

A GUIDE TO USING COUNTRY PROFILES FOR INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT

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Introduction

Beginning with the fall 1999 application season, Indiana University-Bloomington began to see a dramatic growth in the number of applications from international students—from 4,400 in 1998 to over 6,500 for the fall of 2001.

The Office of International Admissions reviewed its processes and policies regarding international applications and several new procedures were suggested: pre-screening of applications by graduate departments, sharing of staff with other units on campus, greater communication with academic units, and the prioritizing of students who are offered large financial aid packages by their departments.

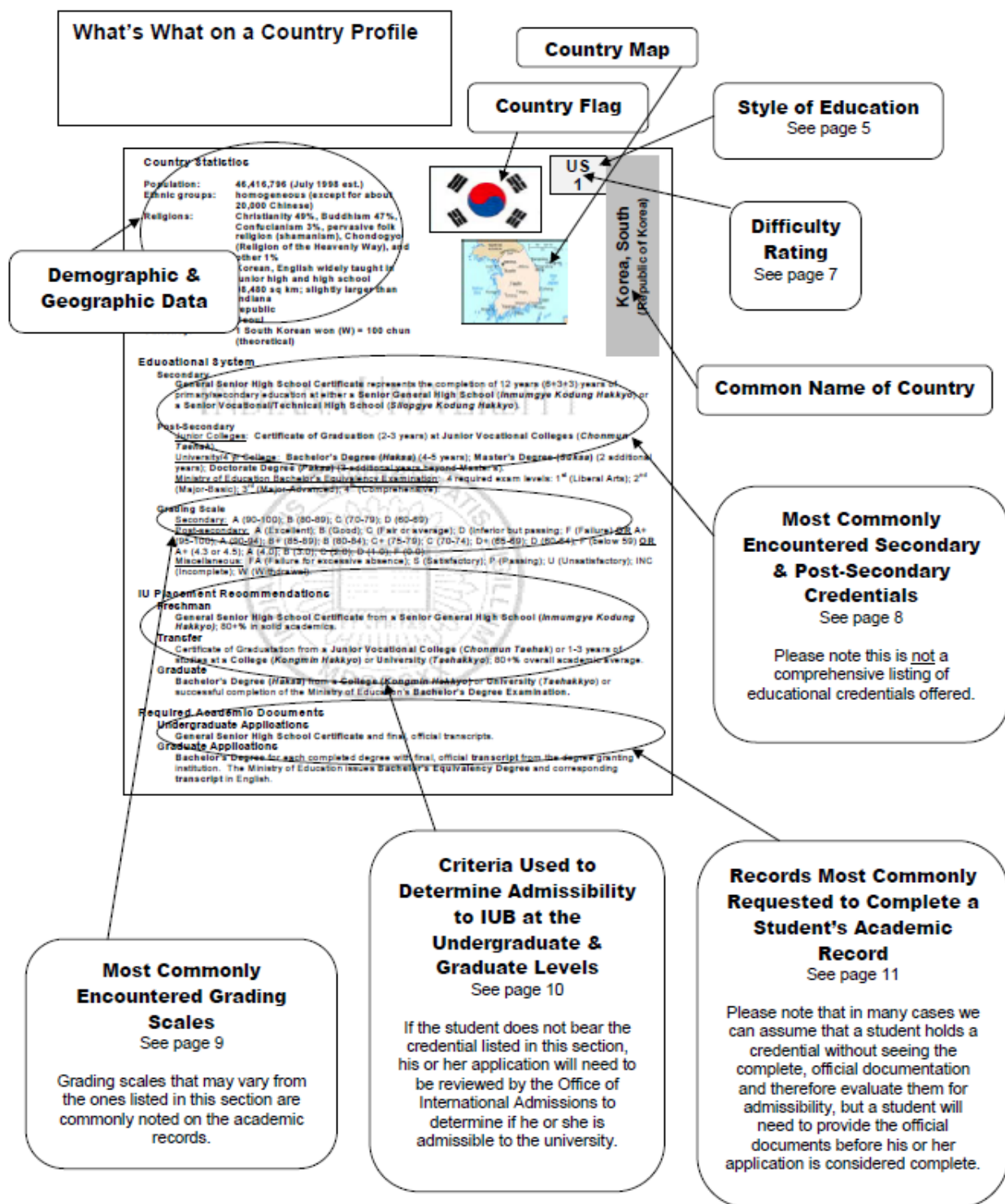
As part of these changes, our office found that we needed to share more of our expertise with departments. Thus, we created the country profiles, designed to simply and succinctly summarize the information our office looks for from international applications. The goal is not to make the reader an “expert” on international credentials, but to simply familiarize the user with the most commonly encountered credentials and grading scales. In this way, departments and units can feel more secure in working with international applications and confidently review applications from some of the less “foreign” educational systems.

