

# Assessing international qualifications



Best practices for  
higher educational  
institutions

# ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

## - BEST PRACTICES FOR HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS



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Education and Culture DG

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## *Foreword*

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Annually about 3.5 million students leave their homes to pursue studies abroad. According to OECD report *Education at Glance 2010*, the number of international students in the world has almost doubled over the past decade.

At the same time, higher education markets are becoming ever more competitive and higher education institutions are investing more in attracting talented students from around the globe. Consequently, universities are increasingly investing in further training of their admissions staff to ensure that they are competent in carrying out the student selection in a way that meets the quality standards of their institution. Although many European universities already have long traditions in international student recruitment, some others are merely setting up their international student admission policies and may lack the internal structure for handling the process.

This booklet is a collection of good practices regarding credential evaluation and student admission in general. It aims to serve as a toolkit for those starting up their international student recruitment by providing tools regarding admissions criteria, credential evaluation, grade comparison and fraud detection. A special focus is given to Chinese and Indian credential evaluation in the field of Environmental Science.

The examples presented in this booklet are a compilation of practices in various European and North American universities. The information was gathered through questionnaires, interviews and browsing through web sites of universities and other relevant bodies.

This booklet is a product of the European Commission funded Erasmus Mundus Action 3 project called Linking European and Asian Networks in the field of Environmental Sciences (LEANES). LEANES aimed at improving the accessibility and enhancing the profile of the European Higher Education Area in order to facilitate and promote study opportunities in Europe for third country (Asian) students. The project was focused mainly on education in the Environmental Sciences. LEANES was conducted by Trinity College Dublin (Ireland), Research School for Socio-Economic and Natural Sciences of the Environment (the Netherlands), University of Eastern Finland and StudyPortals, the Netherlands.

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## *Glossary*

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**Academic record** shows the studied courses or subjects, earned grades and the hours of study or number of credits for each course. Academic record may be called *a transcript, detailed marks sheet, examination report*, or other name depending on the country in which it is issued.

**Copy** is a photocopy or a notarised copy.

**Credential** is one partially or fully completed educational programme from educational institution leading to a certificate, diploma or degree.

**Degree mill** is an institution of higher education operating without supervision of a state or professional agency and granting diplomas which are either fraudulent or, because of the lack of proper standards, worthless.

**Diploma Supplement** accompanies a higher education diploma in Europe, providing a standardised description of the nature, level, context, content and status of the studies completed by its holder.

**Lisbon Convention** is an international convention of the Council of Europe, which stipulates that international degrees and studies must be recognised unless substantial differences occur.

**Official document** is mailed directly by the educational institution that has awarded the original document. Official document bears proper seals and signatures of the awarding institution. Document is not considered official if it has been handled by the applicant.

**Original document** bears the seals and signatures of the awarding institution. Photocopies or notarised copies are not original documents.

**Translation** is a word-to-word (literal, not interpretive) complete English translation of the requested document. Translation must always be done by an official translator.

## INTRODUCTION

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Assessing international qualifications is an activity that, increasingly, concerns universities that aim to act globally. Not so long ago holders of foreign qualifications found that their credentials were simply not accepted for evaluation by admissions officers. This has changed in Europe, North America, Australia New Zealand and several Middle East countries as a consequence of adopting the Lisbon Convention since 1999.

The Lisbon Convention was the first European legal act to stipulate that everyone has a right to a fair assessment of foreign qualifications. The Lisbon Convention changed the viewpoint from seeking a full equivalence of the foreign qualifications to '*Recognition if no substantial differences are evident*'. Although recognition under the Lisbon Convention is based on mutual trust and provision of information between the higher education systems of the states that are parties to it, the spirit of Lisbon Convention can be practiced in a broader global context.

Meanwhile the Lisbon Convention aims at breaking boundaries for international student mobility, academic credentials have become an international currency. People are assessed against their academic merits not only when applying for a study place but also when applying for a profession or even a residence permit. As in many countries, educational achievements determine which support, benefits, wealth and employment the holder is entitled to. The academic documents give the holder access to privileges that may be withheld from those not possessing such documents. However, the main difference between a proper currency and academic credentials is that while the former is protected heavily against fraud, the latter is often lacking that protection. Hence, producing forgery is a multi-billion business.

International credential evaluation and fraud detection is difficult. Traditionally, those countries and universities that have long been popular targets among foreign students, tend to have the most rigorous admissions procedures. Meanwhile, some countries (especially in the Scandinavia) have traditionally had a very relaxed approach with few security features. However, recently the

attitude towards international student admission has started to change and many countries have introduced centralised admissions procedures.

As centralised units are set up and universities build their own admission systems, the number of international applicants keeps on increasing and many universities are struggling to keep up with the pace. Furthermore, not everything can be done in centralised units or not every university has the possibility to join such an organisation. This booklet aims at bringing together the best practices of various actors in the field of international qualification assessment. The booklet is compiled in a way that it would cover the range from defining the admissions policy and admissions procedure to evaluating the qualifications and completing a successful student selection.

# ASSESSING INTERNATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS

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## UNIVERSITY ADMISSIONS POLICY

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The admissions policy reflects the values and aspirations of the educational institution in question. In Europe, the admissions policy often aims at recruiting able and motivated students, regardless of gender, nationality or religion.

Qualification assessment is a part of university's admissions policy, which must serve the purpose of recruiting the best students for the institution and the programme in question. Implementing the admissions policy calls for thorough knowledge on potential applicants' qualifications and ability to apply it in a way that candidates from around the world will be treated equally.

To assess merit and motivation applicants are asked to submit a variety of academic credentials and supporting documents. Recruiting prospective students calls for clear selection criteria which attracts a particular target group. A straight forward eligibility and selection criteria help not only the institution to select the best students for their programme, but also informs the applicants thus saving the time of ineligible students from submitting their applications in the first place.

All the applicants should be given clear instructions on the admissions procedure: a concise list of documents that they must submit, how these documents are to be submitted and in which language and all the deadlines that apply. Adequate and unambiguous instructions for submitting the application should be available beforehand on the university/programme web pages. This ensures that students are aware of how strictly their papers will be checked and what the consequences are for submitting misleading information or forged documents.

Similarly students should be informed whether the university recruits students via authorised Agents. In some countries, such as in China, it is common that universities recruit students via agents and from a student's viewpoint it may appear the only way of applying for a programme. In order to avoid anyone from taking advantage of the system, it is important that the universities announce

the procedure on their web pages and clearly state whether to apply directly to the university or via an agent.

To supplement or to replace the entrance examination, universities use various selection criteria. Of these the most common seem to be the relevance of degree, academic excellence, motivation, references, work experience, international experience and English (or other relevant) language proficiency. Of these criteria priority is usually given to relevance of degree, academic excellence and language proficiency. Work experience and international experience are often used as supplementary criteria.

#### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**Admissions requirements for master's degree programme Environment and Resource Management in Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam:**  
<http://www.falw.vu.nl/nl/opleidingen/masteropleidingen/environment-and-resource-management/admission-requirements/index.asp>

**Admission requirements for master's degree programme MESPOM Erasmus Mundus:** <http://mespom.eu/admissions>

**Admission requirements for doctorate programme MARES Erasmus Mundus:** <http://www.mares-eu.org/index.asp?p=1156&a=948>

## SELECTION CRITERIA

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### ENTRANCE EXAMINATIONS

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Entrance examinations and interviews can support the student selection. More complicated, however, is to create an entrance examination that treats all the applicants equally regardless of their country of origin. In Environmental Sciences, for example, students may be experts in their own countries and can reflect to their local issues. Consequently, questions made by Europeans are likely to favour Europeans over nationals from other continents. Thus, many universities and programmes have seen that entrance examinations do not provide the required added value to their selection process and instead they use brief tests or telephone interviews for a few selected students, merely to check on suitable background and quality of their previous degree or language proficiency.

