

# 1.

## Getting started

# Some questions to consider

As you begin along the path to employment, take time to identify your strengths, your skills and experience. You will see what you have to offer an employer and what you will need to do to prepare for employment. Here are some questions to consider. Some will require you to think carefully and make difficult decisions. Take the time to write answers on a piece of paper.

1. Are your speaking and written English skills strong enough to get a job? Have your English skills been evaluated?
2. Do you know the kind of work you want to do? Do you have any education, training or experience in your desired occupation or will you need to begin new studies or training?
3. Have you had your education documents evaluated in Canada?
4. Do you need to be certified or registered to work in Canada or Ontario in your chosen occupation/profession?
5. Do you know the English language words and terminology that are commonly used in your occupation?
6. Have you met with an employment counsellor who can help you understand the opportunities available to you and the requirements you may need to get the job you desire?
7. Are you willing to take the time and effort to find a job, even if it takes a long time? Do you have enough money to survive if you do not find a job right away?
8. Are you willing to take a job that may not be in your chosen occupation, or that may be below your skill level?
9. Do you have references from your country of origin? Do you have references from someone in Canada?

My three greatest strengths are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

The three most important things I must do to prepare for employment are:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

## The Benefits of Transferable Skills

Employers are very interested in knowing about your education and work experience, but many employers also seek out workers who have “transferable skills”. These are skills and attributes that can be used in many job settings. In job applications and interviews, highlight your abilities in these three most important areas:

1. The ability to communicate effectively, solve problems, and learn new skills.
2. A positive attitude and the ability to be a responsible employee.
3. The ability to work effectively as part of a team.

Other transferable skills to highlight include:

- Customer service skills
- Leadership and teaching abilities
- Computer skills

*Li Chang Chen,  
Engineering at  
Trojan Technologies*





Name:

**Naved Altaf**

Country of Origin:

**Pakistan**

Past Employment/Education:

**Sui Southern Gas Company/  
Masters in Information Technology**

London Region Employer & Position:

**LHSC Support Analyst in Quality &  
Performance Department**

Naved Altaf was attracted to London because he was told it is a quiet community, very family oriented and a good place to raise children. He came to visit a brother in 2003 and returned to live here in the spring of 2006.

With 15 years of IT experience, Naved expected it would be easy to get a job. After three months of full-time job searching, unsolicited calls and sending resumes to every IT organization in the area, Naved found a job working as a support analyst at London Health Sciences Centre. He found the job through a posting on Workopolis.com, an employment search and career planning website. The hospital checked his references in Pakistan and offered him a job on contract.

Naved cautions newcomers that although their education and skills may help you to win entrance to Canada, those skills and education do not always help you get a job.

“Prepare yourself to follow a path,” says Naved. “Build a strong, targeted resume and search for the proper audience for your resume. Because most employers want Canadian work experience, you should keep yourself ready for any job the first time – then you can move along from there.”

## How important are English skills to get a job?

The ability to speak English well is one of the most important things that newcomers need to gain employment. Those with strong English skills will become employable much faster than those who have only basic English skills. There are some jobs where English skills are not as important, but they tend to be jobs that will not pay a very high wage. Written English skills are also very important to many employers.

Improving your English skills can take as long as two or more years. You want to get started as quickly as possible and take every opportunity you can to speak English to others.

### Some ways to improve your English

1. Take an English as a Second Language (ESL) course.
2. Go to places where you can speak English. Join a club, a place of worship, a social organization or a conversation circle. Volunteer your time with a charity. Try to spend as much time as possible speaking English.
3. Watch television, listen to the radio and read the newspaper in English. The news is an especially good choice because you will also learn about your new community and your new country.
4. Ask friends and family members to help you if you use an improper word or phrase. Ask them to correct your pronunciation and grammar.

# Assessing and upgrading your English skills

The Government of Canada offers language training for newcomers. The program is called LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada).

Before you are admitted to a class, your English skills will be assessed. In the London region, the assessment centre is at the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre. They will refer you to an appropriate ESL course. These classes, from Canadian benchmark levels 1 to 5, are offered at a number of locations including:

- YM-YWCA of London (five locations including Woodstock)
- YMCA of St. Thomas – Elgin (four locations)
- Richmond Street Language Centre
- Chinese Canadian National Council
- Thames Valley District School Board (five locations)

The Centre for Lifelong Learning in London also offers English classes and Fanshawe College

offers a one-year General Arts and Science program in English Language Studies.

