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The Background Screening Credentialing Council has drafted the following response to a question we have received regarding the General Background Screening BSOAP Standard, this letter applies to General Version 1.0. This response is provided for *educational purposes only* and does not constitute legal advice, express or implied, of the BSCC, or the Professional Background Screening Association. Consultation with legal counsel is recommended in all matters of employment law.

For the purposes of this Letter, and to ensure our response applies to both Standards, the terms Organization and CRA may both be used.

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TITLE: Clause 5.3 Accredited Academic Institutions

**Question:** We are seeking clarification of “degree equivalency evaluation as an additional service” that is mentioned under section 5.3. To the best of our knowledge, nobody offers such a service to businesses in the Australian and New Zealand markets. I recently reached out to Australian members of the PBSA and they were similarly surprised by the audit criterion. Within Australia and New Zealand, effective regulation exists to prevent tertiary institutions from offering, for example, a medical degree unless the particular course meets the core requirements of qualification. No university is going to start calling their nursing degrees, “medical degrees”, for example. The adverse consequences of that move would be disastrous for the institution. Similarly for all other degrees. So, the need for degree equivalency evaluation simply does not arise for domestic qualifications.

For international qualifications, I am told there is, within Australian government, a small, highly specialised team that will review the detail of certain degrees, down to assessing the individual units that comprise them, in order to assess suitability for relevant high-skilled immigration visas, then respond to appeals, applications for judicial review and the like. However, that is an intensive (and therefore expensive) process and is not a service that is directly available to employers (even within government) in an employment screening context. The question, if relevant, will be answered by whether the person is able to get the required visa. Against that background, how should we approach this criterion?

**Response:** Thank you for your inquiry.

The BSCC does not interpret this section to require the organization to provide or procure any type of degree equivalency service, particularly where no such service is available or practicable. Instead, we view this as a mandate to organizations to communicate the scope and limitations of their service, particularly regarding degree equivalency. This can be achieved in various ways, like a note in a product description or a disclaimer on a screening report which indicates that degree names may not be the same in all jurisdictions and that it is the client’s responsibility to establish whether the candidate meets their educational expectations through a degree equivalency service or otherwise, if necessary.

Thank you for submitting your inquiry and giving the BSCC an opportunity to review. We believe we have responded fully to your inquiry. Please let us know if you have any further questions

8.3.2023