Comprehensive entrance examinations are challenging to organise unless the university has a concise network of partners to take care of the practical arrangements of the examination worldwide. Arranging entrance examinations in the university premises is cumbersome owing to travel costs and visa arrangements, which may be impossible for students to arrange.

In general, embassies and consulates tend to be very cooperative and helpful in arranging entrance examinations or interviews on their premises in a foreign territory, but their resources can be limited. If such an arrangement is to be considered as a part of the student selection process, it is good to negotiate with the consulate well in advance of the practical arrangements. In some consulates the security checks are vigorous and in politically unstable areas the consulates may be closed for periods of time. Furthermore, for some students, travel to the nearest consulate may mean a trip abroad as not every country has its representative in each and every country in the world.

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## RELEVANCE OF DEGREE

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When assessing international degrees the aim is to ensure that the degree is of such quality that it fulfils the prerequisites for applying to the relevant programme. The first step is to establish the status of the institution that has issued the credentials. The institution must exist and offer the course in question and, furthermore, have the authority to issue the degree in question. The second step is to define whether the degree meets eligibility criteria and provides the applicant with sufficient knowledge to continue his/her studies in the European university. The third step is to determine whether the content of a degree meets the requirements of the programme. Whenever possible, the applicant should be asked to submit a European Diploma Supplement or equivalent along with the other degree documents.

Universities vary significantly in quality. The national Ministry of Education (MoE) is most often the responsible body for keeping record of each county's recognised educational institutions and many provide national university rankings. The official web site of the relevant MoE is often the best and most updated source of information. The common deficit of the MoE web sites, however, is that the information might only be in local language(s), which makes navigating and comprehending the information challenging. Such is the case in China, where the most relevant body for information is the China Academic Degrees & Graduate Education Information (CDGDC). CDGDC is a representative of the Chinese Ministry of Education and not only produces university rankings but also verifies Chinese degree documents. In India the responsible organisation for assessing and accrediting higher education institutions is the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) where all the information is available in English.

If the information on the MoE web site is not sufficiently comprehensive the International Association of Universities (IAU), which operates under UNESCO, offers a free on-line database that contains information on education systems of most of the world's countries. The database also has up-to-date contact information of the focal bodies in each country such as the MoE. IAU also publishes a book called *World List of Universities*, which is a good reference especially if one prefers to use a paper book instead of on-line database.

Similar on-line services are e.g. World Education Services (WES) in the US that offers valuable information on educational systems, credential evaluation and links to national web sites. One of the largest and prominent knowledge centres in Europe is the Nuffic database for international recognition for diplomas. Nuffic also maintains country modules which contain information on national education systems and the main qualifications issued in them. German Anabin, Anerkennung und Bewertung ausländischer Bildungsnachweise, is also a database for country profiles and information on education systems. Anabin provides detailed and up-to-date information on universities, programmes, degrees etc. Anabin's operational language is German. Furthermore, commercial databases are prolific. One of the most concise and up-to-date is *Country Education Profiles (CEP)*, which is managed by the Australian Ministry of Education.

Commonly, European universities can themselves determine who are eligible for further studies in their academic programmes and who are not. Advice and recommendations can be sought from the National Academic Recognition Information Centres (NARIC), which provide guidance to educational institutions. For example, in Finland the NARIC is the Board of Education, in the Netherlands Nuffic and in Ireland the National Qualifications Authority. NARICs are connected to one another by European Network of Information Centres (ENIC).

Usually the NARICs provide information on how foreign qualifications compare with the national degrees. Some NARICs, such as the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials (CICIC) and Nuffic provide lists where national equivalents are provided to many foreign degrees. The European Research Council has a list of doctorate degrees and Country Education Profiles provides a commercial database. The Association of Indian Universities publishes a book called *Equivalence of Foreign Degrees* but currently has no list or database available on the Internet. To acquire tuition, World Education Services broadcasts commercial webinars in the field of international admissions and recruitment.

Usually, defining the equivalency of an international degree to a national one is done by assessing the extensiveness and its educational level of advancement. Extensiveness refers to the total work load and time that has been spent to

acquire the degree. The advancement indicates the versatility and depth of the degree, which reveal the acquired competences in a theoretical and methodological framework. Finding answers to the following questions helps to assess the credential at hand:

**Admission requirements** – what are the requirements that the applicant must have fulfilled in order to enter the programme from which the degree has been issued?

**Duration of study** – duration of the programme is a good indicator of the extensiveness of the studies.

**Course contents** – transcript of records indicates what is included in the studies. The names of the courses can indicate the contents of the courses, but not necessarily the level of them.

**Examination methods** – how were the studies conducted? Literature exams, essays, group work, field experiments, laboratory work, etc.

**Thesis** – what were the research elements of the studies? What is the duration and credits given to a thesis?

**Learning outcomes** – an important indicator, but often difficult to interpret from degree documents.

**Qualifications** – does the degree grant a permission to practice certain profession? Does the degree qualify for further studies?

After concluding that the degree is from a renowned university and the level of studies meet the ones of the European university and programme, it is time to concentrate on the contents of the degree. In the field of Environmental Sciences students are usually accepted from various fields. The broader the target group of students is, the more important it is that the applicants are clearly informed who are eligible for the studies and who are not.

Environmental Sciences is such a broad field that providing detailed information on desired or requested previous degree is essential. Students with various

backgrounds both with regard to subject and level of excellence is demanding for the teachers as well as the curriculum development.

#### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**Anabin**, Germany: <http://www.anabin.de>

**Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials:**

<http://www.cicic.ca>

**CDGDC**, China: <http://www.cdgdc.edu.cn/>

**Country Education Profiles**, Australia: <https://aei.gov.au/AEI/CEP>

**ENIC-NARIC**, Europe: <http://www.enic-naric.net/>

**European Research Council**: <http://www.erc.europa.eu>

**Association of Indian Universities**: <http://www.aiuweb.org/>

**International Association of Universities**: <http://www.iau-aiu.net/>

**NAAC**, India: <http://www.naac.gov.in/>

**Nuffic**, the Netherlands: <http://www.nuffic.nl>

**World Data on Education** (UNESCO):

<http://www.ibe.unesco.org/en/services/online-materials/world-data-on-education.html>

**World Education Services**, USA: <http://www.wes.org>

**World List of Universities**, published by <http://www.palgrave.com>

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## ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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Credential evaluation is a process that ranks the applicants according to academic merit. Owing to the complexity of academic grading systems that vary among programmes and universities, comparing degrees among universities and countries is challenging.

The ultimate goal of credential evaluation is to ensure that appropriately qualified and able students are selected into the programme in question. For this purpose many universities have set the minimum grade for each country or region that the applicant must have in order to be eligible for selection process. For example, the University of Alberta and Guelph University from Canada publish their minimum grade lists on Internet. The Guelph list is used also by e.g. Wageningen University in the Netherlands.

The secondary goal of the credential evaluation is to rank the qualified students according to their academic merit. The traditional approach is to compare international qualifications to national ones. Another approach could be to compare the foreign grades locally to the other grades given in the particular university or country. The latter would require further knowledge on the educational system in the particular country and the possibility to have access to degree documents of a large applicant population.