Be sure to ask whether there is a cost. Some programs are free and some are not.

Resources:

- LINC Assessment in London region – contact the London Cross Cultural Learner Centre at 505 Dundas Street, London or phone 519-432-1133.
- LINC website – [www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/welcome/wel-22e.html](http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/newcomer/welcome/wel-22e.html)
- Language Benchmark Assessment (LBA) – [www.language.ca](http://www.language.ca)
- Centre for Lifelong Learning – [www.cfl.on.ca](http://www.cfl.on.ca)
- Fanshawe College – [www.fanshawec.ca](http://www.fanshawec.ca)

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# An accent can make it hard for people to understand

A strong accent can make it difficult for people to understand newcomers, even if their English skills are good. Employers should not discriminate against people who have accents, but they may believe that customers and coworkers will have difficulty understanding you.

Your accent is part of who you are and there is no reason for you to lose it altogether. You can take steps to make sure people can understand you.

- Speak clearly and slowly. The more you speak English, the easier it will be for others to understand you.
- Let people know that it is okay if they ask you to repeat yourself.
- Ask friends, family or coworkers to help with your pronunciation and grammar.
- Resist the urge to spend time only with people who speak your native language. Look for opportunities to speak English with others and your language skills will improve at a faster rate.

### Is that English my coworkers are speaking? Understanding occupational language

Newcomers to Canada who work in specialized occupations can face an extra challenge – learning the specific language of their occupation. Each occupation has its own set of words, phrases and short forms. Some companies even have their own terminology or shortforms. While your English skills may be very good, you might not yet have an understanding of job-specific vocabulary. If you are already in a workplace, don't be afraid to ask for an explanation.

There is specialized language training for certain occupations, such as engineering and healthcare, but not for all occupations. The Ontario government is increasing investment in these types of training programs. If you visit a centre that offers employment counselling services for newcomers, they will be able to tell you if there is language training available for your occupation.



## Help from Coworkers

Rosario Ortega, who came to Canada from Colombia and now works at Gamma-Dynacare in London, offers this advice:

*“Take time to get your English and language skills as strong as you can. I was lucky to find a job where my employer has given me a chance to try new jobs as I learn. My coworkers help too. If I don’t understand or don’t use the right word, they help me.”*

Name:

**Li Chang Chen**

Country of Origin:

**China**

Education:

**Bachelor of Engineering (Mechanical) from Beijing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics**

London Region Employer and Position:

**Trojan Technologies – Creates technology documents and drawings using AutoCAD, Solidworks and Adobe InDesign**

Trojan Technologies is a world leader in the development of ultraviolet water treatment solutions. Before a friend told her about a contract position with Trojan, Li Chang Chen had sent out “piles of resumes”. She believes that language skills have been her biggest challenge, and she continues to work at that daily. Li Chang’s friends and others have cautioned her that it can take years to catch up to her previous career level, but she believes that with hard work and some trust from Canadian employers, she will find great success and happiness in Canada. At Trojan Technologies, she says she has found an excellent employer who is putting her skills to work, while allowing her to become more familiar with the Canadian work culture.

“I have found that communication skills are most important. Even if you are shy, it is important that you work to make friends and encourage yourself to talk to people. It will help you improve your language skills and increase employment opportunities.”



Name:

**Domenico Santoro**

Country of Origin:

**Italy**

Education:

**PhD in Environmental Engineering**

London Region Employer and Position:

**Trojan Technologies, Specialist in  
Computational Fluid Dynamics**

Domenico Santoro, a native of Italy, is a highly skilled professional, brought to the London region by a company that needs his expertise. He works for Trojan Technologies, a world leader in the development of ultraviolet water treatment solutions.

Even though Domenico has had lots of help from his employer in getting settled, he says that adjusting to a new life has been a challenge.

“One of the hardest things for me was trying to balance all the work it takes to get settled – getting a driver’s license, a car, utilities, health insurance, preparing to pay Canadian taxes, while also being in the first days of a job where I am trying very hard to prove myself to my new employer. I think it takes two years just to get settled, and adjust, but living here is definitely easier.”

## Is it worthwhile to upgrade qualifications?

The answer to that question is “yes”!

In Canada, you will often hear the phrase “lifelong learning”. It means that many adults continue to take courses and upgrade their skills throughout their lifetime. When you upgrade your skills, you increase your opportunities to find work.

In addition to taking English classes, you may choose to return to college or university studies, either full-time, or part-time while you work.