Although the country profiles were designed to enhance the speed of processing international applications, they were also designed to instill caution in some cases. Some credentials are difficult to review, even for professional credentials evaluators, and we would never suggest that departments review them on their own. Because of this, we have included profiles for some of the more difficult educational systems. Since all of the profiles contain a “Difficulty Ranking” which explain how they are intended to be used, we ask that you consult us when you receive applications from these systems.

Not all countries are represented in these profiles, but we have tried to include the most commonly encountered countries. We ask departments to identify specific countries they are interested in knowing more about. Each year we update these profiles and expand the number included.

As always, if you have questions about using these profiles or just general questions about international admissions, please contact us at (812) 855-9806 or e-mail us_at_intlgrad@iu.edu.

Country Profiles



Using the Country Profiles

Country profiles are designed to assist departments to both recruit students and review applications. Here are a few quick words about how departments may wish to use them. Please contact the Office of International Admissions if you have any questions or need additional explanations.

Recruitment

Look at both the Grading Scale section under Educational System and the IU Placement Recommendations for Graduate applications. This will indicate if the student holds a bachelor's degree equivalency and how well the student did in school. Also look at the types of academic records that we request in the Required Academic Records section. This will allow you to inform students of what credentials they should have as well as what academic records to submit with their application. This way applications can be complete when submitted

Admissions

Look at the Difficulty Rating. If a bachelor's degree equivalency is a 1, 2 or a 3, you should be able to review for admission or denial with only a certification from our office. If it is a 4 or a 5, we suggest you only consider them for denials. If you are interested in a student from a 4 or a 5 educational system, it is a good idea to consult our office prior to admitting them.

Review their academic records using the Grading Scale section to see how well the student did in their courses as well as looking at the section on Post-Secondary Education to see where their credentials fall in the general scheme of the country's education. Remember, an international "bachelor's" degree is not always equivalent to a US bachelor's degree.

Finally, look at the IU Placement Recommendations to see if the student has more or less than a US bachelor's degree equivalency.

Style of Education

There are approximately 150 countries from which we commonly receive applications and credentials. It is easy to be overwhelmed if you consider each country as having a unique educational system. However, the majority of education systems can be grouped into four different patterns, making them much easier to review. If you know these four basic education patterns, you'll understand the majority of educational systems. With these four starting points, you won't feel like you're starting from ground zero each time you examine credentials from a new country.

It's easier if you think of how the world powers colonized or influenced other parts of the world and brought with them their educational systems. The United States, the United Kingdom, France, and the former Soviet Union had a hand in developing the schools, colleges, and universities of the majority of other countries.

As a result, there are many similarities between the educational systems of former colonies or heavily influenced countries and the empire or super-power that did the colonizing or influencing.

The United States (US)

Chances are, this is the system you're most familiar with. High school (primary and secondary school) lasts, on average, 12 years. The first post-secondary degree, the bachelor's degree, is awarded after an additional 4-5 years of undergraduate study at an accredited university or college. Students hungry for more education can go on for a master's degree (2-3 years after the bachelor's) or a doctoral degree (2-3 years after the master's or 5-6 years after the bachelor's). In credentials evaluation shorthand, we call this a 12+4 system. That stands for 12 years for the completion of the primary and secondary cycle followed by 4 years to complete the first post-secondary (undergraduate) degree.