Comparing international credentials is a delicate process. In order to understand credentials it is essential to understand the educational and evaluation systems of the country in question. Simple conversion tables that attempt to scale academic credentials among countries often fail to serve the purpose as they tend to be over simplified.

Universities are usually autonomous institutions and there are no such universal national tests, such as Reifeprüfung in Germany and A-levels in Great Britain, that commonly exist on lower levels of education. As a result, universities have no other comparison to make but between the students themselves.

Consequently, the top 10 % of the students in an average university are seldom at the same level as the top 10 % in a highly renowned university. Despite this, according to the ECTS system, the top 10% in different universities would receive the same grade.

Another issue is grade inflation apparent in many countries. This leads to a skewed distribution of grades where top grades are overrepresented. Skewed distribution can be seen also in countries where top grades are seldom or never given to freshman students. Spain is an example of country where top grades are given only to students in their final stages of university studies.

Sometimes scholarships or other awards are given out on a competitive basis and evaluating credentials may be justified. However, due to the complexity of the issue, robust absolute evaluation of credentials can be difficult to make and this should be acknowledged before attempting to create ranking lists.

One way to rank the applicants is to make them do a Graduate Record Examination test (GRE). GRE is a standardised test that is used widely by North American graduate schools as a part of their student admissions procedure. GRE test measures the verbal and quantitative reasoning, critical thinking and analytical writing skills of the applicant. GRE can also measure subject specific skills for example in the field of Environmental Sciences, namely biochemistry and biology. GRE is registered and administered by ETS.

Regardless of using GRE as a part of the student selection, study transcripts are the basis of credential evaluation. The transcripts should always be received directly from the institution that has issued them and an increasing number of academic institutions are capable of doing this.

Whenever this practice is not possible, the copies of transcripts submitted by students should be sent back to the academic institution for verification. The transcripts should be sent to the official address of the institution, which may be different from the one identified by the applicant. Furthermore, the transcripts should not be addressed to an individual but to the title of the officer who has issued them, i.e. 'Controller of Examinations', 'Registrar of the College', 'Director of the Studies' or similar.

Correspondence between the academic institutions can be time consuming. This should be made clear to the applicant by advising him/her to apply well in advance to allow time for the verification process. Thanks to email and fax, the time that it takes to obtain a response seems to be decreasing steadily. Only faxes or emails that come from the official email address or fax numbers of the

institution should be accepted. It may be necessary to check the institution's web site or a reliable published reference for that.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**ETS:** <http://www.ets.org/>

**Graduate Record Examination, GRE:** <http://www.ets.org/gre>  
**University International Credential Evaluation Guidelines by Guelph**

**University, Canada** (adopted by Wageningen University, the Netherlands):

<http://www.wageningenuniversity.nl/NR/rdonlyres/F1A53FB5-D8F7-41E7-AB92-431EA207C8DA/121243/toelatingscriteriaUniGuelph.pdf>

**Minimum Academic Requirements from Other Countries by**

**University of Alberta, Canada:**

<http://www.gradstudies.ualberta.ca/applyadmission/reqintlcountries.htm>

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## LANGUAGE SKILLS

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Language proficiency is crucial for successful study. Usually postgraduate programmes are tight in schedule and there is no time to be wasted in learning the medium of instruction. It is both the student's and institution's interest that the applicant has sufficient communication skills before the studies begin.

Language proficiency can be tested or attested in many ways. For example the applicant can be considered having sufficient English language skills if he /she originates from UK, Ireland, Australia, New Zealand, USA or the English part of Canada. Similarly, having studied the previous degree (BSc or MSc) in English can be taken as a proof of sufficient command of the language. These practices are easy for the applicant but not very reliable from the viewpoint of attesting the English language proficiency. Taking into account the great number of people holding e.g. a British passport but who do not speak English as a native, place of origin can hardly be considered a reliable way of measuring one's language skills. Similarly, it is common to see that students who claim to have studied their previous degree in English can have great difficulties in writing academic English.

The most straightforward and reliable way to ascertain applicant's English proficiency is to ask the applicant to submit an English language test sheet. In European universities the most commonly accepted standardised test are TOEFL, IELTS and Cambridge Certificate of Advanced English (ESOL CAE) and Cambridge Certificate of Proficiency in English (ESOL CPE). All these tests are tailored to measure the applicants' ability to communicate. They consist of speaking, writing, reading and listening of the language and each section is given points separately. Often universities announce the minimum requested overall score but if it is desired that applicants do not compensate e.g. writing skills by ability to read, the minimum score can be set for each section separately.

In European masters programmes in the Environmental Science, it seems that the commonly used minimum English language requirement are IELTS 6.5, TOEFL Internet based Test 90, TOEFL Computer based Test 230, TOEFL Paper based Test 570, ESOL CAE test A or B, ESOL CPE test A, B or C.

The language test administrators provide on-line access both to the test takers and the academic institutions to review the test results over the Internet. Unless an institution has the access to the on-line service, language test score sheets must be asked to be sent to the university's admissions office directly from the language test administrator. As it might take a while for the original test sheet to arrive, the applicants can be asked to submit a copy of the score sheet at the time of applying. However, the copies should always be supported by the originals that eventually arrive from the test administrator.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

- ESOL:** <http://www.cambridgeesol.org/>
- IELTS:** <http://www.ielts.org/>
- TOEFL:** <http://www.ets.org/toefl/>

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## MOTIVATION

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Applicant's motivation to study in the programme can be measured e.g. by setting an entrance examination or asking the applicant to write a motivation letter. The challenges in arranging an entrance examination was discussed in previous chapters and hence the focus in here is assessing motivation letters.

The extensiveness of the motivation letter depends on its purpose and weight in the student selection process. The admissions officers should also consider how many motivation letters they must read and adjust the available time and the nominal length of the letters accordingly. As a rule of a thumb it can be said that the length of a motivation letter should not exceed one A4 page. Often a half a page will do equally well. As the font and margins can be adjusted, the more accurate way of expressing the required length is the number of words or characters.

The applicant should be provided clear instructions on what is expected of his motivation letter and what is the maximum length of it. The focal questions to be answered are: Why this university? Why this programme? What are your objectives and future aspirations and how does this degree help you in achieving them? If relevant, the applicant can be instructed in providing answers also to questions: What is your intended topic of MSc thesis? Under whose supervision would you like to work on it? Furthermore, the applicant can be asked about achievements outside the academic discipline.

Evaluating motivation letters is always subjective. Therefore, it would be ideal if all the motivation letters would be evaluated by the same member of the student selection committee. Furthermore, motivation letters like any other admission documents can be faked. Motivation letters can be bought from e.g. student recruiting agencies that sell their services to students. In order to recognise similarities or spot out identical letters, it is also important that only one or a few people are involved in the evaluation process.

Everyone involved in the process should be familiar with criteria and be instructed for how the motivation letters are evaluated. Criteria for evaluation of the motivation letter can be based on:

- A. The applicant has written the motivation letter respecting the maximum length of it.
- B. The writer appears to be clear-headed and gets to the point without using jargon.
- C. The writer convinces the reader that he/she is suitable for the programme. The reader gets the feeling that she would like to know more about the applicant and could consider him/her as a future colleague.
- D. The writer has long-term plans and explains how the programme would help him/her to achieve these goals.
- E. The writer implies how she/he could contribute to the programme.

The maximum points should be given to those who have produced a well-written motivation letter that has all the aforementioned elements in it. The reader gets the feeling that the writer is suitable for the programme and can express him/herself very clearly. The lowest score would be given to ones that lack most or all the aforementioned elements; the language is poor and the writer misses the point completely. Furthermore, discrepancies in the letter should be treated rigorously. Lapses that may sound innocent e.g. mentioning a wrong university or programme are likely be because an applicant has not concentrated on writing the application seriously or the letter is a copy of another letter which was not intended to be submitted to this programme or was not written by the applicant at all.

