁵⁶.

With that said, what an MRA does and looks like in practice is not a singular concept; many variations are possible. While some allow for immediate permit-on-permit recognition, others may apply only to an individual’s academic qualifications and not to work experience or other specific professional competencies. Some may simply outline the assessment process and areas applicants need to remediate before being eligible for licensure. Other forms of qualification recognition (occasionally termed MRAs) are essentially unilateral statements. A given professional body will carry out focused research as to a specific professional credential and/or system of education. Based on this research, they will come to an official determination on the comparability of that credential in “Canadian” terms; in these situations, no formal agreement between jurisdictions exists. A summary of the three basic categories cited by interviewees are summarized in the table below.

Type of Agreement	Description
Full MRA	A formal agreement between two jurisdictions allowing for immediate permit-for-permit recognition
Partial MRA	A formal agreement between two jurisdictions where specific, necessary experience or upgrading is required prior to the issuance of a license to practice(e.g. a course on Canadian regulations/jurisprudence, Canadian experience)
Targeted Research	No formal/ agreement - Unilateral research conducted on a specific overseas credential resulting in a fast-track for certain applicants

⁵⁵ See Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials – International Mutual Recognition Agreements (<http://www.cicic.ca/en/670/mutual-recognition-agreements.canada>).

⁵⁶ See notes from Canadian Foundation on Economic Education – Conference on Mutual Recognition Agreements: Summary Outcomes and Recommendations (<http://www.cfee.org/en/pdf/Mutual%20Recognitions%20Agreements%20Conference%20-%20Final%20Report%20-%20July%202012.pdf>).

Organizations that have established MRAs as a means of international credential recognition tend to represent those professions with larger numbers of members (e.g. Accounting, Engineering). This follows, given that the time, research, political will, and effort required to develop these agreements is considerable. However, given Canada's provincial regulation system, recognition and certification of professionals rests with the provinces, and as such, the benefits of MRAs and MOUs may not be realized to the extent described if provincial regulators are not on board.

It is also worth noting that developing an MRA is not a "one-time" effort. Ongoing communication with the partner jurisdiction is required to make sure that any changes to licensing standards and policies are communicated and understood. As such, MRAs may have to be examined and rewritten every few years.

Generally, two strategies are considered by organizations when creating MRAs.

1. **Low-Risk:** Choose a jurisdiction that has very similar practice, language and cultural standards to Canada as the risk to the profession and the public is likely to be minimal, or;
2. **High-Volume:** Select the highest volume source jurisdiction for MRA consideration as it will have the greatest impact on the most number of applicants.

While ostensibly successful in certain professions, others indicated some reservations in regards to implementing MRAs. Many organizations feel that their current evaluation practices and policies allow for applicants to be processed within a very reasonable timeframe. Hence, the incentive to develop an MRA as a means of expediting the assessment process for international applicants is limited. A number of interviewees representing occupations with smaller numbers of international applicants also felt that the effort put into negotiating a series of MRAs would not generate a meaningful return on investment given the relatively size of their applicant pools. Moreover, MRAs are usually not retroactive in any way, and generally only apply to immigrants that come after the MRA is struck. As a result, it takes time for the benefits of the MRA to accrue once it has been implemented.

Another drawback mentioned by regulators is the fact that by instituting MRAs with certain jurisdictions (and not others) international applicants are treated differently. This may have the undesirable effect of muddying the transparency and overall fairness of the system. This viewpoint is supported by recent literature on the topic which suggests, that "MRAs inevitably introduce complexity into the recognition process by creating different rules for immigrants from different countries"⁵⁷.

A recent legal challenge has been made (and upheld) related to the objectivity and fairness of MRAs. An applicant seeking licensure as a professional engineer in Alberta felt discriminated against because as he had to complete a series of examinations that were not required of graduates from Canada and those countries with which the regulatory body has Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs). The tribunal hearing this case agreed with the complainant indicating that "the discrimination was related to his place of origin because the [regulatory body] assumed engineers with qualifications from foreign

⁵⁷ M. Sumption, (2013) "Tackling Brain Waste: strategies to improve the recognition of immigrant's foreign qualifications", Migration Policy Institute.

countries with which it has no MRAs, have lesser qualifications than graduates from Canada or MRA institutions. The Tribunal also found that the imposition of additional exams and requirements without individualized assessment restricted the ability of immigrants to work in their respective professions and perpetuated disadvantage in these groups”⁵⁸. While an isolated incident at this point, this may serve as precedent for applicants to other professions/regulatory bodies who offer an expedited system of assessment and recognition for individuals from certain source countries and not others.

