

Guide to International Graduate Admissions

This guide is designed as a basic overview of MSU's policies and practices related to international graduate admission. Keep in mind it will be updated as policies and processes change, so it's important that graduate departments update their records accordingly as newer versions of this document are sent out via the Grad School listserv.

Please consult this document as you work to admit international graduate students and **before** reaching out for assistance. For challenging cases, please contact the Graduate School (<https://grad.msu.edu/>) or Tonya McFadden (Mcfadde9@msu.edu), Mena Alverson (alvers26@msu.edu) in Admissions. Detailed and complex cases not addressed in this document should be referred to Senior International Credential Analyst, Dr. Patrick Leahy.

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General Issue	Specific Problem	Solution
Credentials – Degree Award	Admission “Holds”	<p>Applicants who are in the last semester of the equivalent of a US bachelor’s degree program, and have yet to have their degree awarded, may be admitted with a hold for their final transcript and diploma (in the original language and English, if applicable).</p> <p>Under special circumstances, admissions will admit international students with a hold for an official copy of their bachelor degree diploma. This is typically done in cases where it’s a late admit in the admissions cycle or if the applicant is having unexpected difficulty obtaining their diploma. This is done as long as we have the official transcripts on file (in the original language along with a translation if applicable).</p>
Credentials – Degree Award	Graduate Degrees	Graduate Degrees awarded do not automatically mean they earned the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree. Admission requirements/processes/policies of different institutions are always questionable no matter the location or caliber of the institution.
Credentials – Degree Award	Proof of Degree award	Need transcript to clearly show specific degree awarded (in original language) and date of award. English translation as well, if needed. Otherwise, <u>we highly recommend requesting official copy of diploma in original language and English clearly showing the name of the degree awarded and date of award.</u>
Credentials - Equivalency	Degree Equivalency: Three-Year Bachelor’s Degrees	MSU requires the equivalent of a four-year US bachelor’s degree for admission to graduate programs (master’s,

		<p>doctoral, etc.). Most three-year undergraduate degrees do not meet this requirement.</p> <p>A three-year bachelor's degree plus a two-year master's degree, earned at official, governmentally-recognized institutions in India or Europe (Bologna Process countries) MSU views as equivalent to a four year US bachelor's degree.</p>
Credentials - Equivalency	Not Acceptable Bachelor Degrees – either international or US-earned	<p>MSU does not treat the following degrees as equivalent to regular, four year US bachelor's degrees.</p> <p>Bachelor of Applied Science Doctor of Veterinary Medicine</p> <p>Please consult the international credential analyst for other degree types.</p>
Credentials - Equivalency	Postgraduate Diploma	<p>MSU does NOT treat this credential as equivalent to a two-year master's degree. However, there MAY be an exception to this in the cases of postgraduate diplomas awarded in India, <u>where the transcripts clearly indicate the diploma is equivalent to a master's degree</u>. Please consult with the international credential analyst in these cases.</p>
Credentials – Official Records	Degree Waivers	<p>For applicants who do not hold the equivalent of a four-year US bachelor's degree, departments may formally request a degree waiver from the Graduate School if they feel the applicant has strong grades, coursework, and/or work experience. Waiver requests should follow the procedures outlined on the Grad School website: https://grad.msu.edu/four_year_degree.</p> <p>Applicants are still expected to provide copies of all postsecondary transcripts and diplomas (in the original language and with English translations if applicable) in a timely manner for admissions processing. This is so transcripts and diplomas can be evaluated to determine equivalency, and whether a waiver may be needed to admit.</p>

<p>Credentials – Official Records</p>	<p>Notarized Academic Records</p>	<p>MSU does not accept academic records that have been notarized.</p> <p>A public notary’s stamp only indicates that they viewed the documents. It does not prove the records are official or authentic by the institution the applicant attended.</p> <p>Exceptions include countries in Eastern Europe that follow an apostille process, where appropriate officials notarize the records to make them official. Official, notarized copies of academic records (transcripts and diploma in the original language and English) should be mailed in an official, university envelope to the MSU department.</p>
<p>Credentials – Official Records</p>	<p>Official documents from a third party individual, company, or another university that received them previously</p>	<p>We do not accept these documents.</p>
<p>Credentials – Official Records</p>	<p>Official Academic Records</p>	<p>MSU will accept UNOFFICIAL postsecondary academic records (transcripts, certificates, diplomas, translations, etc.) for admissions processing, with the policy that official, hardcopies of all transcripts, certificates, diplomas, and translations will be mailed to MSU in official, sealed envelopes (one envelope per institution attended; translation agency envelope for translations are acceptable) by the appropriate deadline, typically about a month into the student’s first semester of enrollment.</p> <p>Departments should work with their international applicants to ensure they provide all the appropriate documentation needed for admissions processing and finalization. Ideally, official copies of their FINAL academic records (ALL postsecondary transcripts and diplomas) should be mailed to MSU as early as possible, to minimize challenges later.</p>