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## WORK EXPERIENCE

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Evaluating applicant's work experience usually favours elder applicants as work experience tends to increase over the years. There are programmes where relevant work experience is a necessity to perform well in the studies but weighing of such merits requires careful consideration.

Usually students have had limited opportunities to engage themselves into working life while studying. Thus, previous work experience reveals perhaps more about the applicant's social network and enthusiasm rather than ability to apply his/her profession in practice. In order not to favour elderly students over younger ones, work experience should not be over-emphasised in the selection process.

Academic experience refers to scientific publications and presentations. Similarly to work experience, merits in the scientific world tend to increase over the years. MSc programmes seldom ask for academic experience, whereas for higher degree programmes, merits can be a significant indicator of student's ability.

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## REFERENCES

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Reference letters serve the purpose of providing information on both the applicant's personality and academic background. The best way to receive reference letters are via on-line service where the referee must identify himself by signing in. There are many commercial on-line service providers such as Interfolio.

Unless your university has a licence for such an on-line service the reference letters must be asked as paper letters. Paper letters should always arrive in sealed envelopes directly from the referee to the admissions services of the educational institution. Reference letters should not be at hands of the applicant at any time because firstly, the referee must be given the possibility to write the letter confidentially without the applicant having the possibility to read the letter at any stage. Secondly, unless the recommendation letter arrives directly from the referee, there is a possibility to forge the letter.

As much as the contents of the letter it matters who has written the recommendation. A letter from a dean or a head of the department generally weighs more than a letter from a researcher or lecturer. Usually students are asked to submit 1-3 recommendation letters from academics in the university where the applicant has obtained his/her previous degree. A recommendation letter not only reveals how highly the referee thinks of her but also provides the admissions officer a contact to check the applicant's educational background.

The referees should be checked for their existence. The address, telephone number and email address should be identical to the information on the institutions web page that the referee claims to present. This is not always as straight forward as it sounds. There are numerous universities out there who do not have a domain on their own. Consequently, it is common that academics in especially Africa and Asia use email accounts such as Gmail, Yahoo! or Hotmail. Similarly, the institutions' web pages may be incomplete or out of date or simply written in local language, which makes navigating through pages difficult. Thus, failing to locate the referee on the web pages does not necessarily mean that she/he does not have a relationship with the university.

The existence of the referee can be further checked by simply sending him/her an email and thank him/her for recommending the applicant. Usually they respond revealing their relation to the applicant.

## AUTHENTICITY OF DOCUMENTS

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### FRAUD AND DECEPTION

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Educational documents give the holder the right to privileges that may be withheld from those not in a possession of such documents. They commonly determine the right to access certain education or profession, which bring benefits and welfare including the right to enter a certain country. As a result, educational documents can be considered as a form of currency that is used by individuals to navigate through society. The main difference between the educational credentials and actual currency is that the latter receives considerable protection whereas the former is often too easy to falsify. Consequently, degree forgery is a multi-million global business.

Owing to easy access to high quality laser printers and stamps sold on-line over the Internet, forging documents has become easier than ever before. Unfortunately, universities and other authorities issuing educational documents have not kept up with the pace and no matter how good the original documents, the forgeries can be almost identical.

The number of fake universities and fake degrees is increasing rapidly. Often the line between deception and legally accepted procedure is extremely thin and those who wish to take advantage of the system can do it relatively easily. Internet provides an ideal platform where courses and institutions can be set up and degree certificates sold. Diploma mill (according to Webster Dictionary) is an institution of higher education operating without supervision of a state or professional agency and granting diplomas which are either fraudulent or, because of the lack of proper standards, worthless. Degree mills appear on the Internet as distance learning institutions and may sound like a proper universities and have convincing URL endings such as .edu. They often claim to be accredited by fictitious accreditation agencies and it can be difficult to say whether their business is illegal or not.

Detecting fraud is difficult. The best way to effectively eliminate fraud is to stop forged documents being submitted in the first place. Traditionally it has been the responsibility of the student admissions officers to detect fraud by checking

whether the educational documents contain errors or discrepancies. Considering the myriad number of admission documents that the universities must deal with annually, it is impossible to inspect each document thoroughly. Thus, centralised admissions procedures are being introduced in many European countries and for example University Admissions Finland (UAF), and Nuffic in the Netherlands offer help for higher educational institutions.

The centralised pre-processing of applications is seen as a cost-efficient way of verifying applicant's general eligibility to the studies in question and the authenticity of the educational documents. The centralised system makes document comparison easier and allows knowledge to concentrate to experts, which helps detecting forgeries. UAF and Nuffic provide similar services to higher educational institutions but their approaches seem to differ: UAF handles the eligibility check of the applicants as a part of their admissions service, whereas Nuffic checks the applicant's general eligibility to further studies separately from the actual admissions procedure. Nuffic offers a certificate (formerly known as NESO certificate) for all who have passed the eligibility check and sends it directly to the Dutch university where the student is about to apply.

As the most effective way of combating against fraud is to prevent fraudulent documents being submitted in a first place, it is crucial that the admissions officers strictly refuse to accept credentials from elsewhere but directly from the institution that has issued them. The role of admission officers is becoming increasingly important and they have great responsibility in ensuring a fair procedure for all the applicants. Traditionally the approach towards fraud has been very lax and, especially in Scandinavia, few security features have been used to verify documents. However, the attitude is changing and many universities acknowledge that if they want to appear on global ranking-lists they must have quality assurance in place, which in turn calls for appropriate admission procedures. Quality in student selection means that the previous credentials of each applicant must be checked effectively.

Quality in student selection also means that the university has put in place fraud detection. The first step is to keep record on all the admission documents that have been sent to the applicants. Copies of admission letters etc. must be stored adequately as questions of their validity may arise e.g. from immigration

officers. Ideally, the university keeps record also of degree documents in a visual database where high quality photocopies of degree certificates, transcripts and other relevant documents are stored for comparison. The copies of the degree documents, from which personal identities have been removed, should clearly state which of them are authentic and which are fakes including the grounds for which the judgements have been made. In some countries the task of keeping record of degree samples is centralised and for example in Finland, the Board of Education is a moderator of such a database.

Furthermore, universities should take action whenever fraud is detected. This is to say that the application should be declined and the reasons for doing so should be stated clearly both to the applicant and the proper authorities, usually the local police and immigration officers. Data protection laws allowing, this information is ideally shared with other universities because often applicants who have been refused by one university attempt to apply to another one. The consequences of submitting fraudulent documents should be clearly stated in the university web pages so that anyone applying for the university could read it before submitting an application.

Competent credential evaluation and fraud detection calls for constant training of admission officers. Help can be sought e.g. in EAIE/ACE or NAFSA training sessions or WES webinars. Similarly, the national structures of ENIC/NARIC and embassies of specific countries are able to help. Furthermore, a number of private consultants, such as *Higher Education Solutions*, can organise tailor made training sessions upon request.

#### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**Higher Education Solutions:** <http://www.higheredsolutions.co.uk/>

**EAIE** Professional Development Training Courses:

[http://www.eaie.org/professional\\_development/training/](http://www.eaie.org/professional_development/training/)

**List of degree mills** by Oregon Student Assistance Commission, Office of Degree Authorisation, US:

<http://www.osac.state.or.us/oda/unaccredited.html>

**NAFSA** – Association of International Educators

<http://www.nafsa.org>

**Wilhelm, I.** 2010. Falsified Applications Are Common Among Chinese Students Seeking to Go Abroad. Chronicle of Higher Education, June 14<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<http://chronicle.com/article/Falsification-Is-Common-Among/65946/>

**World Education Services** webinars and workshops:

<http://www.wes.org/webinars>

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## FAKE DOCUMENTS

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To thoroughly examine the admission documents it is essential to have a magnifying glass and a UV light lamp. It also helps if you have an authentic document at hand for comparison. Universities often rely on elements built into the paper and unique font to give their documents protection against forgery.

Unusual format of layout, unusually high grades, missing signatures or seals are clear indicators that the document at hand may not be authentic. The quality of the paper, stamps, seals, watermarks, foil strips e.g. features are easy to ascertain especially if you know what is being looked for. Running a hand over paper reveals discrepancies caused by seals and holding the paper against a light, preferably UV light, helps to detect watermarks and elements built into the paper.

Inconsistencies in typography, spelling mistakes, traces of ink solvent, missing text, crooked text or letters are typical signs of attempts to change information on the document. However, at the same time especially in India, it is common to use a degree template to which personal information and the name of the degree are type written or even hand written.

The more documents the applicant is requested to submit the more likely it is that the ones attempting forgery are being caught. Inconsistency between documents i.e. dates of birth, name, etc. can reveal forgery. However, one must bear in mind that not everyone uses the Gregorian calendar and therefore inconsistencies in dates of birth may occur simply due to calculation errors. Similarly, especially in countries that are lacking a centralised register for its citizens it is not uncommon that the date of birth in passport is not identical to the one in the birth certificate and consequently in the degree document.

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## TRANSLATIONS

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The translations of educational documents i.e. degree documents and study transcripts should be done by the authority that has issued the originals. If this is not possible, the translator should be an authorised professional and the contents of the translation should be identical to the original i.e. every word and page should be translated not only the essential parts of the document.

Utmost care should be taken when interpreting the translations. Often the authorised professionals are not professionals in the field of education and unintended mishaps may happen. For example in Spanish degrees licenciado refers to bachelor's level studies but is often translated as licentiate, which refers to third cycle degree. Similarly Chinese degree certificates are often translated as diplomas regardless of the level of studies that the document refers to.

Translations should never stand alone. Instead, a copy of the original document should always be asked to support the translation. The original should be compared with the translation and it always helps if the admissions officer has previous knowledge of the original language. For example, unless the admissions officer speaks Arabic, documents from North Africa should be requested in French, which is the other official language in many countries.

## COUNTRY PROFILE CHINA

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### HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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In China the education system is supervised by the Chinese Ministry of Education. All the Chinese higher educational institutions that are allowed to issue degrees are accredited by the Ministry of Education. The ones that are not accredited do not have the right to issue legal degree certificates.

Although the Chinese education system has a centralised structure and is highly regulated by the Chinese education authorities, China has no universal credit system and thus the number of credits required for a completion of a degree varies among institutions. Usually the credit load is between 180 to 240, where 1 credit is usually assigned for every 18 hours of study.

In the 1990s the Chinese government launched two projects to enhance its higher education and research. 100 universities were selected to form the *Project 211*, which aims to bring the level of education in the selected institutions to a level that would meet the highest international standards. These selected 100 universities play an important role nationally and receive additional funding and resources from the Chinese government.

The ambitious but realistic aim of the *Project 985* is to further invest in 39 of the *Project 211* universities. Although the universities participating in both the projects are fixed, there is minor fluctuation from year to year mainly due to merging taking place in the Chinese higher educational system. The up-to-date list of the *Project 211* and *Project 985* universities can be found on the web pages of the Chinese Ministry of Education in Chinese or on the web pages of China Education Centre in English.

With regard to top Chinese universities, admission is limited and highly competitive. The *Project 211* institutions can be considered as prestigious institutions and they generally maintain higher admission standards. Students who are admitted to these universities tend to be the best of their class and acknowledged as such by many European universities. For example Nuffic in the Netherlands recommends that a BSc degree from any of the *Project 211* university is to be considered equivalent to a Dutch BSc level university degree,

whereas a Chinese BSc degree from any other university should be considered equivalent to bachelor's degree from a Dutch university of applied sciences or only two-years of university level studies.

The nominal length of a Chinese bachelor's programme is four years (or five in some specific fields such as engineering). Not every country has followed the Netherlands' approach and in general Chinese Bachelor of Science degrees are considered to be equivalent to European ones. Some countries have signed bilateral agreements on qualification recognition, such as *The Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications between the Governments of Ireland and China*. Also the Netherlands has signed an agreement with China on qualification recognition.

Upon graduation the students receive a diploma and a certificate of degree conferment. In China, diploma refers to a degree document in general and has not necessarily anything to do with the level of education. Often Chinese degree certificates are translated into English as diplomas. The diploma and certificate of conferment can be issued as separate documents or as a single Certificate of Graduation (毕业证书) or Graduation Diploma (毕业文凭) in which there is an indication that the person in question has also been issued a degree.

The BSc certificate, or diploma, may only be issued upon successful completion of the entire study programme. The certificate of graduation, instead, can be issued if the student has completed all the subjects in the programme but has failed some compulsory elements, such as a compulsory English course or the final thesis.

#### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

#### **Mutual Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications between the Governments of Ireland and China:**

<http://www.qualificationsrecognition.ie/qual-rec-recognition.html>

#### **List of Chinese Project 211 and Project 985 universities** by China Education Center:

<http://202.205.177.9/edoas/en/index.jsp>

<http://www.chinaeducenter.com/en/cedu/ceduproject211.php>

**Nuffic:** <http://www.nuffic.nl>

## DEGREE DOCUMENTS

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As of January 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, the format of Chinese bachelor's, master's and doctorate certificates changed and the old booklet layout was replaced by an A4 template. bachelor's degree (学士学位) is green and the paper is equipped with water marks and are marked with an invisible ink "Supervised and Published by the Academic Degree Committee of the State Council". The original Chinese documents have a stamp, or chop, which is usually red and contains the name of the document awarding institution. The master's (硕士学位) and doctorate (博士学位) degree certificates are blue and pink, respectively, and contain the same information as the bachelor's degree.

All the degree certificates are equipped with a unique 16-digit certificate number and Chinese authorities, such as China Academic & Graduate Education Development Center (CDGDC), can trace down the authenticity of the degree by it. Digits 1-5 refer to the issuing body, digit 6 refers to the level of education (bachelor's 4, master's 3 and doctorate 2), digits 7-10 refer to the year and the digits 11-16 allow further identification of the student.

CDGDC is under the Chinese Ministry of Education and under the government's committee that is responsible for academic degrees. CDGDC represents Chinese government and Ministry of Education and the most important task of CDGDC is to assess the level of education in Chinese universities. The ranking produced by CDGDC is the most respected ranking in China and many other assessments, including university audits, are based on CDGDC assessment. The CDGDC assessment is conducted every six years and it is based on university's available resources as well as the quality of students, research and master's and doctorate theses. Currently the assessment is available in Chinese only.

Another focal task for CDGDC is the verification of Chinese degrees. In practice, every degree from secondary level to Doctorate degree can be verified through

CDGDC. CDGDDC has access to information regarding every degree that has been completed in China. CDGDC is the most reliable way to ascertain the authenticity of Chinese degrees. For example France, the Netherlands and Japan request that every Chinese applicant has his/her degree certificate verified by CDGDC. Being the focal administration with regard to degree document verification and internal evaluator of Chinese academic institutions, CDGDC is extremely important partner with European universities and admissions services.