There are many “continuing education” programs where you can take a series of courses and earn a certificate, or just take one or two courses to improve your skills in computers, for example:

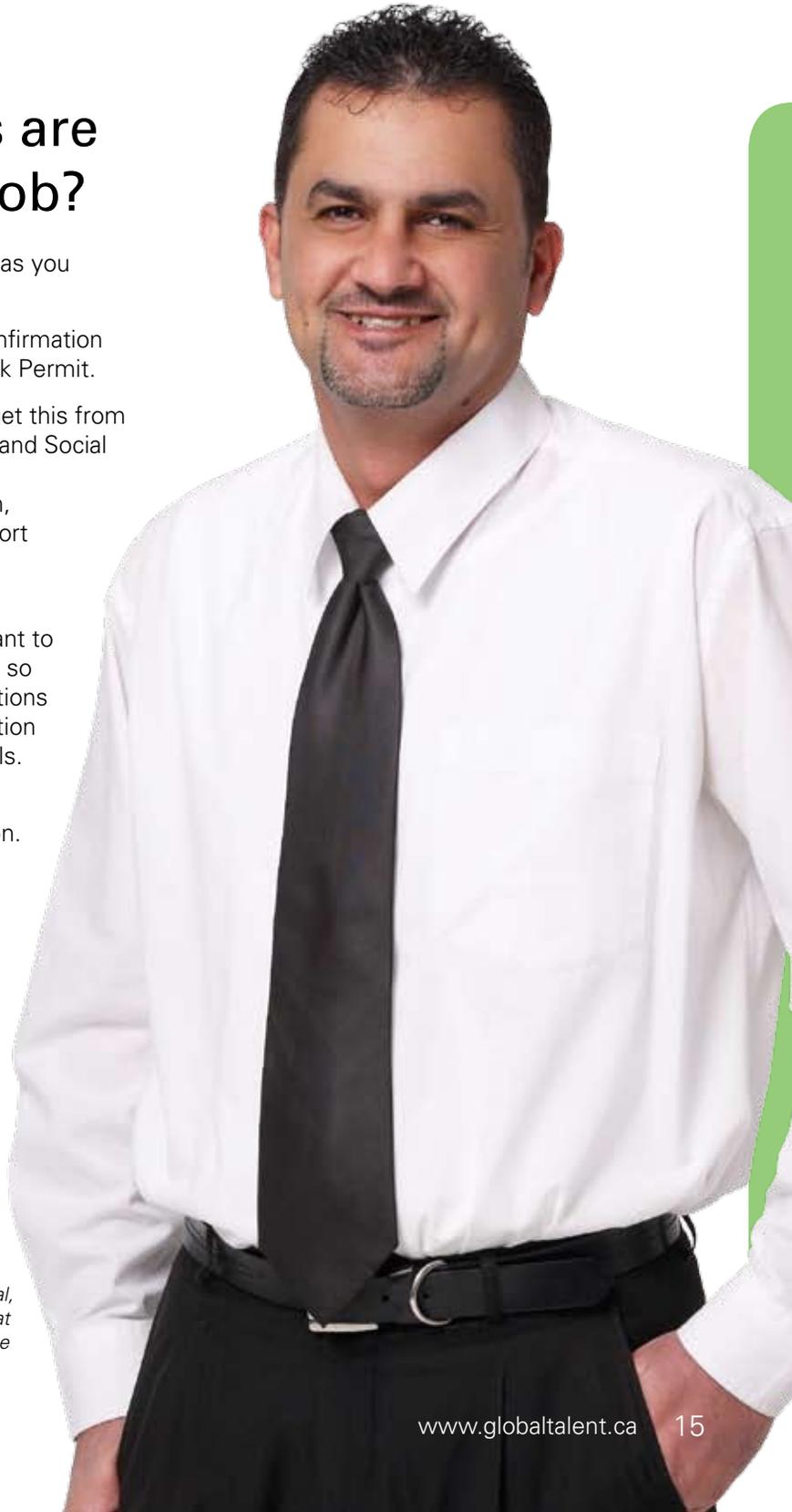
- Fanshawe College – [www.fanshawec.ca](http://www.fanshawec.ca)
- The University of Western Ontario – [www.uwo.ca](http://www.uwo.ca)

# What documents are needed to get a job?

Here are documents that you will need as you prepare to get a job:

- Permanent Resident Card or Confirmation of Permanent Residence or Work Permit.
- Social Insurance Card: You can get this from any office of Human Resources and Social Development Canada. You will need two pieces of identification, such as a birth certificate, passport or immigration papers.
- Education degrees, diplomas or certificates: You will probably want to have these evaluated in Canada, so employers or educational institutions will understand how your education compares to Canadian credentials.
- Professional certifications and qualifications or trade certification.
- Letters of recommendation from former employers or from Canadians who know you.
- A driver's license (if the job requires driving).