As well, there may be additional challenges made related to those “partial MRAs” that still explicitly require some prescribed amount of “Canadian experience” before becoming fully licensed. The Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has released a new policy related to employer and regulatory bodies’ requirement regarding this provision. In 2013, the Commission indicated that a “strict requirement for *Canadian experience*” is prima facie discrimination (discrimination on its face) and can only be used in very limited circumstances”⁵⁹. The onus will be on employers and regulatory bodies to show that a requirement for prior work experience in Canada is a *bona fide* requirement, based on a legal test set out by the Supreme Court of Canada.

The Supreme Court of Canada set out a three-part test to determine whether a standard that results in discrimination can be justified as a reasonable and *bona fide* one. The organization or institution must establish on a balance of probabilities that the standard, factor, requirement or rule:

- i) was adopted for a purpose or goal that is rationally connected to the function being performed;
- ii) was adopted in good faith, in the belief that it is needed to fulfill the purpose or goal, and;
- iii) is reasonably necessary to accomplish its purpose or goal, because it is impossible to accommodate the claimant without undue hardship⁶⁰.

Promising Practices - MRAs

- Describes the nature of the agreement (i.e. legal MRA or unilateral research)
- Are clearly written and readily available for potential candidates to review
- Explains clearly which groups are eligible for licensure under the MRA
- Clearly describe the outcomes of the agreement to the applicant
- Employs a regular system for review and updating
- Expedites the assessment and recognition process in a meaningful way

Example - MRAs

Engineers Canada is part of the Washington Accord, which it signed-on to in 1989. The framework of the accord in regards to the terminology above can be considered a “partial MRA” with generally low-

⁵⁸ Paul Fairweather, Brad Cocke, (February 28, 2014) “Professional Engineering Requirements found Discriminatory to Immigrants”, Harris Legal News. Also see, Jason Wai, Linda McKay-Panos, (March 17, 2014) “Professional Bodies, Internationally Educated Graduates and the Alberta Human Rights Act”, University of Calgary Faculty of Law Blogs on Developments in Alberta Law.

⁵⁹ “Policy on Removing the ‘Canadian Experience’ Barrier”. Ontario Human Rights Commission. Approved February 1, 2013.

⁶⁰ Ibid. Ontario Human Rights Commission. <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-removing-%E2%80%9CCanadian-experience%E2%80%9D-barrier> (accessed March 30, 2014).

risk partner countries. Engineers Canada has indicated that it and its constituent associations receive a high volume of applications from India, China, Pakistan and Iran. Three of the four (China, Pakistan and India) are provisional members of the Washington Accord, and India is seeking full membership through the National Board of Accreditation in June 2014 and China will be a provisional member for at least the next year. In terms of the partial MRA component, the accord gives “substantial equivalency” of formal education from member countries; it is not a permit-on-permit type of agreement. An IEG’s credentials and professional competencies are actually still evaluated and assessed and gaps are still identified. Moreover, since the agreement only covers education in terms of granting “substantial equivalency”, other factors including Canadian work experience and good character reference checks must be obtained before becoming a licensed engineer in Canada.

In practice, assessors who assess individuals under the Washington Accord are looking to exempt candidates from certain examinations or other requirements. However, if gaps are noted an assessor may require a candidate to sit a challenge exam in a particular subject area to prove knowledge. The benefit of the accord is that there is not necessarily a remediation plan assigned, as long as knowledge can be proven in an examination context. It should be noted that the Canadian system of engineering is one where candidates are expected to demonstrate learning from a broad range of five key areas (Math, Natural Science, Engineering Science, Engineering Design, Complimentary Studies). In other member countries that are part of the accord, they may go further in depth into a particular area with their students, so it is possible that individuals from some countries have to write a number of exams when they come to Canada to demonstrate a greater breadth of knowledge.

Overall (and somewhat surprisingly,) the amount of time saved by an IEG coming from a Washington Accord country may not be overly significant. The accord deals with academic equivalency only; academics are only one of five categories of requirements for licensure in Canada. However, more often than not, applicants holding degrees from Washington Accord-accredited programs do not need to write exams. However, if an applicant under the Washington Accord is assigned exams, it is generally a lower number than a non-Washington Accord applicant. Time saving also comes from the fact that they do not have to engage in significant remediation activities, since their education has been deemed already to be “substantially equivalent.”