In China, document forgery is common and forged documents easily available. To ensure the authenticity of the degree documents, Chinese applicants should be asked to request the CDGDC to send their credentials report directly to a university's admissions services. An English version of the credentials report costs the student 260 RMB, and it takes about a month for CDGDC to issue it. The credentials report is not a translation of the applicant's degree documents, but a statement that verifies certain information to be true.

## PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

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Over the past years, the number of Chinese who wish to study abroad has increased rapidly. This is the result of several factors, of which the most important are that the growing middle class can invest more on education, Chinese Ministry of education is encouraging students to seek overseas study options and the fact that higher education markets in China are highly competitive.

Chinese students and their parents value university rankings highly. Consequently, the number one destination for Chinese students has been the United States. If the studies are to believe, the Chinese want the best money can buy, meaning that they aim at the highest ranked universities in which they can afford to study.

Although the dominance of US universities as the destination for Chinese students is still prevailing, the number of Chinese studying in Europe is on the increase. It seems that lower tuition fees, safety and cultural aspects are main assets for European universities.

Cost-effective marketing in China may be challenging and many claim that presence in China is a necessity. Many of the western social media are banned in China and students have no or limited access to e.g Facebook.com. Similarly the Chinese government has blocked access to web sites with particular endings such as .net. Consequently, using Agents in student recruiting is popular among those universities that can afford it.

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:

**China Education Association for International Exchange, CEAIE:**

<http://en.ceiae.edu.cn/>

**White, A.** 2011. Chinese Student's International Study: Factors Feeding the Decision Process. *World Education News and Reviews* 24:1.

<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/11feb/feature.htm>

**Melcher, T.** 2010. How Chinese Students Select Overseas Universities.  
World Education News and Reviews 23:7.  
<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/10sept/feature.htm>

## LIST OF CHINESE HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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The following is an attempt to list the Chinese higher educational institutions that offer BSc or MSc programmes in the field of Environmental Sciences. The list is by far not complete.

An Hui Normal University: <http://www.ahnu.edu.cn/>

Anhui Agricultural University: <http://www.ahau.edu.cn/>

Anhui University of Science and Technology:

<http://www.aust.edu.cn/>

Beijing Forestry University: <http://www.bjfu.edu.cn/>

Beijing Normal University: <http://www.bnu.edu.cn/>

Central South University: <http://www.csu.edu.cn/>

Central South University of Forestry and Technology:

<http://www.csuft.edu.cn/>

Changchun Institute of Technology: <http://www.ccit.edu.cn/>

Chengdu University of Technology: <http://www.cdut.edu.cn/>

China Agricultural University: <http://www.cau.edu.cn/>

China Three Gorges University: <http://www.ctgu.edu.cn/>

China University of Geosciences: <http://www.cugb.edu.cn/>

China University of Petroleum: <http://www.upc.edu.cn/>

Chonqing University: <http://www.cqu.edu.cn/>

Dalian Maritime University: <http://www.dlmu.edu.cn/>

Dalian University: <http://202.199.158.1/>

Dalian University of Technology: <http://www.dlut.edu.cn/>

Dong Hua University: <http://www.dhu.edu.cn/>

East China Institute of Geology: <http://www.ecit.edu.cn/>

East China Institute of Technology: <http://www.ecit.edu.cn/>

East China Normal University: <http://www.ecnu.edu.cn/>

East China University of Science and Technology:

<http://www.ecust.edu.cn/>

Fudan University: <http://www.fudan.edu.cn/>

Fujian Normal University: <http://www.fjtu.edu.cn/>

Fuzhou University: <http://www.fzu.edu.cn/en/>

Guangdong University of Technology: <http://www.gdut.edu.cn/>

Guangxi University: <http://www.gxu.edu.cn/>  
Guilin University of Technology: <http://www.glite.edu.cn/>  
Harbin Normal University: <http://www.hrbnu.edu.cn/>  
Hebei Normal University: <http://www.hebtu.edu.cn/>  
Hebei Polytechnic University: <http://international.heut.edu.cn/>  
Hebei University of Science and Technology: <http://www.hebust.edu.cn/>  
Hefei University of Technology: <http://www.hfut.edu.cn/>  
Henan Agricultural University: <http://www.henau.edu.cn/>  
Henan Normal University: <http://www.henannu.edu.cn/>  
Henan Polytechnic University: <http://www.jzit.edu.cn/>  
Henan University: <http://www.henu.edu.cn/>  
Henan University of Science and Technology: <http://www.haust.edu.cn/>  
Henan University of Technology: <http://www.haut.edu.cn/>  
Hohai University: <http://www.hhu.edu.cn/>  
Huainan Normal University: <http://www.hnnu.edu.cn/>  
Huaiyin Institute of Technology: <http://www.hyit.edu.cn/>  
Huaqiao University: <http://www.hqu.edu.cn/>  
Huazhong University of Science and Technology: <http://www.hust.edu.cn/>  
Hunan Agricultural University: <http://www.hunau.net/>  
Hunan University: <http://www.hnu.edu.cn/>  
Inner Mongolia University of Science and Technology:  
<http://www.imust.edu.cn/>  
Jiangnan University: <http://english.jiangnan.edu.cn/>  
Jiangsu University: <http://www.ujs.edu.cn/>  
Jianxi University of Science and Technology: <http://www.jxust.cn/>  
Jilin Agricultural University: <http://www.at0086.com/JilAU/>  
Jilin Normal University: <http://www.jlnu.edu.cn/>  
Jilin University: <http://www.jlu.edu.cn/>  
Jishou University: <http://www.jsu.edu.cn/>  
Kunming University of Science and Technology:  
<http://www.kmust.edu.cn/>  
Lanzhou Jiaotong University: <http://www.lzjtu.edu.cn/>  
Lanzhou University: <http://www.lzu.edu.cn/>  
Liaoning Technical University: <http://www.lntu.edu.cn/>  
Liaoning University: <http://www.lnu.edu.cn/>

Nanchang University: <http://www.ncu.edu.cn/>

Nanjing Agricultural University: <http://english.njau.edu.cn/>

Nanjing Forestry University: <http://www.njfu.edu.cn/>

Nanjing University: <http://www.nju.edu.cn/>

Nankai University: <http://www.nankai.edu.cn/>

North China Institute of Water Resources and Electric Power:

<http://www.ncwu.edu.cn/>

North University of China: <http://www.nuc.edu.cn/>

Northeast Agricultural University: <http://www.neau.cn/>

Northwest A&F University: <http://www.nwsuaf.edu.cn/>

Ocean University of China: <http://www.ouc.edu.cn/>

Peking University: <http://www.pku.edu.cn/>

Qingdao Agricultural University: <http://en.qau.edu.cn/>

Qingdao Technological University:

<http://io.qtech.edu.cn/>

Shandong Agricultural University: <http://www.sdau.edu.cn/>

Shandong University: <http://www.sdu.edu.cn/>

Shanghai Jiao Tong University: <http://www.sjtu.edu.cn/>

Shanghai Normal University: <http://www.shnu.edu.cn>

Shanxi University: <http://www.sxu.edu.cn/>

Shenyang Jianzhu University: <http://www.sjzu.edu.cn/>

Shenyang University: <http://www.syu.edu.cn/>

Sichuan Agricultural University: <http://www.sicau.edu.cn/>

Sichuan University: <http://www.scu.edu.cn/>

South China Agricultural University: <http://www.scau.edu.cn/>

South China Normal University: <http://www.scnu.edu.cn/>

South China University of Technology: <http://www.scut.edu.cn/>

Southwest University: <http://www.swu.edu.cn/>

Southwest University of Science and Technology:

