



TIP SHEET 4

HOW TO ASSESS SKILLS AND NEGOTIATE COMPETENCIES

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Assessing the skills and competencies of a candidate with international experience can seem daunting. You may not be familiar with the organizations listed, let alone their reputations, and their job titles may be confusing - but these should not be reasons to screen-out a candidate. Experience from other countries can be just as, and sometimes more, valuable than Canadian experience. This Tip Sheet will provide you with some ideas on how to assess experience, skills and competencies of skilled immigrants easily and effectively.

1 Use scenario-based questions:

- Focus on asking scenario-based questions to more immediately and accurately assess how the candidate would perform on the job.
- Immigrants may have trouble answering open-ended questions and specific questions can help focus their responses.

2 Clarify previous experience:

- Immigrants may modify their resumes to fit advice they received in person or found online (e.g., have you ever heard the advice “keep it to no more than a page”?).
- Candidates may also make assumptions about an employer’s understanding of their previous roles. Consider this before discounting the candidate.

3 Assess overqualified applicants:

- Many candidates who are new to Canada find it difficult to gain employment in their field. They may apply for lower level roles because they were either advised by others or anticipate that it will be easier to obtain employment, and “get their foot in the door” to a preferred organization.
- Use the interview process to explore a candidate’s motivation to apply for a role in which they appear to be overqualified.

4 Assess “fit” & workplace culture:

- Research the reputation and culture of an organization where the candidate has worked previously. For example, online research and reviewing news coverage about the company can be useful in understanding a candidate’s past workplace culture.
- Company websites can also provide insight into their previous workplace culture.
- Interview questions can help to understand their previous organization(s) and their work environments, plus the desired work environment and culture for the candidate.

5 Assess professional credentials:

- Determine in advance if the role you’re hiring for is regulated in your province. If yes, then ask the candidate to provide an assessment by the relevant licensing/certification body.
- For non-regulated occupations, structure your interview questions to help assess if the candidate’s previous education and experience are appropriate for the role.

6 Assess academic credentials:

- First consider if an academic credential is necessary to perform the role. If no, then move on to assess the areas of the resume that are required for the job.
- If yes, for the majority of occupations, the only way to objectively assess international academic credentials is through a credential evaluation service (see resources section for more info).

7 Check references:

- Ask for character references if no local work references are offered or available. For example, ask for a reference from professional associations that applicants may be a member of, or seek references from a relevant supervisor if they volunteer somewhere.
- If the international references can speak English, and can be reached by phone, make the call. Consider sending the questions ahead of time by email so that the reference can review the questions and be better prepared to answer.

The percentage of foreign-born in the Canadian labour force population has increased since 1991 from 18.5% to 21.2% in 2006. If recent immigration levels continue at this rate, that proportion could reach almost 33% in 2031.

*Statistics Canada, Projected trends to 2031
for the Canadian labour force*

Resources:

Independent assessment of international academic credentials can be done through an organization such as the [International Credential Evaluation Service \(ICES\) at BCIT](#).

For more help, visit [MindTheGapBC.com](#) to access additional resources and download essential guides (free!)

Previous Tip Sheets:

Tip Sheet 1: How to Create Barrier-Free Job Descriptions

Tip Sheet 2: Where to Post a Job Vacancy

Tip Sheet 3: Conducting Culturally Sensitive Interviews

Upcoming Tip Sheet:

Tip Sheet 5: How to Create a Culturally Inclusive Work Environment

“Having access to the best talent continues to be a challenge for CEOs and business leaders—with 97% of CEOs in PWC’s annual global CEO survey saying that having the right talent is the most critical factor for their business growth.”

*PriceWaterhouseCoopers
Talent Mobility 2020
The Next Generation of International Assignments*

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