Some of the concerns and issues that face Engineers Canada in regards to moving forward with the accord is that the organization itself, has little control over which countries sign-on to the accord and how long the process will take in other countries. So it is possible that countries with a high volume of applications in Canada may take a while to become members of the accord. This is because each country has to have minimum levels of quality assurance and assessment in the education system which meets accord standards. For other professions, one implication is that relying on a broad system like the Washington Accord has advantages and disadvantages. On the positive side, much of the administration and associated research is handled by a third-party; the disadvantage is that the specific countries that Canadian regulators want to see as part of the accord may take a while to be admitted to the accord and to sign on. With MRAs that are created directly between regulators, they can set terms more quickly and directly than what is generally achieved through the Washington Accord.

Also, since the provincial regulators are the groups that officially license engineers, it is still up to them to recognize the terms and the spirit of the accord. Engineers Canada has indicated that some provinces follow the agreement while others do not do so fully, which could create confusion and increased time for IEGs who fall under the agreement. Of further note, there are three engineering professions governed by three different agreements. Engineering (a four year degree) is covered by the Washington Accord. The Sydney Accord covers substantial equivalence in engineering technology (a three year degree) and The Dublin Accord covers substantial equivalence of tertiary qualification in technician engineering (a two year degree). These varying pathways may also be confusing to prospective applicants who may be unsure of which route applies to them.

IV) Personalized Support

The entire immigration and settlement process is challenging enough, but becoming registered or certified in a regulated profession can present additional hurdles. One promising practice in regards to pre-arrivals supports for the organizations researched as part of this report is to provide direct, personalized support to immigrants. Many regulators rely on websites, self-assessment exams, or even general email correspondence to answer the questions immigrants may have about the regulated profession. However, personalized support takes that one step further. It provides one-on-one contact with an individual within a regulatory body (or organization designated by the regulator) to address relevant issues concerning the certification process. It is done in recognition of the fact that the process is difficult and often requires customized answers to very specific questions. It also recognizes the fact that though internet sites often provide very good information, personalized support allows candidates and immigrants to feel more confident in making decisions during the pre-arrival stage of immigrating to Canada.

Promising Practices – Personalized Support

- Offers clear information on the licensure and application process and other potentially relevant topics
- Allows for an approach customizable based on applicant needs
- Where possible, is carried out in real time (i.e. in person, over the telephone or via webinar)

Examples – Personalized Support

- While not the direct focus of this report, the Canadian Immigrant Integration Program (CIIP) warrants mentioning. Begun in 2007 as a pilot project and transformed into a full-fledged program in 2010, the CIIP is an initiative between the Government of Canada, the Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC), and a network of partners across Canada. The program provides free pre-arrival orientation to Federal Skilled Workers, Provincial Nominees, and their spouses and adult dependants, while they are still overseas during the final stages of the immigration process⁶¹. At present, services are offered through 4 centres located in China, India, the Philippines, and the United Kingdom which can serve 25 countries. Briefly, the

⁶¹ [Canadian Immigrant Integration Program](http://www.newcomersuccess.ca/index.php/en/about-ciip), “What is CIIP” <http://www.newcomersuccess.ca/index.php/en/about-ciip> (accessed January 16, 2014).

program is comprised of a series of supports offered in person and online through workshops and counseling sessions. These sessions cover a number of important topics such as: labor market information, licensing information, and a list of actions to be taken before and after arrival in Canada. In many ways the CIIP program represents the gold standard of pre-arrival supports as it provides customized integration plan for each client in person to applicants while they are still overseas.

