



## **Information for Educational Recruitment Agencies About AIRC Certification**

The American International Recruitment Council works to safeguard the interests of both international students and enrolling institutions through the promotion of ethical, standards-based international recruitment strategies.

### **AIRC fulfills its mission by**

- Supporting the interests of international students entering U.S. education by ensuring that the quality of service provided is ethics-based and shaped by globally benchmarked recruitment standards and best practices.
- Certifying recruitment agencies that adhere to highest professional standards
- Providing a comment and complaint procedure for the public to inform AIRC about violation of its standards
- Providing best practice guidelines and training for institutions and their agency partners

### **What is AIRC Certification?**

AIRC Certification attests to whether a student recruitment agency's operation meets the AIRC Certification Standards based on agency self reporting and verified by an on-site review of agency headquarters and branches. The AIRC Certification process follows global practice for quality assurance processes, such as the accreditation model for U.S. higher education which includes:

- A background check of the agency and its owners to determine any financial or ethical irregularities, or violations of the U.S. Foreign Corrupt Practices Act (FCPA)

- A vote by the AIRC Certification Commission to determine agency eligibility to undergo certification
- An agency self study report (Self-Evaluation Report Form) in which the agency responds to and documents how it complies with AIRC Certification Standards
- An external review site visit to one or more agency offices as determined are appropriate and necessary. Trained AIRC institutional members who are professionals in international recruiting conduct these reviews.
- A Call for Comments from the public on applicant agencies
- A review of all gathered materials and records and a vote to certify an agency or not by an independent Certification Commission. The Certification Commission is comprised of U.S. institutional members and education professionals.
- Continuous improvement for certified agencies through annual reporting and recertification after 5 years
- Public comment and complaint procedure for certified agencies.

### **The Benefits of AIRC Certification for Agencies Include:**

- AIRC Certification is a validation for U.S. institutions and institutions around the world that Certified Agencies follow best practice. The certification process verifies that the agency meets 5 AIRC Standards containing over 40 required guidelines.
- AIRC Certified agencies become members of AIRC and have access to all member benefits. They are listed on AIRC's website and also have access to the member-only directory of all AIRC members (institutions, agencies and service providers).
- AIRC Certification is the recognized quality standard for educational agencies in the U.S. and AIRC Certified Agencies may use the AIRC Certified Agency seal to advertise their status. AIRC uses blockchain technology which includes a verifiable digital certification badge.
- AIRC Approved Applicants for Certification and Certified Agencies have access to AIRC's private library of training resources on U.S. higher education and U.S. immigration; including training manuals and videos you can share with your staff. *The Foundations of US Education and Admissions*

course is available continually for free for agency counselors.

- AIRC Certified Agencies may participate in exclusive agency events such as the AIRC Certified Agency Village Booth at NAFSA, exhibiting at the AIRC conference and joining AIRC networking events.
- Through a partnership with StudyTravel, AIRC Certified Agencies are automatically recognized with StudyTravel Reference Checked (STRC) status. StudyTravel Reference-Checked agencies also receive a waiver and do not need to submit references for the AIRC Certification Stage 1.
- ICEF Agency Status (IAS) agencies also receive a waiver and do not need to submit references for the AIRC Certification Stage 1.
- AIRC Certified Agency members contribute to a learning community of recruiting professionals. Certified agency staff may propose presentations at AIRC's annual conference.
- AIRC Certified Agency members receive notices from AIRC regarding institutions seeking RFPs and partnerships.
- AIRC creates opportunities to network with institutions in a professional environment - at its Annual Conference and other events.
- AIRC Certification process substitutes for a Management Consultant exercise to assess and improve operations.
- AIRC Certified Agencies may promote to parents and students that the agency meets American standards.
- AIRC Certified agency members are eligible to run for election to serve on the AIRC Board of Directors.
- AIRC Certified agency members may serve on AIRC committees and help set AIRC policy and contribute to AIRC Standards.

### **How Can Agencies Join AIRC?**

#### **Agency Certification Eligibility**

AIRC Certification is intended for agencies (including organizations and companies), located both inside and outside the U.S., which recruit international

students to accredited post-secondary programs or institutions anywhere in the world and who either have already recruited for U.S. programs or institutions or intend to do so.

For the purposes of AIRC membership and certification, an agency is defined as an organization, company or association that recruits and places students into accredited colleges, universities and other educational institutions on a commercial 'fee for service' basis. The term 'fee for services' refers to any payment made by an institution or an individual student applicant to an agency for services related to the counseling advice, application process and acceptance into a course or program in an educational institution. Individuals that provide placement services but have not established a company or individuals within an agency, including but not limited to shareholders, owners, directors, counselors and other staff are not eligible for AIRC certification or membership.

At the time of application for AIRC Certification, agencies are required to have been in the student recruitment business for two years, and have a successful record of placing students in accredited post-secondary programs or institutions. The date of first student placement must have been at least 18 months before the AIRC application is made.

Agencies must have a record of placing at least 25 students total before applying for AIRC certification. Agencies that are at least two years old but have placed between 25 and 50 students in accredited post-secondary programs or institutions may apply for AIRC Certification, however they may be awarded conditional certification until they have a more substantial record of student placements.

Agencies which have a successful record (at least two years of placement of at least 25 students) of placing students at U.S. accredited secondary schools only, and that intend to use this experience for recruiting students for the U.S. post-secondary programs and institutions, are also eligible to apply for AIRC certification.