Please note that MSU distinguishes between “original” vs. “official” academic records. Original records are transcripts, diplomas, and certificates issued only ONCE to applicants. Typically, applicants have to have their colleges/universities make a photocopy of these documents and stamp the photocopies official. If they are placed by appropriate personnel in official, sealed envelopes (ONE ENVELOPE PER UNIVERSITY/COLLEGE ATTENDED), and received as such, we would treat these documents as official.

PLEASE MAKE SURE APPLICANTS DO NOT SUBMIT THEIR ONLY ORIGINAL TRANSCRIPT, CERTIFICATE, AND/OR DIPLOMA! WE DO NOT RETURN ANY DOCUMENTS WE RECEIVE IN CENTRAL ADMISSIONS!

Also, please ensure your department/grad program website reflects this information, to avoid confusion on the part of applicants.

Transcripts and diplomas are considered official if they are mailed directly from the institution in an official/sealed envelope to the MSU department or if the student brings them into the Office of Admissions in a sealed/official, unopened envelope from the institution that issued the records. Please note that applicants can ask a friend/relative to make the request of their official academic records and pick them up from the institution (in a sealed/official unopened institution envelope) and mail the envelope (unopened) directly to the MSU department.

Students who apply prior to completing their degrees should submit their latest available transcript to date. An official final transcript and diploma will be required after the degree has been conferred.

		<p>IMPORTANT: Please note that the ENVELOPES in which applicants' transcripts and diplomas were contained MUST BE sent to the Office of Admissions along with the academic records.</p> <p>If applicants/students are struggling to have official, hardcopies of their official academic records provided to us in official, sealed envelopes, departments may consult the international credential analyst for advice and possible flexible arrangements.</p> <p>If an applicant's credentials are not the equivalent of a four-year US bachelor's degree (the basic requirement for admission to MSU's graduate programs), and the department still wishes to admit the student (due to strong grades, coursework, and/or work experiences), a degree waiver is required. Not all degree waivers are approved, but departments should follow the procedures outlined on the Grad School website, if they wish to make the request: https://grad.msu.edu/four_year_degree</p> <p>All academic records should be on file prior to making a degree waiver request!</p>
Credentials – Official Records	Refugee applicants and applicants from conflict zones	MSU exercises flexibility in these cases, provided applicants appear to meet basic application guidelines. Credentials should be referred to the international credential analyst who will treat these on a case-by-case basis.
Credentials – Official Records	Requesting and Submitting Official Academic Records	MSU does not accept the following as official academic records: electronic records, records loose (not in a sealed envelope), records the applicant has had access to (e.g., mailed in a regular envelope or mailed in a regular envelope from the applicant's home address), records stamped by a

notary (see exceptions above), records that appear to be inauthentic.

Applicants should request official, hardcopies of all their postsecondary transcripts and diplomas. These should be mailed in an official, sealed envelope – one official envelope for each institution attended.

These should be mailed directly to the MSU department the applicant wishes to enroll in. Departments should save all documentation received (including transcripts, diplomas, translations, etc.) and forward those AND the official envelopes directly to the Office of Admissions for processing. Departments SHOULD SCAN all documents they receive (including envelopes) BEFORE sending them to central admissions. In the unfortunate case that documents get lost in the process, these scans MAY serve as backup copies.

If the applicant is not currently in the region or country where they attended their education – he/she should contact the university by phone or email to find out where her/his options are. If s/he is unsuccessful in contacting her/his former college by phone or email, a friend/relative in the country is welcome to contact the college/university by phone OR go to the college and find out options. Ideally, they should be able to request the official documents from the appropriate personnel. Then the university that issued the official documents can mail the official envelope to the MSU department of intended study OR a friend/relative is welcome to pick up the official, sealed envelope from (each institution) and mail it (unopened) to MSU. Documents sent in this manner would be treated as official.