- While the costs and resources involved in maintaining a program like CIIP are beyond the reach of the vast majority of regulated professions, there are elements of this program which are being offered in a modified way. One lower cost example of this is the provision of webinars to confirmed or prospective applicants (e.g. Global Experience Ontario, HealthForce Ontario – see below). This is a method used by some professions where periodic sessions (in person or in a group setting) are held with applicants to review and discuss areas related to the licensing process. This interactive format allows for customized information to be provided on topics of specific interest. Individual questions can be answered in real-time to ensure that full comprehension is achieved. Group sessions also allow for the added benefit of providing immigrants with peer support opportunities by linking them with other individuals facing similar challenges.
- A related promising practice example of in-person support is a strategy used to recruit engineering technicians and technologists overseas. Specifically, the Canadian Technology Immigration Network directly partnered with CIIP to “increase the knowledge base and capacity of CIIP Advisors in the field vis-à-vis advising internationally trained engineering technicians and technologists; developing occupational specific counseling tools and resources relating to the engineering technology professions in Canada; facilitating pre-arrival preparation of prospective immigrants seeking employment in the science and engineering technology professions; and, providing prospective immigrants with engineering and technology backgrounds with access to employment opportunities and alternative pathways to access those opportunities in the technology professions in Canada”⁶². Particularly noteworthy is the use of CIIP advisors to directly provide specific information to candidates, and the willingness of CIIP advisors to be trained in specific issues related to the profession.
- Another noteworthy example in the provision of personalized support comes from HealthForce Ontario. This organization is charged with the mandate “to ensure that Ontarians have access to the right number and mix of qualified health-care providers, when and where they are needed, now and in the future”. A component of their strategy in achieving this goal involves the internationally trained cohort. To this end, HealthForce holds a series of regularly scheduled webinars for international health professionals while they are still overseas. Webinars are approximately one hour long (with up to 20 participants) and cover topics related to the assessment/licensing process, and the practice environment in Ontario. Efforts are made during

⁶² <http://www.credentials-competences.gc.ca/CommunityBrowser.aspx?id=181>

these sessions to set realistic expectations and timelines among potential applicants. Content can be customized based on the specific needs and questions of those in attendance. Webinars are run every month for physicians and as required for other health professions.

- Global Experience Ontario is in the process of setting up a set of webinars (similar to those offered by HealthForce Ontario) for “non-health” regulated professions. They also currently offer extensive information on the application and licensing processes to clients pre-arrival through email. One-on-one support is provided to clients by telephone or in person once they arrive in Ontario.

V) Initiatives Aimed at Expediting the Assessment Process

There is a final category of pre-arrival supports which are not as widely cited as the three described above. These have been developed with the goal of streamlining and expediting the assessment process by affording the applicant to complete as much of the process in their home country. Research has shown that the length of time taken to become assessed and licensed can yield the perception of unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles for many skilled immigrants⁶³. This may lead to frustration and in some cases dropping out of the process altogether. A brief account of select pre-arrival efforts to speed up the assessment process related to documentation policies, certification exam preparation and offshore exam administration, follows below.

a) Documentation Policies

Typically, one of the most time-consuming aspects of the credential evaluation process is the sourcing and submission of appropriate documentation (i.e. diplomas, degrees, transcripts). A 2007 study conducted by the Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators showed that on average it took individuals 83 days⁶⁴ to submit their required documents based on a sample of over 500 internationally educated applicants. Hence, any efforts aimed at expediting this part of the process is a boon to the applicant. Recognizing this, and the fact that sourcing professional and education documentation is far easier to do in the home country relative to Canada, some regulators have made efforts to encourage applicants to complete this task before arriving in Canada. Some regulators will allow individuals to send in their educational documentation even before a full application is initiated. While seemingly a small policy change, this move can induce individuals to source documents while still abroad even if they are not sure about what career path they are planning to take once in Canada. Should they eventually choose to submit a formal application, the time to submit necessary documentation is decreased significantly.

In other instances, an organization working on behalf of the regulators of a profession will act as a repository for all original documentation. This organization collects and validates applicant transcripts, diplomas certificates, and houses them until they are required by an assessment body or regulator. As such, applicants need only provide their documents a single time to a single organization who can then facilitate their expeditious transfer at select points though the assessment and admissions process.

⁶³ I.L. Bourgeault, et. al. (2010), “Brain Gain, Drain and Waste: the experiences of internationally educated health professionals in Canada”, CIHR Health Canada Chair in Health Human Resource Policy.

⁶⁴ K. Johnson, (2007) “Integrating Internationally Educated Physiotherapists”, The Canadian Alliance of Physiotherapy Regulators.