In general, US-style systems are the easiest for US schools to review. First undergraduate degrees are usually called bachelor's degrees. Examples of US-style systems are Japan, Taiwan, and South Korea. Academic records are similar to the format US transcripts (listing credits, grades, and

Examples:

Japan
South Korea
Taiwan
Thailand

Watch out for:

Philippines

cumulative GPA's) and often note the conferral of a degree on the transcript. The People's Republic of China is also a US style system, except that its academic records are much more complex and more similar to the Soviet system of records (see below).

Examples:

Uganda
Hong Kong/SAR
Kenya
Singapore

Watch out for:

India
Pakistan
Sri Lanka

The United Kingdom (UK)

UK systems complete their secondary education with standardized examinations, commonly called 'O' Levels ('O' stands for Ordinary). The 'O' level examination consists of 4-10 subjects and is taken by students after 11 years of education. Those interested in college continue their study for another 2 years and take 'A' Levels ("Advanced" Level examinations, similar to US AP examinations). Bachelor degrees in UK style systems typically last 3 years and are called "bachelor degrees." This is a 11+2+3 system, the "2" in the middle representing the 'A' levels. Many of these exams are monitored or graded by British examination committees under the auspices of British universities (for instance, the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate in Singapore or the University of London School Examinations Board).

There are some countries that have UK style educational systems that

follow a 10+2+3 (the Indian B. Com or BA is an excellent example of this). For these systems, the “2” is required to be considered for admission to undergraduate programs, and the 3-year bachelor’s degrees are NOT considered sufficient for graduate studies at IU. Notable countries among these are India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. In these countries, students may be issued “mark sheets” which list their university examination results.

France (FR)

With France, things begin to look a little more muddled for those coming from a US educational background, but it’s still not too difficult. Here’s the first trick. In French systems, the high school diploma is called a Diplome de Bachilier de l’Enseignement du Second Degre, sometimes just called the Baccalaureat or Bac II. Remember, in International Admissions, just because something looks like it says bachelor’s doesn’t mean it’s a US bachelor’s degree equivalency.

The French Baccalaureat is awarded after the completion of 12 years of primary and secondary education. After two years of studies at a university, students receive a Diplome d’Etudes Universitaires Generales (conveniently abbreviated as the DEUG) or Diplome d’Etudes Universitaires Scientifiques et Techniques (DEUST). After three years of university studies, students can receive a Licence, and after four years of post-secondary studies students receive a Maitrise. So, the French system looks something like this: 12+2+1+1. Thus the Maitrise is considered a US bachelor’s degree.

Examples:

Botswana
France
Haiti
Iran
Lebanon
Madagascar
Morocco
The Republic of Congo

The Soviet Union (SU)

Of all the systems outlined here, those of the Soviet Union are the only ones whose “parenting” country is no longer in existence. As a result, the countries which developed Soviet types of educational systems are now “in transition” making them the most difficult and least predictable of educational systems.

Examples:

Armenia
Czech Republic
Kazakhstan
Romania
Uzbekistan

The typical soviet paradigm was 10 (or 11)+5. It’s debatable as to whether the 10 or 11-year primary/secondary cycle included kindergarten. Not all countries followed this, (some were 12+4 systems) but this was the normal practice within the Soviet Union. Since the fall of the Iron Curtain, the Berlin Wall, and the Soviet Union itself, we’ve seen a remarkable splintering and variety develop in all the former Soviet/Eastern Bloc countries. For instance, the Baltic Countries (Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia), always feeling closer to Western European and the Scandinavian countries, were quick to extend their secondary education to 12 years and abbreviate the first tertiary degree to 4 years. Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus are

planning to do the same, but in the meantime have already broken the former 5 year degree (the diplom spetsialista) into two degrees, one being 3-4 years in length (the diplom bakalavra) and a second of 1-3 years in length (diplom magistra).¹

¹ These newer degrees are often translated as bachelor’s and master’s degrees, which is literal, but the diplom magistra is viewed by IU to be the US bachelor’s degree equivalency, not the diplom bakalavra. Clever marketing on the part of the Russians, but calling it a bachelor’s doesn’t make it so.