		<p><i>Please note: We do not encourage applicants or their friends/relatives to put themselves in danger by going to a college/university if the situation is unsafe.</i></p> <p><i>Also: Applicants should NOT send us their only official documents. Our policy is to NOT return anything we receive.</i></p> <p>Refugees and those who have attended college in conflict zones represent special cases that should be referred to the international credential analyst.</p> <p>MSU does not accept records already used by another institution.</p> <p>MSU does not accept credential evaluation reports including using such reports as translations of documents into English. These MAY be used as unofficial records, for admissions processing purposes, but are not accepted as official, unless an exception is being made.</p> <p>Finally, unofficial (electronic or hardcopy) academic records may be used for admissions processing purposes, but official hardcopies in official, sealed envelopes are due early in the first semester of enrollment, by the appropriate deadline noted on the Grad School website.</p>
<p>Credentials – Official Records</p>	<p>Two Bachelor Degrees</p>	<p>MSU requires only one bachelor’s degree (equivalent to a four year US bachelor degree) for admission to graduate programs.</p> <p>Students should always submit ALL official academic records from all postsecondary programs they participated in. However, if a student COMPLETED TWO bachelor’s degree programs, we would, at the very least, only need official</p>

		<p>academic records from ONE program UNLESS the student wishes to have TWO bachelor degree posted in CS/SIS. Of course, students should always send copies of ALL postsecondary academic records – transcripts, diplomas, etc.</p> <p>If the student completed one bachelor’s degree program overseas and is in the process of completing a second bachelor’s degree program in the US, in this situation we would ask for official academic records from BOTH programs. If there’s some sort of problem obtaining records, we would need records from at least one completed or nearly completed program to process admissions.</p>
Credentials – Official Records	Verification of Academic Records	<p>Generally, MSU does not accept verification of unofficial academic records via email. Exceptions may include special cases where applicants are experiencing difficulty obtaining official hardcopies of their documents. Please refer these cases to the international credential analyst, who may determine if email verification is appropriate. If so, he will verify via email.</p>
Credentials - China	UPDATE: CHESICC and CDGDC (now called CSSD)	<p>The Graduate School and the Office of Admissions have dropped the previous CDGDC/CHESICC policy. The Office of Admissions will cease with admissions holds for these reports.</p> <p>In rare cases, if MSU receives unusual credentials, MSU reserves the right to request CSSD electronic reports to verify the credentials are official and equivalent to a US bachelor’s degree. Students can still provide these if they wish and MSU can request them if warranted. In some cases, it may be easier for students who studied their bachelor programs in mainland China to send a CSSD report in lieu of hardcopy official transcripts. MSU accepts CSSD electronic reports as official, in lieu of regular, hardcopy academic records, as long</p>

		<p>as they arrive to us via Parchment (electronic transcript channel connected to MSU’s Admissions Office).</p> <p>https://www.chsi.com.cn/en/</p>
Credentials – Specific Countries	Iran	<p>Applicants should be sure to request official copies of the following: 1) The original language (Farsi) and English language transcript and 2) bachelor degree (karshenasi) diploma in the original language and English. This should be done <u>early in the application process to ensure we receive the documents in a timely manner.</u> <u>Only documents received in official, sealed envelopes (unopened) from each university or appropriate ministry will be accepted as official.</u></p> <p>Applicants are welcome to work with a friend/relative in Iran (as is the case in any country) to assist in requesting official documentation. The university or the friend/relative is welcome to mail the official documents in an official, sealed envelope (unopened) directly to the MSU department.</p> <p><u>Update: We are currently exercising flexibility with academic records from Iran, due to the political situation there. Applicants may contact their universities’ registrar or international offices to request official PDF copies of their transcripts and diplomas (in Farsi and English) are emailed directly to the international credential analyst who will review, and if acceptable, will mark them official.</u></p>
Credentials – Specific Countries	Syria/Sudan/Myanmar/Ukraine/Afghanistan	<p>Applicants who attended institutions in these countries may have a great deal of difficulty obtaining their academic records. The international credential analyst should be contacted to assist applicants/departments through our policies/processes.</p>