Promising Practices - Documentation Policies

- Allows applicants to complete as much of the assessment/licensure process in home country
- Provides clear details on documentation requirements (types of documents - transcripts, diplomas, etc.)
- Provides clear details on acceptable documentation (i.e. originals, certified copies) and translation requirements
- Employs a system where official documents only need to be provided once during the application and assessment process
- Has a practical and expeditious method of receiving, validating and housing documents

Examples- Documentation Policies

- Many websites will act as “clearinghouses” for applications. Both www.physiciansapply.ca (medicine) and www.nnas.ca (nursing) will allow applicants to apply online and have those applications and supporting documents sent to relevant provincial regulators directly. This simplifies the application process for individuals who are often ideally confused about the federal/provincial nature of the Canadian regulatory environment.
- While not yet fully functional, the Pharmacy “Gateway” project is also looking to streamline the application process for internationally educated individuals. While provincial regulators will still be responsible for assessing and recognizing international qualifications, all applications and associated documentation can be submitted directly through a central website. This information is then directed to the appropriate regulatory body for assessment. This system will make navigating the assessment process much easier for the applicant and affords them the ability to provide necessary documentation only once to a single central organization.
- In most cases, those responsible for assessing international qualifications require that an application form be completed to officially “open” a file. The Ontario College of Teachers (OCT) has a policy where it will accept documentation (i.e. transcripts, diplomas) from individuals overseas even before an application is submitted. These documents are securely housed by OCT until they are needed. This seemingly simple policy can encourage individuals to source important documents in while still in their home country (where it is far easier and faster to do) and then decide at a later date whether to apply for licensure.
- The Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists (CCTT), offers a preliminary assessment process which can be completed entirely overseas. Leveraging a database of over 8,000 international education programs, the CCTT can provide applicants with a definitive decision of level of competence vis-a-vis Canadian standards. While certain remediation and experience requirements can only be fulfilled once in Canada; applicants are able to provide provincial associations (regulators) with an “international qualifications assessment” which can help to speed up the credential recognition process. This initiative is temporarily on hold as it is migrated from a paper-based system to an electronic one.

b) Certification Exam Preparation

Often a significant (but necessary) hurdle for international applicants is the need to pass a given certification exam. The majority of professions examined as part of this research require some final high-stakes assessment prior to being eligible for licensure. In a 2011 survey of over 200 internationally educated health professions who had successfully navigated the licensure process, 72% indicated that additional information on their profession's specific certification would have been "very helpful"⁶⁵. A similar study conducted by RA Malatest and associates found that over 80% of internationally educated respondents considered the provision of an exam guide and sample certification exam questions to be "helpful"⁶⁶. Many organizations have attempted to address this need with the provision of: exam guides, practice questions and explanatory videos. All of these are accessible overseas and can help the applicant better understand structure, nature and content of the exam and therefore potentially increase their chances of "passing" on their first attempt.

Promising Practices – Certification Exam Preparation

- Provides clear information on the structure, site, offerings, and cost of the exam
- Provides applicants with an exam blueprint or equivalent explaining the content of the exam
- Provides applicants with a series of sample questions based on the exam blueprint
- Orients applicants to the nature and purpose of the exam (e.g. information on "what is a competency based exam" or "how to approach a multiple choice exam")
- Provides reference materials and a textbook list for self-study

Examples– Certification Exam Preparation

- With funding provided by the Ontario Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration, the Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science (CSMLS) has recently completed development of a suite of exam preparation resources for internationally educated applicants. These consist of a series of 5 online vignettes available in both official languages which outline (in plain language) major topics related to the national certification exam. Information is delivered through a voice-over narrative and reinforced with visual examples. Areas covered include: What is a competency-based examination, How to prepare for a competency-based examination, What is a competency profile, What is an examination blueprint, How to interpret your results, How a pass mark is determined, Top 10 exam myths, Recommended textbook list, What is the structure of the examination, What to expect during the examination. The overall objective of the project is to provide current and accurate information related to the CSMLS certification exam. This information is potentially of value to both internationally educated and Canadian educated candidates, and ultimately aims to:
 - reduce exam anxiety;
 - improve knowledge transfer;
 - increase exam readiness;
 - and, improve overall pass rates (especially among the internationally educated cohort).

⁶⁵ K. Johnson & B. Baomal (2011) "Assessing the Workforce Integration of Internationally Educated Health Professionals", The Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science.

⁶⁶ RA Malatest and Associates, Ibid. Pg. 50.

Initial samples of the vignettes were tested through a series of focus groups and surveys to ensure relevance and clarity. Adjustments were made to the final versions based on feedback from respondents. Since the end of the project in early 2013, over 3,800 individuals have accessed the online resource; with each of the modules being accessed a minimum of 500 times.