*Yahya Almoufadh, a Broker at Checker Limousine*



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# Should credentials be evaluated and translated?

Having your education documents and other credentials assessed may be necessary to get a job, to continue your education or to gain professional or trade certification in Ontario and Canada. An employment counsellor can help you to understand what type of evaluation is required.

Employers are sometimes hesitant to hire newcomers because they do not know how international education and experience compares to experience and education in Canada. They may also need confirmation that a degree or job history is genuine.

The more you do to help potential employers understand the value of your credentials, the better your chance of getting a job. You can do this by having your academic record reviewed and accredited in Canada. This will help employers understand the value of your past education and training.

There are a number of organizations that will evaluate your academic records, but World Education Services (WES), is currently the only evaluation organization contracted by the Government of Ontario to provide this service.

Keep in mind, your documents must be provided in English, or in some cases French, so you may need to have them translated before they are evaluated.

The London Cross Cultural Learner Centre provides translation in over 60 languages for many documents. LUSO Community Services in London also provides translation services for newcomers.

You will have to pay a fee for both credential evaluation and translation services.

- World Education Services (WES) – [www.wes.org/ca](http://www.wes.org/ca)
- London Cross Cultural Learner Centre – [www.lcclc.org](http://www.lcclc.org)
- LUSO Community Services – [www.lusocentre.org](http://www.lusocentre.org)

### Seek Some Advice

Before spending money to have your education and other documents assessed and translated, speak to an employment counsellor at a local agency that assists immigrants. A counsellor can tell you which documents are most relevant and recommend where to go.

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# New access centre for regulated occupations

A new (April 2007) access centre is designed specifically to help newcomers who want to gain employment in a regulated occupation.

The South Western Ontario Centre for Access to Regulated Employment (SWO-CARE) will provide current and reliable information on:

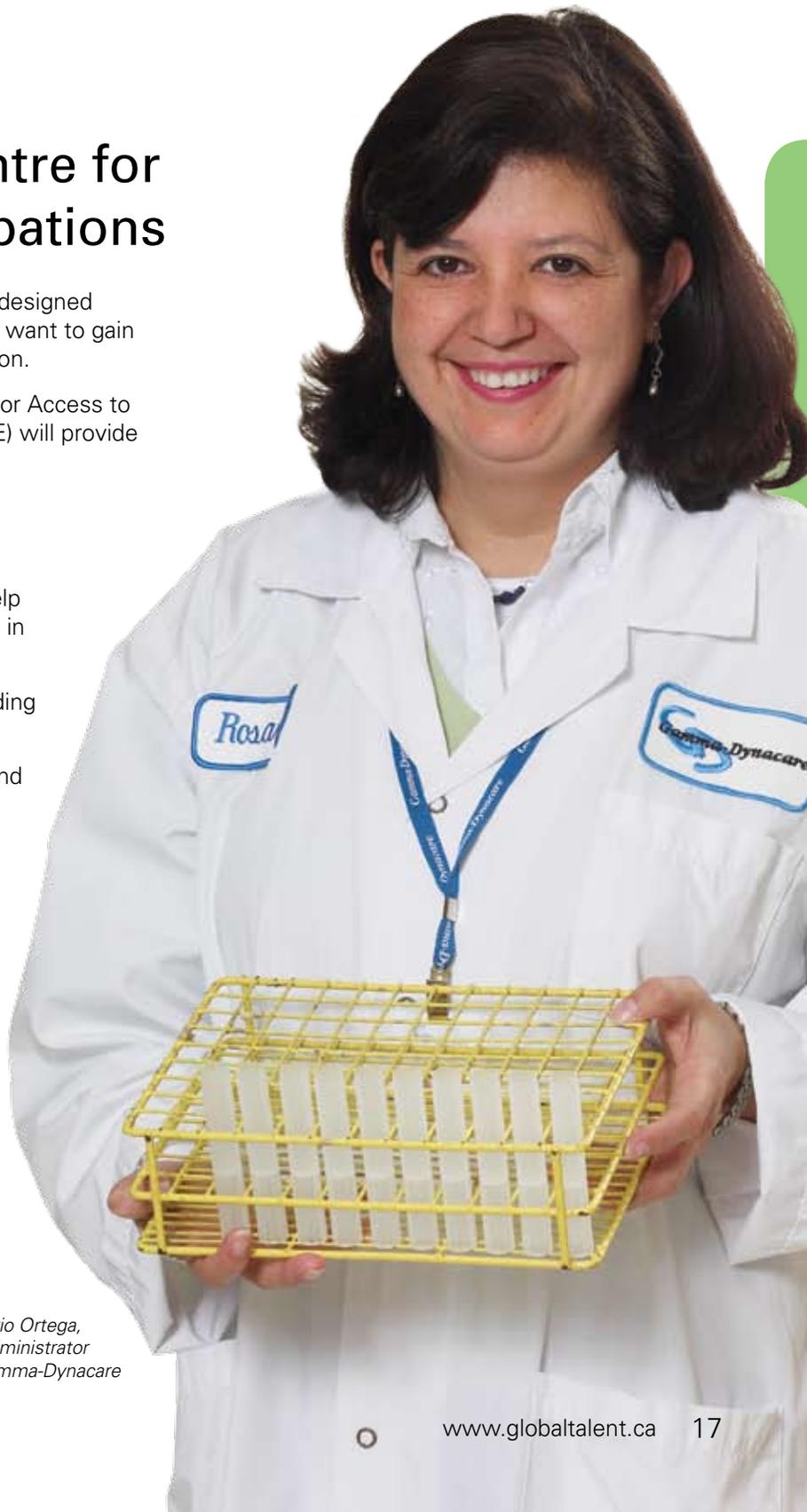
- labour markets;
- licensing requirements;
- regional agencies that will help prepare and place individuals in suitable employment;
- training and academic upgrading opportunities.

