

Geoscientists Canada Continues Work on Professional Admissions and Labour Mobility

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While it seems like no time ago, almost 5 years have passed since the Premiers of Canada's 13 provinces and territories agreed together to revise and change Chapter 7 of the Agreement on Internal Trade (AIT). The 2009 revisions to AIT marked a significant moment for all regulated professions in Canada, wherein those licensed and registered by a professional association in one province or territory, upon application, can be recognized and re-registered for the same professional occupation in any other province or territory, provided they are in good standing. More specifically, it states that re-registration should occur "without any requirement for any additional training, experience, examinations or assessments."

As a result, regulated professions across Canada are looking to better harmonize the practices and procedures used by provincial bodies in the assessment and admission of applicants seeking licensure. Geoscientists Canada and its 10 constituent associations (CAs) have made significant advances in this regard.

The Internationally Trained Geoscientists (ITG) initiative, which was completed in 2011, saw the development of a common framework for assessing and licensing P.Geo. applicants from outside of Canada¹. This framework has helped to harmonize the way our CAs evaluate and recognize international credentials. This ITG project also saw the groundwork laid for the initial investigation of mutual recognition agreements (MRAs) with other countries. An MRA was negotiated with the Institute of Geologists of Ireland² which was recommended for adoption to our CAs in 2013.

More recently, Geoscientists Canada commenced a follow-up initiative referred to as the Admission Support Tools (AST) project. With funding provided by the Government of Canada's Foreign Credential Recognition Program, this initiative aims to further enhance assessment processes and collaboration among the CAs.

Central to the AST project is the development of a "Competency Profile" for geoscience practice. Once completed, this document will describe in detail the abilities or skills that a geoscientist must demonstrate they possess at the time of licensure for independent practice.

Over the past 10 years, the majority of regulated professions in Canada have developed, or are developing, competency profiles. Having this profile is seminal for any profession; there are a number of benefits associated, specifically with geoscience:

- It describes the work that geoscientists actually undertake and the services they provide to society every day;
- It explains the scope of the work of geoscientists to employers, clients, other professions, government and the general public;
- It provides enhanced clarity regarding what licensure represents—for applicants, referees, validators, assessors, Fairness Commissioners and others involved in admission to geoscience as a regulated profession;
- It gives prospective applicants a clearer vision of their likelihood of becoming licensed;
- It provides a firm foundation from which to later develop competency-based assessment tools for potential use in admissions into the profession;

¹ Geoscientists Canada website, "[Framework for Assessment in the Licensing of Professional Geoscientists in Canada](#)"

² Geoscientists Canada website, "[Ireland and Canada Enhance International Mobility for Professional Geoscientists](#)",

- It can be used to create a strong and direct link between education and practice; and
- It sets a transparent and objective benchmark for admissions and potentially for other purposes - such as: continuing competency, practice guidance and disciplinary matters.

Speaking about the work being done on the profile, the President of Geoscientists Canada, Greg Vogelsang, P.Geol./P.Eng., says, "The development of a competency profile is a big step for any profession. Doing it now for geoscience is good, timing wise. While only a recently regulated profession in some parts of Canada, the profile describes practice in terms of the work we do and the services we provide society that the entire country can use, and will serve as a key reference for the profession going forward."

Funding for a "Diagnostic Study" is also included as part of the AST project. Through this study, Geoscientists Canada aims to identify successes and issues in the assessment and admissions process. Data collected may be used to streamline approaches going forward, while at the same time maintaining and enhancing the rigour of the admissions standards that are already applied Canada-wide. Both qualitative and quantitative research is being undertaken in support of this work.

In the near future, Geoscientists Canada will be reaching out to current practitioners for their assistance and input on both these topics.

In May 2014, an online survey will be distributed to all P.Geol.'s across the country. Individuals will be asked to review the Competency Profile in draft and provide feedback. The information gathered as part of this validation process will be used to finalize the profile document later this summer.

Additionally, focus groups in Toronto, Calgary and Vancouver have been conducted with licensed, internationally-trained P.Geol.'s as part of the Diagnostic Study. Feedback shared in these group sessions is now informing development of a second online survey that will seek input from internationally-trained P. Geol.'s, Canada-wide. This survey will be administered in July 2014.

Please keep an eye out for both these surveys later this year. Your participation and input is of great value to the profession.

The AST project, which officially began in 2013, is scheduled for completion in March 2015.