Difficulty Rating

A difficulty rating has been assigned to each profile to assist departments in quickly assessing how difficult an educational system will be to review for someone who is familiar only with the US educational system. The scale ranges from 1 to 5 with 1 being the easiest/most similar educational systems and 5 being the most difficult/dissimilar educational systems. This is not a rating of the relative quality of the educational system. In general UK and US style systems will be easier to review. French and Soviet systems will be more difficult. Here is a reference chart explaining the Difficulty Rating Scale:

Rating	Comment	Example Country	Recommendation for Graduate Office
1	Educational system is very similar to US; transcripts are very similar to those issued by US universities and colleges; very little concern for fraudulent academic records	Japan South Korea Canada, Ontario United Kingdom, England	Review for both Admission and Denial
2	Educational system may slightly differ from that of the US; grading scales may be very different from those of the US; academic records may not be similar to US transcripts; very little concern for fraudulent academic records	Indonesia Taiwan Singapore	Review for both Admission and Denial
3	Educational system differs from the US system or academic records very different from US transcripts; students may receive only one copy of original academic record; some concern for fraudulent academic records	People's Republic of China India Lithuania Turkey	Review for both Admission and Denial
4	Educational system greatly differs from the US system; academic records are commonly irreplaceable; educational system may be in transition; political and economic instability may impact the quality of education; concern for fraudulent academic records	Belarus Poland Romania	Review for Denial, Suggested not to be reviewed for Admission without full evaluation unless department has strong familiarity with educational system, student, or institution
5	Educational system very difficult to review; information may be difficult to obtain; fraudulent documents are common; probable inability to communicate with educational institutions	Haiti Nigeria Georgia	Review for Denial only, Full evaluation by the Office of International Admissions for admission

We suggest that graduate offices review applications from countries that are from systems with ratings of 1, 2, or 3. Systems with a rating of 1 or 2 should be very simple to review with the help of the country profile for that country. Systems rated a 3 may require a call to the Office of International Admissions for the first couple of applications, but with time and experience, graduate offices should begin to feel confident when reviewing these systems.

We do not advise departments to review applications from systems rated 4 or 5 without a strong understanding of the issues that involve these particular systems.

Most Commonly Encountered Secondary & Post-secondary Credentials

This is a short-listing of the degrees, diplomas, or certificates that a student would most likely have when they apply to Indiana University. We intentionally did not make this a comprehensive listing of the credentials offered in a particular country. Such an exhaustive study would most likely be of little use to the individual programs.

This section is divided into Secondary and Post-Secondary. For the purposes of graduate admissions offices, the Post-Secondary section will be of most interest, though the Secondary information may provide you with some understanding of the IU Placement Recommendations made elsewhere on the profile. Of course, if an application is being considered for undergraduate admission, the Secondary section is vital to the admissions review. For most purposes, there will only be one credential listed under the Secondary section, though in some cases, we have listed a few others that may be commonly encountered.

Post-Secondary may have the following sub-sections: Junior Colleges, Professional/Vocational, and University/4-yr College. Each sub-section may have up to three or four credentials listed. Again, these are the credentials we most often see associated with applications to Indiana University.

The Junior College sub-section contains credentials that would most commonly be awarded by institutions resembling US junior colleges or community colleges. Usually, they are diploma or degree programs that would be viewed as 2 years of post-secondary work. They may provide a bridge between secondary and tertiary studies, and usually students could transfer this coursework towards further academic studies. Not all countries incorporate these types of educational institutions into their educational structure; therefore, all profiles do not contain this sub-section.