Agencies that engage sub-agents for part of the recruitment process or agencies that franchise their operations are eligible for certification. (A sub-agent is a person employed or contracted by the agency to transact the whole, or part of the student recruitment process. A franchisee is an individual or company which licenses the rights to use an agent company's trademarked name and business model to conduct business.)

The agency applying for certification will be accountable for actions of the sub-agents and franchisees and any others working on behalf of the agency once AIRC certification is achieved. The awarding of AIRC certification does not apply to sub-agents. Sub-agents may apply for AIRC certification independently.

The awarding of AIRC certification does apply to a franchisee of the agency provided the franchisee uses the agent company's trademarked name and business model to conduct business.

An applicant agency is ineligible for certification if it or any principal or material owner thereof has been convicted of fraud or has pleaded no contest or guilty in a criminal proceeding or has been adjudged to have committed fraud in a civil proceeding within the last seven (7) years.

If an agency becomes Certified, it becomes a member of the AIRC community in which it has access to both our institutional and agency members through our secure institutional directory and annual conference. It has the opportunity to share ideas and it has access to professional development opportunities provided by AIRC. Certified agency members can serve on our Board of Directors and committees. AIRC is a dynamic community of individuals which truly do learn from each other and who are quite proud of their designation. Our annual conference is a key event for certified agency and institutional members to come together. Certified agencies may also purchase (for a small fee) a table to display information about their agency at the conference and AIRC has occasional marketing events that agencies can choose to participate in.

### **The Certification Application Process**

To be approved to enter into the certification process, an agency must complete the following steps:

#### **Stage 1**

1. Fill out an Preliminary AIRC Agency Application Form online at <https://airceducation.app.neoncrm.com/forms/airc-service-provider-or-agency-member-application>. Once the application is submitted, AIRC staff will review your membership application. If we find we have enough information, you will be charged the \$2000 application fee. You will receive an update on your membership category eligibility within 1 week of submitting your application.
2. This application fee is non-refundable may be made by credit card for your convenience. This application fee covers the cost of a comprehensive background check. AIRC contracts with a firm to conduct the extensive, global background check which conducts native languages searches. The agency must not have any record of fraudulent activity in the last 7 years. The agency must also have placed at least 25 students and have been in business for 2 years. AIRC will also collect your listed institutional contracted partners to verify the relationship. For StudyTravel Reference-Checked agencies and ICEF IAS agencies, this step is waived.

3. The agency must also submit a Letter of Intent. A sample letter can be requested from [Certification@airc-education.org](mailto:Certification@airc-education.org).
4. AIRC uses the background check, Letter of Intent, references and application to assess eligibility of the agency to move forward with certification.

## **Stage 2**

If the agency is approved to move forward, it becomes an Approved Applicant and enters Stage 2. It must then pay the AIRC Certification fee as determined by its market.

### **Priority Rate: \$2000**

- i. For agencies in source market countries that make up fewer than 20% of current AIRC certified agency members
- ii. Currently all countries other than India fall into this category
- iii. Top-priority markets are a sub-category within this category. These are the most critical growth markets for AIRC as determined by staff analysis and member input. They are: Nigeria, Vietnam, Mexico, Ghana, Brazil, and South Korea.
- iv. Agencies with ICEF or StudyTravel Reference Checked status receive a \$300 discount.

### **Standard Rate: \$6000**

- i. For agencies in source market countries that make up more than 20% of current AIRC certified agency members
- ii. Currently only India falls into this category
- iii. Agencies with ICEF or StudyTravel Reference Checked status receive a \$300 discount.

(see the fee charts at the end of this document)

The AIRC Self-Evaluation Form is provided to the agency at Stage 2. On the form, the agency describes to us how it is meeting the AIRC standards, including documentation and example materials. The agency's applicant status is made public on the AIRC website on the Certification page.

The agency is provided with training materials from AIRC at this stage. These include our Professional Development Manual (a publication describing US higher education and US immigration); Fundamentals of US Education and Admissions, and a presentation on the US visa.

If the agency has questions about any aspects of the Self-Evaluation form, AIRC will help guide you and provide examples of what we are requesting.

After the agency's Self-Evaluation report is completed (this takes the agency between 8 - 16 weeks) AIRC appoints an external reviewer to visit the agency headquarters for the in-person verification. (The agency pays for travel and lodging and meals for the reviewer.) After this step is completed then the Certification Commission has the required materials with which to consider the agency for certification. During the applicant phase, an approved agency may attend the AIRC conference in order to meet others in our membership community and attend sessions and workshops.

### **Certification**

The independent Certification Commission meets several times per year and certification decisions are made at these meetings. Upon certification, the agency pays \$2500 which is the first year's membership fee.

The time frame of certification for most agencies is 5 years. After the first five years, AIRC Certified agencies may apply for recertification for 10 years.

Please email [Certification@airc-education.org](mailto:Certification@airc-education.org) if you have other questions.

### **AIRC Certification and Agency Membership Fees**

	<b>Priority Rate</b>	<b>Standard Rate</b>
<b>Application Fee</b>	\$2,000	\$2,000
<b>Certification Fee</b>	\$2,000	\$6,000
<b>Discount for ICEF or Study Travel Status</b>	-\$300	-\$300
<b>Cost of reviewer site visit</b>	varies	varies
<b>TOTAL</b>	\$3,700 - \$4,000+	\$7,700 - \$8,000+
<b>First Year Member Dues</b> (prorated by month currently; will be prorated by half year based on date of certification)	\$2,500	\$2,500

Other fees:

Recertification fee: \$3500

Recertification review fee after Conditional Certification: \$500

Fees subject to change.

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