The centre will prepare a concrete and customized plan for individuals who use the service.

Many internationally trained newcomers have routinely faced difficulties in getting the information they need to fully understand what the opportunities and requirements are in their profession or regulated occupation. SWO-CARE will be a good 'first stop' to begin the process of assessment, preparation and certification on the path to employment.

For more information look for the SWO-CARE link at [www.wil.ca](http://www.wil.ca).

*Rosario Ortega,  
an Administrator  
at Gamma-Dynacare*



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# Who can practise a profession in Ontario?

In Ontario there are 34 regulated professions and a number of registered trades. A regulated profession is one that requires you to:

- Meet very specific education and training standards;
- Register and agree to standards of practice;

Some professions also require ongoing training and upgrading of skills.

Each regulated profession is governed by a regulatory body. Even if you were certified in your own country, it may be illegal to work in Ontario or use the professional title if you are not registered in Ontario. Some regulatory bodies, such as those overseeing accountants, will allow you to perform work, but not use the title “chartered accountant”.

Examples of regulated professions include:

- Doctors, nurses, pharmacists and most other health professionals;
- Dentists, dental hygienists and assistants and denturists;
- Accountants, insurance brokers and real estate agents;
- Engineers and engineering technicians and technologists;
- Lawyers and paralegals;
- Teachers, social workers, funeral directors, veterinarians, land surveyors.

For a full list of regulated professions, go to a special Ontario government website for internationally trained professionals at [www.citizenship.gov.on.ca](http://www.citizenship.gov.on.ca). You will also find contact information for each of the regulatory bodies and learn more about the requirements for working in that profession.

### Regulated Trades

Many trades in Ontario are also regulated, including mechanics and carpenters as examples. For a list of professional and trade associations visit: [www.211ontario.ca/apt/index.htm](http://www.211ontario.ca/apt/index.htm).

### Will international credentials be accepted?

In many countries, education and certification standards are different than Canada. That is why regulatory bodies will have to assess your education and certification documents. You may be required to undergo further training, write examinations (in English) and/or work under the supervision of a certified professional for a period of time before you will receive certification.

Please understand that, even with recent changes to help speed the process, certification can take a very long time and be quite expensive. Seek advice from an employment counsellor to make sure you know the steps you will need to take.

## Improvements Expected

In December of 2006, the Ontario government passed legislation called the Fair Access to Regulated Professions Act, 2006. It requires regulated professions in Ontario to “ensure their licensing process is fair, clear and open” and to ensure that credentials are assessed in reasonable time. The government will be establishing the **Office of the Fairness Commissioner** to oversee this work, and an **Access Centre for Internationally Trained Individuals**, an information centre that will help immigrants navigate the system.

*Edgar Marquez,  
a Law Clerk  
at Lerner*