English Language	English Language Proficiency Tests	<p>For applicants who studied in countries where English is not a dominant language, they are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test and submit official scores to MSU.</p> <p>A list of countries MSU considers English-speaking, and thus no test is required, is featured on the Graduate School website: https://grad.msu.edu/english-language-competency</p> <p>Also included on this website is information on automatic and non-automatic English language proficiency waivers.</p> <p>Acceptable English Language proficiency tests include, but are not limited to, the following: TOEFL, IELTS, MSUFLT, PTE A (Pearson).</p> <p>MSU does NOT accept TOEFL ITP tests.</p> <p>TOEFL scores must be sent to MSU electronically by ETS.</p> <p>IELTS and other acceptable English proficiency test scores can be submitted in hardcopy form as long as the original document is sent directly from the testing agency in an official envelope. Again, hardcopies of acceptable English proficiency test scores AND official envelopes should be saved and forwarded to admissions.</p> <p>Special note: Unusual cases will be reviewed by central admissions.</p> <p>--</p> <p>If there are no test scores in CS/SIS, or if the student's test scores are below the requirement for provisional admission, the department must follow the English Language Proficiency</p>
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<p>English Language</p>	<p>Translations and Original Language</p>	<p>All academic records (transcripts and diplomas) not issued in English must be accompanied by a word-for-word, line-by-line, English translation done by an official translator.</p> <p><u>Similarly, departments should make sure applicants request original language academic records as well as English language versions from non-English speaking countries.</u></p> <p>Please note if a degree is indicated as a “bachelor” degree in an English translated document, this DOES NOT prove the degree is the same as a four-year, US bachelor’s degree.</p> <p>Translations may be done by the university that issued the applicant’s official academic records or a certified translator in the applicant’s country. All translations should be based on the official documents. Translations may be included with the official documents in the official, university-sealed envelope or mailed in a separate, official translation agency envelope. Alternatively, translations may be done by an American Translator’s Association-certified translator in the US (e.g., www.7clingo.com in Lansing). The website for the American Translators Association (ATA) is: www.atanet.org</p>

		<p>MSU only accepts ATA-certified translations if the translation is done in the US!</p> <p>Departments are welcome to assist applicants in paying for translations.</p> <p>MSU only accepts official, hardcopy translations mailed in either official, university envelopes (along with the official, original language academic records) OR in an official, translation company's envelope. MSU does NOT accept electronic/scanned translations as official.</p> <p>To see if a translator is ATA-certified, enter their certification number into the following website: http://www.atanet.org/certification/check_certifications.php</p> <p>Special Note: Unofficial translations accompanying unofficial academic records (in the original language) may be used for admissions processing. However, final, hardcopies of the translations and the original language official academic records are required to finalize admission, and are due about a month after classes begin, for each semester. See the Grad School website for details on official academic record deadlines: https://grad.msu.edu/fsresources/GPDandGAPC</p>
International Graduate Admissions	Affidavit of Support	The affidavit of support must include the signature of the sponsor. The dollar amount must meet the current I-20 funding requirement. The form is valid for up to a year prior to the start of the enrollment semester.
International Graduate Admissions	Curriculum	Departments should generally ensure applicants' they wish to admit participated in rigorous and appropriate academic undergraduate programs. This helps to ensure proper preparation for graduate studies.

		Departments may also wish to check the university/college website to ensure the degree program they participated in at the time of their studies <u>actually exists</u> . It is worth using archive.org to review an institution's website, including degree program information, as it appeared in the past.
International Graduate Admissions	Departments Submitting Documents to MSU Office of Admission via campus mail	All other documents directed to admissions will go directly to the Processing Team. If specific staff are needed to review, please ensure you reach out to them via email first, including the international credential analyst.
International Graduate Admissions	Financial Proof – Bank Statement	The account holder's name must be in English. The account holder's name must match the sponsor's name on the Affidavit of Support. The dollar amount on the account holder's statement must meet the current I-20 funding requirement. The bank statement is valid for up to a year prior to the start of the enrollment semester.
International Graduate Admissions	Further Information on International Graduate Admission	See the Grad School website: https://grad.msu.edu/fsresources/GPDandGAPC https://grad.msu.edu/internationalapplicants
International Graduate Admissions	Grades	Departments should ensure they have local grade scales and their US equivalents for different institutions and/or countries, to determine grades and GPA equivalencies for all international applicants they wish to admit. If they do not, they should contact the international credential analyst for guidance.
International Graduate Admissions	Slate Decision Forms <i>Formerly known as RAF (recommended action forms), which is a legacy term that did not carry over to Slate.</i>	The Slate decision forms must be completed by 1) GPC (Graduate Program Coordinator), 2) Final Approver (College Level).