<http://www.swust.edu.cn/>

Sun Yat-Sen University: <http://www.sysu.edu.cn/>

Tangshan College: <http://www.tsc.edu.cn/>

Tianjin University: <http://www.tju.edu.cn/>

Tongji University: <http://www.tongji.edu.cn/>

Tsinghua University: <http://www.tsinghua.edu.cn/>

University of Science and Technology LiaoNing:

<http://www.asust.edu.cn/>

University of Science and Technology Beijing: <http://www.ustb.edu.cn/>

University of Science and Technology of China: <http://www.ustc.edu.cn/>

University of Shanghai for Science and Technology:

<http://www.usst.edu.cn/>

University of South China: <http://www.nhu.edu.cn/>

Wuhan Polytechnic University: <http://www.whpu.edu.cn/>

Wuhan University: <http://www.whu.edu.cn/>

Wuyi University: <http://www.wyu.edu.cn/>

Xi'an Jiaotong University: <http://www.xjtu.edu.cn/>

Xi'an University of Architecture and Technology:

<http://www.xauat.edu.cn/>

Xiamen University: <http://www.xmu.edu.cn/>

Xihua University: <http://www.xhu.edu.cn/>

Yanbian University: <http://www.ybu.edu.cn/>

Yangzhou University: <http://www.yzu.edu.cn/>

Yanshan University: <http://www.ysu.edu.cn/>

YanTai University: <http://www.ytu.edu.cn/>

Yunnan Agricultural University: <http://www.ynaau.edu.cn/>

Yunnan Normal University: <http://www.ynnu.edu.cn/>

Zhejiang Gongshang University: <http://www.zjgsu.edu.cn/>

Zhejiang University: <http://www.zju.edu.cn/>

Zhengzhou University of Light Industry: <http://www.zzuli.edu.cn/>

## COUNTRY PROFILE INDIA

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### HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Higher educational institutions in India are versatile in size, specialisation and quality. There are about 500 universities in India to which about 15,000 colleges and institutions are linked.

The Indian universities can be categorised roughly into affiliating universities and unitary universities. Affiliating universities comprise smaller colleges and institutions and form an umbrella that brings these smaller units together. These colleges and institutions provide usually only undergraduate education and further tertiary education is the responsibility of the main university. Unitary universities have no affiliating institutions and thus provide both under graduate and graduate education themselves.

Currently, there are over 100 so called Deemed to be Universities (or deemed universities). Central Government of India declares educational institutions as deemed universities on the recommendation of the University Grant Commission (UGC). Deemed universities have the same rights as ordinary universities and may award their own degrees. They are also given a great level of freedom with regard to designing their curricula and collecting admission fees. Those deemed universities that perform well eventually get the status of a full-fledged university.

Out of all the universities in India there are 40 Central Universities. While other universities in the country are established by the State Governments, Central Universities are formed by the Government of India, by an Act of Parliament. All the Central Universities receive funding from the Indian government, which helps them to provide a high level of education. State universities are consequently dependent on State governments' funds and their quality varies from one State to another.

The Indian government has also declared some higher educational institutions as Institutions of National Importance (INI). For example, all the Indian Institutes of Technology (IIT), National Institutes of Technology (NIT) are considered INI, and receive additional funding directly from the Indian Government.

Consequently, e.g. IITs are considered to be of top class educational institutions rivalling their counterparts in the US. Recently, Indian Minister of Science and Technology Kapil Sibal announced in his keynote at the 98<sup>th</sup> Indian Science Congress at SRM University that India is working on a concept of creating Indian Ivy League. The idea would be to brand the Indian Institutes of Management and Indian Institutes of Technology as "Navaratna" Universities.

The nominal length for Indian Bachelor studies is three years. In the past this has been a challenge for Indian students who wish to pursue studies abroad. Some countries, especially those whose own national BSc programmes require four years of study, have traditionally been reluctant to accept Indian students straight away to their MSc programmes.

Recently, the World Education Services has announced that they have revised their assessment criteria and consequently the three-year bachelor's degrees can be considered equivalent to US bachelor's degrees. WES claims that the level of Indian higher education has risen recently and as a result, no bridging studies should be required from those possessing an Indian degree in Division or Class I and II at universities accredited by NAAC with grade A. In Europe, both the traditional approach and more liberal approach are used. For example Nuffic recommends that only Honours BSc degrees from renowned Indian institutions should be considered equivalent to three years of university level studies whereas regular BSc or Honours BSc from regular institution should be considered equivalent to two-years of university studies.

NAAC is an autonomous institution of the University Grants Commission. It promotes the quality of Indian higher education by arranging quality assessments and accreditations of higher educational institutions. NAAC publishes up-to-date lists of accredited universities and ranks them according to A-D scale, A++ being the best and C being the lowest accredited. D category universities have failed the accreditation process.

#### **REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**Central universities:** <http://www.education.nic.in/AutonomousSec.asp>

**India Education Portal:** <http://www.indiaedu.com/>

**Indian Govt. Department of Higher Education:**

<http://www.education.nic.in/>

**Institutions of national importance:**

<http://www.education.nic.in/IHL/INSTITUTIONSNATIONALIMPORTANCE.pdf>

**National Assessment and Accreditation Council:**

<http://www.naac.gov.in/>

**National Network of Education Portal:**

<http://www.indiaeducation.net/portals/>

**University Grants Commission:** <http://www.ugc.ac.in/>

**WES evaluation policy against Indian BSc degrees:**

<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/08sept/practical.htm>

## DEGREE DOCUMENTS

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There is no standardised format for degree documents in India. Furthermore, degrees and transcripts may be issued in the names of different institutions. This is owing to the Indian system on universities and their affiliated colleges.

It is common in India to issue *Provisional certificates*, especially on bachelor's level. Provisional certificates are issued upon completing the studies and are to be replaced by a degree certificate that is issued usually at a formal graduation ceremony. In practice, there are often long delays in conferring the degree and the provisional certificates are used by the graduates to apply for admission to the next level of studies or profession. As a result, provisional certificates are commonly accepted in India and abroad, also in Europe. A provisional certificate can be used as a basis for credential assessment if it clearly states that the graduate has met all the requirements for graduation.

Sometimes provisional certificates are issued even if the graduate has not met all the requirements for graduation but this can usually be seen in the document. However, to avoid confusion it is highly recommended that provisional certificates should only be accepted if they are recent and there is a great chance that the graduate has not yet had the possibility to receive the formal degree certificate. If the provisional certificate has been issued more than a year ago, the graduate should be asked to acquire the formal degree certificate and submit it instead of the provisional certificate.

Discrepancies in Indian degree documents do occur. One common feature is that the degree certificate and study transcript appear to be from two different institutions. This is because undergraduate studies can be carried out in a college, which may as well be a private institution, but the degree certificate is awarded by the affiliating public university. Furthermore, spelling mistakes are either overlooked or difficult to mend and consequently names and dates may not be identical in ones birth certificate, degree certificate or even passport. Often the School leaving certificate, which is issued upon graduating from high school, is considered the most official document in India and hence many European universities request the document.

**REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:**

**Anabin:** <http://www.anabin.de>

**Nuffic:** <http://www.nuffic.nl>

**WES:** <http://www.wes.org>

## PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS

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Similarly to Chinese students, Indian students also seem to consider US universities the most attractive destination for studies abroad. According to studies, Indian students are more willing to take a loan to study in the United States than for example in a renowned university in Europe. However, Europe as a destination is becoming more attractive partly due to increased awareness among the Indian students that the three-year Indian bachelor's degrees are widely accepted in Europe.