- The Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT) is responsible for administering the National Occupational Therapy Certification Examination (NOTCE) - the profession's certification exam. Over the past five years CAOT has implemented a number of strategies aimed at improving exam readiness for internationally educated (and Canadian) candidates. The trial occupational therapy exam manual (TOTEM) is a web-based resource which includes 100 questions, answers and accompanying rationales. It is bundled with a one-time attempt of an online exam (based on the NOTCE) designed to give candidates a sense of their relative "readiness" to sit the high-stakes version. The TOTEM and accompanying exam which were launched in 2012 cost approximately \$60,000 to develop; partial funding was made available by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The bundle is available for purchase on the CAOT website at a cost of \$159.00.

c) Offshore Exam Administration

From the immigrant perspective, access to these exams in their home country is a big advantage as it can serve to greatly speed up the assessment and recognition process. It also helps reduce situations where immigrants have to financially support themselves while still studying for exams. However, administering exams overseas can be exceptionally difficult and costly, particularly when an exam requires participants to touch or manipulate a model and standardized patients (e.g. through an objective structured clinical examination –OSCE). Two other issues that impact overseas exam administration are security and the fact that many professions require Canadian experience, supervised Canadian practice and/or some Canadian courses to be taken as part of their registration requirements, even before final examinations can be challenged. Because of these factors, the majority of regulators do not see offering a full suite of qualifying exams overseas as a viable option.

These issues however, do not completely impede the possibility of some regulators offering at least some portion of exams offshore. The most common practice seems to be offering information about the exam, including content and format to immigrants while they are in their home country. Others are offering on-line simulations or readiness exams that do not determine standing but provide a sense of what the exam will be like when immigrants arrive in Canada. While some regulators have considered offering their knowledge-based components overseas, many have ruled this out because of the security and logistics issues involved. A case in point is the Canadian Association of Medical Radiation Technologists (CAMRT) which used to hold its certification exam in 27 sites around the world. A 2006 internal report was commissioned to update the status of international administrations. This study found a number of incidences which compromised exam security including missing materials and qualifications related to exam invigilators. As a result of these findings, the exam is now presently only

offered in one location outside of Canada. They presently offer the exam in Doha, Qatar as part of an accredited program, which serves 12-15 people annually.

Some member-funded regulators feel that expenditures should be directed towards activities that specifically address member needs. Moreover, they indicate that there are very high fixed costs in offering exams overseas, and that in most cases there simply is not enough demand at any one time to justify or offset those costs.

With the exception of physicians (described below), many regulators in this study have only had limited efforts overseas. The NDEB for Dentistry will consider offering overseas exams in places that have about 50 candidates and acceptable security. They presently offer the “Fundamental Knowledge Examination” (the first of three examinations) in the UK. They are looking to offer all their exams in the UK, Australia and Hong Kong, but need to partner with local dental schools there to administer and supervise the exam appropriately.

Promising Practices - Offshore Exam Administration

- Ensures that the exam and associated materials are secure
- Has appropriate onsite personnel to effectively invigilate the exam and arrange for any special needs
- Assesses to the same standards as Canadian-educated applicants
- Partners with appropriate organizations to administer the exam, whether it be third party examination organizations or accredited programs
- Is offered on a cost effective basis.

Example - Offshore Exam Administration

The Medical Council of Canada has been offering its “Evaluating Examination” (MCC-EE) offshore since 1979. At the time it was offered in eight countries through collaboration with embassies and was linked to immigration outcomes. As such, it was considered a high-stakes examination right from the start, so it had a very strong legacy on which to build. From 1979, the examination has grown to over 80 countries worldwide and over 500 sites within those countries, with a total of 3,500 exams administered a year.

Over the years, the MCC has switched the examination to a computer-based format (2005), and has partnered with a third-party examination provider to deliver and invigilate the examination in Canadian and overseas test centres. This partner administers the exams on a local level allowing MCC to focus on more strategic activities. Prior to introducing the computer-based MCC-EE in 2005, the MCC had been using a computer-based system in Canada for another examination (MCC Qualifying Examination, Part I), so it was not too challenging for them to convert the MCC-EE. With that said, even with a third-party partner, the MCC has a significant challenge in administering the exam on such a scale. Key to managing this challenge is ensuring that their information systems can manage the data exchange with the third-party partner that collects the data from the Canadian and overseas test centres. While the third-party partner may help with security and other local logistical issues, the MCC has to make fundamental decisions on what to do if the examination site is compromised in any way, say by fire, flooding or

political instability that make it impractical to write the exam on a particular day. This in and of itself can be challenging in terms of fairness of administering the exam on a global scale.

