



Australian Government
Department of Education, Science and Training

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26/4
Ms Joanne Towner
Committee Secretary
Joint Standing Committee on Migration
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Ms Towner

I refer to Mr Randall's letter of 5 December 2005 to the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson MP, the former Minister for Education, Science and Training, concerning the current situation with the *Country Education Profiles* (CEPs). As requested, please find the following Departmental advice.

The National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition (AEI-NOOSR) is responsible for the provision of services that underpin the recognition of overseas qualifications in Australia. In early 2004, a major stakeholder consultation survey was undertaken to seek stakeholder feedback on how AEI-NOOSR was delivering its qualifications recognition services and ways to improve them. As a result of this feedback, AEI-NOOSR has undertaken significant change management activities aimed at improving the way in which they service industry.

A major change initiative - a two-year project - has recently been finalised culminating in the launch of the new CEP Online system on 14 October 2005. The project was a direct response to industry requests for AEI-NOOSR to deliver:

- Overseas qualifications recognition information in an electronic format this is easy to access, search and browse; and
- More regular and frequent updates to this information.

The launch of CEP Online saw 106 countries online with new profiles and assessment guidelines for a range of priority countries. The new CEP Online system is a functional and dynamic publication that may be accessed by any individual or organisation on a subscription basis. Online information will be updated regularly with the focus for updating on value adding information, catering for the diverse information needs of users including Australian education institutions, professional bodies, State and Territory Overseas Qualifications Units, government agencies, employers, education agents, migration agents, overseas organisations and individuals.

In developing CEPs, AEI-NOOSR carefully considers a range of factors including the educational system of the country concerned, the types of awarding institutions, and the structure, length and level of programs. Many assessment guidelines assess overseas qualifications at 'face value' e.g. an overseas Bachelor degree is compared to the educational level of an Australian Bachelor degree. However, sometimes comparison to a qualification below 'face value' may more accurately reflect the educational level of a particular qualification.

Information contained in CEPs is intentionally general and primarily intended for general student and labour mobility purposes. CEPs may be used as one factor to take into account to inform decision makers. However, the final basis for specific educational, professional, employment or migration decisions is set by the relevant authority e.g. migration authority or labour market regulator.

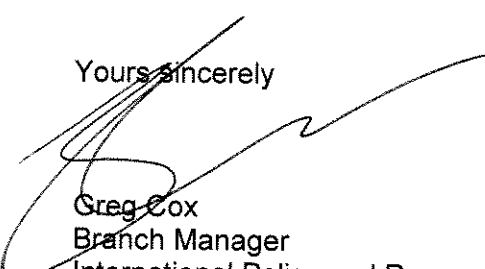
To date, the Department has received consistent and very positive feedback from industry on CEP Online. AEI-NOOSR will seek formal feedback on this product in 2006 to ensure that we are delivering a service that is closely aligned with user needs.

To complement the use of CEP Online, AEI-NOOSR offers a range of other services to support industry including delivering professional development seminars on qualifications recognition topics to a range of stakeholders. A 2006 schedule of professional development seminars is currently being delivered with major events scheduled across Australia.

Furthermore, AEI-NOOSR also provides an information and advisory service to stakeholders groups to support the recognition of overseas qualifications and use of CEP Online. The section also maintains a website, hotline and mailbox accessible by anyone to support the provision of information and advice. Finally, AEI-NOOSR provides the option for individuals to apply for a formal educational assessment online. As a result of strategic change management and consultation with stakeholders from the section, these services have substantially improved service turnaround times.

I hope this information is useful to the committee. Should you require clarification of the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact me on (02) 6240 8439. Alternatively, you may wish to contact Ms Mary Finlay on (02) 6240 7628.

Yours sincerely



Greg Cox
Branch Manager
International Policy and Recognition Branch

13 March 2006