Professional/Vocational credentials are those which are intended to prepare and qualify students for employment. They do not grant access to further education, nor do they usually count towards an academic credential. However, there are academic areas of study in the US that are not considered academic in other countries. Business and education are two common examples.

Credentials listed under University/4-yr College are those that most closely resemble US bachelor's and graduate degrees. They may differ slightly in the number of years required to receive them, and they may vary in the amount of specialized content. They are most commonly academic in nature and provide access to further studies in their field.

Most Commonly Encountered Grading Scales

Although not all of the grading scales used in each country are represented here, these scales are the most common for academic degrees awarded by universities, colleges, or college-prep secondary schools.

It is not uncommon to find the grading scale listed on the transcript (sometimes on the back). If this is the case, we suggest you review the applicant's grades using the grading scale listed on the transcript.

In general, we do not attempt to convert each grade into a US 4-point scale. Instead, we keep the average in the original scale and get a general idea of how the student has done while in school. Crunching an average to the hundredth decimal of a 4-point scale disregards the possible absence of some US grades (usually the grade of "D" is not found outside the US) or may neglect different grade distributions of other countries.

Criteria Used to Determine Admissibility to IUB at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

This is the credential students most commonly have to have to be considered for admission to an undergraduate or graduate degree at Indiana University. For undergraduate admission, we look for a credential that encompasses completion of primary and secondary education that is academic in nature. Education that is professional or vocational in nature does not prepare a student for the rigors of an academic program at Indiana University. The curriculum should include math, language of instruction, laboratory science, and social science. In general, this credential is one that, when completed, represents eleven to thirteen years of completed education and would give the holder access to further education at the tertiary level.

For graduate admission, we look for a credential or credentials that encompass 4 additional years of academic study. Professional or vocational programs are not sufficient. This credential should also enable the student to continue studies in his or her native educational system. Students who hold this credential are considered to have a "bachelor's equivalency."

Please note that these are generic standards and are given without consideration to specific applications. Departments or programs may feel that students who do not have the above credentials may be appropriate students in their graduate programs. They may petition the dean of their school and the University Graduate School (if the degree is a UGS degree) to admit a student without a bachelor's equivalency. Departments interested in pursuing such a course of action should contact the Office of International Admissions.

Some of the sources of the information included in the profiles, including these recommendations, are the following:

- NAFSA, Association of International Educators
- AACRAO, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
- NCAA, National Collegiate Athletic Association
- ENIC, European Network of Information Centers
- NARIC, National Academic Recognition Information Centers
- UNESCO
- NOOSR, National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition
- The British Council
- ECE, Educational Credentials Evaluators
- WES, World Education Services
- PIER, Projects for International Education Research
- Colleagues at other universities and colleges
- IU faculty and staff
- Ministries of education
- Embassies
- OSEAS, Overseas Educational Advisers
- National Council on the Evaluation of Foreign Educational Credentials
- International Association of Universities

Records Most Commonly Requested to Complete a Student's Academic Record

This section is for the reference of the Office of International Admissions. It describes the types of records needed to officially complete a student's record. The student does not necessarily have to submit them all at the time of application, and in many cases they can submit them during the first semester of their studies at IU. For instance, the academic records for a bachelor's degree from the Peoples' Republic of China are not complete without the Chinese and English versions of the transcript of grades and bachelor's degree certificate. All of these documents must bear the seal of the degree-granting institution, but we may release the application to the department with only the official English versions or photocopies of all four documents.

Graduate programs may wish to familiarize themselves with this portion to get an idea of what documents they may be looking at in an admission review. Also, since many students contact departments directly, you may wish to refer to this section to answer the student's questions about what academic records to submit.

The Office of International Admissions remains responsible for determining the official or unofficial nature of an applicant's academic record. If a graduate program has questions regarding a student's academic records, they should contact our office as soon as possible.