Also Europe's multicultural and multilingual atmosphere are seen as positive aspects. Similarly, European application processes tend to be more simplified and relatively low in cost compared to the ones in the USA. However, it is not only the United States with whom Europe needs to compete with. In Asia the higher education system is emerging and many universities are among the best in the world. However, it is being said that the institutions that understand their target markets and can tailor their offerings accordingly will attract the best talent from India and the world.

### REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING:

**Choudaha, R.** 2010. Current Indian Overseas Recruitment Trends. *World Education News and Reviews* 23:9.  
<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/10nov/practical.htm>

**Khandavilli, V.** 2010. Indian Perceptions of US Higher Education. *World Education News and Reviews* 23:8.  
<http://www.wes.org/ewenr/10oct/feature.htm>

## LIST OF INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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The following is an attempt to list the Chinese higher educational institutions that offer BSc or MSc programmes in the field of Environmental Sciences. The list is by far not complete.

Acharaya N G Ranga Agricultural University: <http://www.angrau.net/>  
Acharya Nagarjuna University: <http://www.nagarjunauniversity.ac.in/>  
Amrita University: <http://www.amrita.edu/>  
Andhra University: <http://www.andhrauniversity.info/>  
Anna University, Chennai: <http://www.annauniv.edu/>  
Assam University: <http://www.assamuniversity.nic.in/>  
Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University: <http://www.bbauindia.org/>  
Banaras Hindu University: <http://www.bhu.ac.in/>  
Banasthali University: <http://www.banasthali.org/>  
Bangalore University: <http://www.bub.ernet.in/>  
Barkatullah University Bhopal: <http://www.bubhopal.nic.in/>  
Bharathiar University: <http://www.b-u.ac.in/>  
Bharathidasan University: <http://www.bdu.ac.in/>  
CCS Haryana Agricultural University: <http://www.hau.ernet.in/>  
Central Institute of Fisheries Education: <http://www.cife.edu.in/>  
Cochin University of Science and Technology: <http://www.cusat.ac.in/>  
Dr. Ram Manoar Lohia Avadh University: <http://www.rmlau.ac.in/>  
Gautam Buddh Technical University: <http://www.uptu.ac.in/>  
Goa University: <http://www.goauniversity.org/>  
Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University: <http://www.ipu.ac.in/>  
Guru Jambheshwar University of Science & Technology:  
<http://www.gjust.ac.in/>  
Guru Nanak Dev University: <http://www.gndu.ac.in/>  
Homi Bhabha National Institute: <http://www.hbni.ac.in/>  
Indian Agricultural Reserach Institute: <http://www.iari.res.in/>  
Indian Institute of Science: <http://www.iisc.ernet.in/>  
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Kolkata:  
<http://www.iiserkol.ac.in/>  
Indian Institute of Science Education and Research, Mohali:

<http://www.iisermohali.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Bombay: <http://www.iitb.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Delhi: <http://www.iitd.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Gandhinagar: <http://www.iitgn.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati: <http://www.iitg.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Hyderabad: <http://www.iith.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur: <http://www.iitk.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur: <http://www.iitkgp.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Madras: <http://www.iitm.ac.in/>

Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee: <http://www.iitr.ac.in/>

Indian School of Mines: <http://www.ismdhanbad.ac.in/>

Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research: <http://www.igidr.ac.in/>

Jadavpur University: <http://www.jaduniv.edu.in/>

Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi: <http://www.jamiahAMDARD.edu/>

Jamia Millia Islamia: <http://www.jmi.ac.in/>

Jawaharlal Nehru Technological University Hyderabad:

<http://www.jntu.ac.in/>

Jawaharlal Nehru University: <http://www.jnu.ac.in/>

Kakatiya University: <http://www.kuarangal.com/>

Karnatak University Dharwad: <http://www.kud.ac.in/>

Kurukshetra University: <http://www.kuk.ac.in/>

Madurai Kamaraj University: <http://www.mkuniversity.org/>

Mahatma Gandhi University: <http://mgu.ac.in/>

Malaviya National Institute of Technology Jaipur: <http://mnit.ac.in/>

Manipur University: <http://www.manipuruniv.ac.in/>

Manonmaniam Sundaranar University: <http://www.msuniv.ac.in/>

Maulana Azad National Institute of Technology: <http://www.manit.ac.in/>

Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology: <http://www.mnnit.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Agartala: <http://nitagartala.in/>

National Institute of Technology Durgapur: <http://www.nitdgp.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Hamirpur: <http://www.nith.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Jamshedpur: <http://nitjsr.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Kurukshetra: <http://www.nitkkr.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Patna: <http://www.nitp.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Raipur: <http://www.nitrr.ac.in/>

National Institute of Technology Rourkela: <http://www.nitrkl.ac.in/>  
National Institute of Technology Silchar: <http://www.nits.ac.in/>  
National Institute of Technology Srinagar: <http://www.nitsri.net/>  
National Institute of Technology Tiruchirappalli: <http://www.nitt.edu/>  
National Institute of Technology Warangal: <http://www.nitw.ac.in/>  
North Maharashtra University: <http://www.nmu.ac.in/>  
North-Eastern Hill University: <http://www.nehu.ac.in/>  
Osmania University: <http://www.osmania.ac.in/>  
Padmashree Dr. D.Y. Patil University: <http://www.dypatil.ac.in/>  
Panjab University: <http://www.puchd.ac.in/>  
Pondicherry University: <http://www.pondiuni.edu.in/>  
Punjab Agricultural University: <http://web.pau.edu/>  
Punjabi University Patiala: <http://www.punjabiuniversity.ac.in/>  
Rajiv Gandhi University: <http://www.rgu.ac.in/>  
Sambalpur University: <http://www.suniv.ac.in/>  
Sardar Vallabhbhai National Institute of Technology:  
<http://www.svnit.ac.in/>  
Sastra University: <http://www.sastra.edu/>  
School of Planning and Architecture: <http://www.spa.ac.in/>  
Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology:  
<http://www.skuastkashmir.ac.in/>  
Siksha O Anusandhan University: <http://www.soauniversity.ac.in/>  
Sri Krishnadevaraya University: <http://www.skuniversity.org/>  
Sri Venkateswara University: <http://www.svuniversity.in/>  
Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University:  
<http://www.srtmun.ac.in/>  
Tamilnadu Agricultural University: <http://www.tnau.ac.in/>  
TERI University: <http://www.teriuniversity.ac.in/>  
Tezpur University: <http://www.tezu.ernet.in/>  
Tharpar Institute of Engineering and Technology: <http://tiet.ac.in/>  
University of Calcutta: <http://www.caluniv.ac.in/>  
University of Delhi: <http://www.du.ac.in/>  
University of Hyderabad: <http://www.uohyd.info/>  
University of Jammu: <http://www.jammuuniversity.in/>  
University of Kashmir: <http://www.kashmiruniversity.net/>

University of Madras: <http://www.unom.ac.in/>

University of Mumbai: <http://www.mu.ac.in/>

University of Mysore: <http://www.uni-mysore.ac.in/>

University of Pune: <http://www.unipune.ac.in/>

VIT- Vellore Institute of Technology: <http://www.vit.ac.in/>

West Bengal University of Technology: <http://www.wbut.net/>

Vikram University: <http://www.vikramuniv.net/>

Wildlife Institute of India: <http://www.wii.gov.in/>

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