International Graduate Admissions	Resources	<p>The following are online resources that may assist in international graduate admissions:</p> <p>To determine if an educational institution is officially recognized: the World Higher Education Database (WHED): http://whed.net/home.php</p> <p>Online training regarding international graduate admissions at MSU:</p> <p>https://d2l.msu.edu/d2l/le/content/922233/Home</p> <p>The Graduate School at MSU:</p> <p>https://grad.msu.edu/</p> <p>https://grad.msu.edu/fsresources/GPDandGAPC</p> <p>https://grad.msu.edu/internationalapplicants</p> <p>https://grad.msu.edu/english-language-competency</p> <p>All official academic records should be requested in the original language and English if the applicant did not attend undergraduate studies in an English-speaking country. Also, departments should request official copies of transcripts and final diplomas from the undergraduate universities applicants' attended to avoid delays admissions processing. Please note we follow the guidelines of ECE:</p> <p>https://www.ece.org/ECE/Individuals/Education-Reports</p> <p>See "review documentation requirements"</p>
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<p>Transfer Credit</p>	<p>Transfer Credit</p>	<p>For applicants who attended international colleges and universities as undergraduates and then transferred to an accredited US institution, and the transfer classes/credits are present on the undergraduate transcript, we would generally NOT require official transcripts from the institution the applicant transferred from, unless the documentation appears questionable in some way.</p> <p>Similarly, for applicants who studied abroad while they were in their undergraduate programs, and transferred credit into their undergraduate program, we would NOT require official transcripts from the study abroad institution, unless warranted.</p> <p>It may be possible for MSU graduate students to transfer credit from graduate study abroad or previous graduate programs. The determination is made firstly by the department and then the registrar's office (with the input of admissions, if needed). To be considered transferable, credit from international programs should be earned at officially recognized colleges and universities, and from academically-oriented programs.</p>

Further Information:

To expedite and ease the process of admitting international graduate students, the following are suggestions departments should consider as they are looking to avoid delays or problems.

1. Graduate programs might request **official** academic records from international applicants EARLY in the admissions cycle, as example, as they are applying. This may help avoid problems and delays later in the cycle. Of course, we do accept unofficial international academic records for admissions processing, but the earlier we receive the official records the better. It's important to recognize that applicants

may apply BEFORE they finish their undergraduate programs – they may apply using the latest available academic records, but, final, official, hardcopies in official, sealed envelopes are due by the appropriate deadline, early in their first semester of enrollment.

2. Graduate programs are welcome to recommend for admission international students at the departmental/programmatic level based on unofficial academic records, yet in these cases they should make it clear to applicants that they will not be fully admitted to the university until official copies of their academic records are received, in official, sealed, envelopes (one envelope per institution attended). This process helps avoid “losing” applicants yet underscores our requirement for official hardcopies later, which are due early in the first semester of enrollment.
3. Graduate programs should be aware that grade scales range greatly across the world and are subject to change with educational reforms. Up to date information on international grades and their US equivalents are kept in our office. Please contact Dr. Patrick Leahy (leahypat@msu.edu) for the latest grade scale information, to ensure appropriate review of international applicants by departments. **Of course, always first consult the transcript to see how a particular institution or program approaches grades to determine equivalency.**
4. Graduate departments are welcome to contact Dr. Patrick Leahy to conduct an informal review of international academic records (scanned copies via email or via Zoom/Teams) to assess whether an international applicant would meet our international credential policies.
5. **Please do NOT share the contact information for the international credential analyst or graduate processing staff in the Office of Admissions with applicants. We ask that departments/units coordinate the needs of prospective international grad students with us. This way we can ensure we are all on the same page. If necessary, to expedite processing, units may share the email addresses of Office of Admissions staff, but only after grad departments/units have worked with prospective students and us. Departments/units may wish to be included on all email communication between Admissions and prospective students, to help ensure smooth processing.**