Following a pilot study, the MCC realized that it was impractical to offer the examination on one specific day, so there are liberal and generous times available to challenge the examination. It is offered five times a year, over a two to three week window, and candidates can schedule and change their times easily through the MCC's third party partner.

The sitting fee for the exam is \$1,500; this figure is based on cost recovery. It is potentially quite expensive for some applicants (especially given that two other exams need to be written by candidates as well before they become eligible for licensure). Besides the infrastructure needed to support the examination, the fee is justified by two other critical factors. The first is that the MCC wants to make ensure the examination is sustainable over the long-term. It is a high-stakes examination that for the purpose of fairness and consistency should not have its format continually altered based on short term cost considerations.

The other justification for the cost of the examination is the fact that the content needs to be regularly updated. This is done for two reasons. The first is for security and sustainability of the examination. The MCC recognizes that regardless of security protocols taken, information about the examination will be leaked-out, so it is necessary to change the content of the examination on a very regular basis in order to ensure that the instrument is not compromised. Secondly, since the medical field changes so rapidly and is so diverse, content needs to be updated to reflect current medical standards and practices.

Though the MCC-EE has been successful for a number of years, its future is uncertain. The MCC-EE is not required to be written by those who have graduated from Canadian medical schools. As such, the "fairness" of establishing a pre-requirement that International Medical Graduates must pass the MCC-EE before being able to sit the Qualifying Examination has been challenged. In response to this, the MCC is looking to deliver the MCC Qualifying Examination, Part I overseas.

VI) A Proactive Philosophy

While not necessarily a concrete form of pre-arrival support, an organization's overarching philosophy in regards to the assessment and recognition of foreign qualifications can yield marked benefits.

Interviews with regulators in the 14 regulated professions cited in this report, yield two dominant schools of thought related to the provision of pre-arrival supports to prospective applicants. The first is fundamentally a traditionalist viewpoint. That is to say, a regulatory body should limit its core functions to setting entry-to-practice standards, ensuring continuing professional competency and protecting the public. Adherents maintain that any activities taken outside of these areas (i.e. providing pre-arrival support) is not the mandate of the regulator and may in fact detract from the diligent provision of core functions. As such, the provision of clear, accurate and accessible information on the application, assessment and licensing process is their only obligation in this regard.

In contrast, a second philosophy holds that it is the responsibility of the regulator to do what is reasonable in facilitating the expeditious assessment and licensing of qualified applicants from start to

finish. It also recognizes that the role of the regulator has changed markedly in the past decade with the introduction of international and domestic requirements (Fairness legislation, AIT, Lisbon Convention, etc.). As such, these regulators (and their professional partners) have made more significant efforts at providing pre-arrival support and programs directed at their applicant pools. One factor that differentiates this from good customer service or even an immigrant-centric philosophy, is the fact that pre-arrivals are put on the organization's agenda, that issues are addressed quickly, and that pre-arrivals issues are championed by senior management within the organization.

Promising Practices – Proactive Philosophy

- Has systems and people in place to resolve pre-arrivals issues early/quickly
- Continually analyzes and refines communications with applicants to make pre-arrivals materials clearer
- Puts “pre-arrivals” issues on the agenda of the organization
- Keeps statistics and track of results, including website visits, successful outcomes
- Creates solutions to issues of offering services overseas
- Partners with other organizations to create workable solutions to offering pre-arrivals services overseas

Examples – Proactive Philosophy

Throughout the study various examples of this philosophy were demonstrated. Select examples are noted below.

- The National Dental Examining Board (NDEB) reviews each international application to ensure that there are no miscommunications or areas of misunderstanding among applicants. There are senior managers who take responsibility for the issue of pre-arrivals. They are also one of the few organizations that is seeking to create formal agreements with international jurisdictions, and planning on offering their exams, overseas in various countries. It should also be noted that during the interview for this project that the NDEB directly made changes to its immigration section of the website as a result of an insight generated from the discussion.
- A number of professions provide examples (and in some cases videos) of personal success stories of internationally educated applicants who have successfully navigated the assessment process (architecture, engineering, occupational therapy, medical radiation technology). This allows potential applicants to get a firsthand account of some of the challenges and resources associated with the licensing process.
- Engineers Canada has embarked on a grassroots marketing campaign to make IEGs aware of its role in pre-arrivals services. It recognizes that engineers from different countries will often form grassroots organizations to communicate with each other and to connect with people from their countries of origin while in Canada. Engineers Canada is marketing, communicating and being directly in touch with these organizations to inform them that anyone who is thinking of immigrating to Canada as an engineer should approach Engineers Canada to find out more

about the processes involved. This grassroots approach provides a sensible solution to an issue which is often associated with pre-arrivals support – effectively reaching a very broad audience in a cost-effective manner.

