

ASET waives fees for Ukrainian refugees, offers fast route into local tech

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The Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) has announced two initiatives to help Ukrainians fleeing their war-torn country a smoother route into a local tech career.

ASET is the professional association representing 18,000 applied science and engineering technicians, with Fort Saskatchewan being home to 110 ASET members.

"Imagine having fled Ukraine to move to Alberta only to encounter another obstacle: your foreign educational credentials aren't accepted by local employers and no one will interview you for a job in your profession. The Association of Science and Engineering Technology Professionals of Alberta (ASET) has the answer for this with two game-changing initiatives designed to support refugees/newcomers," the provincial organization shared in a press release.

ASET's competency-based assessment program, the first of its kind in Canada, fast-tracks refugees and newcomers with engineering technology education into their rightful careers in one-half to one-quarter of the time it would take them to complete an engineering technology diploma at a Canadian polytechnic or technical college. This saves them having to return to school, which is too often required of professionals with educational credentials from outside of Canada.

"With our application fee waiver for refugees now in place and our competency-based assessment program already established and proven to help newcomers, ASET is making it easier than ever for refugees with tech backgrounds to get on the career paths for which they were educated in their home countries," said ASET CEO Barry Cavanaugh. "Alberta and Canada as a whole need more people with the technical knowledge and experience to contribute to our province and nation and we value what these newcomers bring."

Also, ASET is waiving most of its fees for engineering technology professionals who have refugee status. The fees can cost up to almost \$1,000 per member over time.

In 2016, the local organization launched a program designed to offer foreign-trained and other engineering technology professionals a faster route to establishing careers: the competency-based assessment program. The first of its kind in Canada and pioneered by ASET, it enables them to gain purchase in their career fields without having to return to school full-time. ASET eliminated

the Canadian work experience requirement, making it one of the few regulatory bodies in Alberta to do this.

After Russia invaded Crimea in 2014, single mother Mila Wagner made the difficult decision to leave her home and job in Ukraine and move to Alberta two years later with her three-year-old son, Nikita. When she arrived in Alberta in 2016, she discovered that her multiple engineering technology-related degrees from Ukraine did not translate in the Canadian employment market. She had to take on menial work until she was able to earn a civil engineering technology diploma at Lethbridge College.

While she praised the excellent civil engineering technology education that she received at Lethbridge College, she said she wished she had known about the fast-track program.

"If I could have been accredited through ASET from my previous schooling in Ukraine, I could have been positioned in a job in my field sooner," said Wagner, now an ASET member. "I think the competency-based assessment program combined with application fee waiver will be a game changer for refugees from Ukraine and other countries."

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