Recommendations

The overarching finding stemming from this research is that there are already excellent examples of pre-arrival supports currently being administered by regulators, associations and other groups involved in the recognition of international qualifications. As such, the authors' primary suggestion is that the specific promising practices distilled from these examples need to be taken into account when refining exiting pre-arrival support and designing new ones. With that said, there other more general, recommendations which have been proffered.

Define Responsibilities!: There are certain pre-arrival categories of activities that do not fall strictly within the traditional purview of the provincial regulator. Arguably helping applicants pass certification exams (with preparation support and practices tests) and providing in person support and counselling are not core regulator activities. As well, mutual recognition agreements which can be costly and time consuming to develop are most often negotiated at the national level. While the FQR framework provides that the provision of "pre-arrival support" should be a focus of regulators, many other types of organizations may be in a better position to administer certain categories of initiatives. As such, further definition of roles and responsibilities in regards to this important aspect of the assessment and recognition process

Find a Partner!: The challenges of creating, maintaining and continually updating pre-arrivals supports are significant. Generally it is difficult to communicate or interact with a very broad audience regarding a very detailed process. Moreover, the resources involved (human and financial) may be too significant for a single body to undertake unilaterally. However, a number of the solutions uncovered in this report show strong and unique partnerships between organizations. Some regulators are partnering directly with CIIP to deliver customized messages and supports to immigrants. Others are partnering with grassroots organizations, and some have developed strong relationships with third party suppliers to invigilate exams throughout the world. These types of creative, cooperative arrangements can help ensure that messages are directed at specific audiences while ensuring ongoing sustainability.

Do More Research!: The scope of this project is limited to the pre-arrival activities associated with the 14 regulated priority occupations. There are likely many other groups involved in administering innovative programs in this regard. Colleges, universities, employers, government, assessment agencies, and settlement groups all may offer some form support that can be accessed overseas. Time and resources permitting, it is recommended that a broader environmental scan be conducted in this regard to ensure that all possible promising practices are documented and shared. It is also suggested, that primary research be conducted with users of these supports (i.e. skilled immigrants). Where possible, focus groups and or/surveys with clients will help to assess the utility of these programs and perhaps catalyze the development of new ones.

Fund Programs Appropriately!: A number of programs cited in this report owe their creation to external, project-based funding. These funds are typically used to develop a given tool and test its efficacy through a "pilot phase" of 6 months to three years. Many pre-arrival supports rely on up-to-date regulatory information to function properly (websites, self-assessment tools, MRAs, personalized supports, etc). Moreover, given the relatively high-stakes nature of the entire regulation process,

ensuring the lasting success of a pre-arrivals initiative is important to both the consistency of the process and how immigrants interact with the regulator. Pilot or temporary pre-arrivals measures will only go to confuse immigrants. Ongoing funding is therefore necessary to ensure that these programs receive the necessary review and revisions central to their ongoing utility.

Measurement Matters!: As discussed early on the report, the ability to measure the net effect of a pre-arrival support and therefore its relative success is difficult. Caveats aside, there are certain categories of pre-arrival supports whose net effect can be quantified and tracked over time. Website hits can be measured; self-assessment tools use can be measured; MRA flows and processing times can be calculated. While often time consuming to establish evaluation matrices at the outset, the development of these (especially for pre-arrival supports) will help to objectively quantify the benefits of these supports to both the regulatory body and applicant. This is essential in ensuring a system of continual refinement and improvement for those involved in the assessment and recognition of international qualifications.

Let's Get Together!: In nearly all studies of this type, a seemingly trite recommendation referencing the need for "further collaboration" is made. This report is no different. There is currently considerable experience and promising practice information within Canada related to the provision of pre-arrival supports. While some of this knowledge can be shared virtually (i.e. through reports, phone calls and emails), when it comes to facilitating true understanding, there remains no surrogate for face-to-face interaction. It is therefore recommended that funding be provided to allow for conferences of interested parties to share information on this important aspect of the FQR framework.

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Appendix A: A Pan-Canadian Framework for the Assessment and Recognition of Foreign Qualifications

