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U.S. Department of Homeland Security
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090
Washington, DC 20529-2090



U.S. Citizenship
and Immigration
Services

DATE: **OCT 30 2013**

OFFICE: CALIFORNIA SERVICE CENTER FILE: [REDACTED]

IN RE: Petitioner: [REDACTED]
Beneficiary: [REDACTED]

PETITION: Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker Pursuant to Section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:

INSTRUCTIONS:

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) in your case.

This is a non-precedent decision. The AAO does not announce new constructions of law nor establish agency policy through non-precedent decisions. If you believe the AAO incorrectly applied current law or policy to your case or if you seek to present new facts for consideration, you may file a motion to reconsider or a motion to reopen, respectively. Any motion must be filed on a Notice of Appeal or Motion (Form I-290B) within 33 days of the date of this decision. **Please review the Form I-290B instructions at <http://www.uscis.gov/forms> for the latest information on fee, filing location, and other requirements. See also 8 C.F.R. § 103.5. Do not file a motion directly with the AAO.**

Thank you,

Ron Rosenberg
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

DISCUSSION: The Acting Director, California Service Center (hereinafter "the director"), denied the nonimmigrant visa petition, and the matter is now before the Administrative Appeals Office (AAO) on appeal. The appeal will be dismissed. The petition will be denied.

On the Form I-129 petition, the petitioner claims that it is a "skilled nursing facility." In order to employ the beneficiary in what it designates as a "marketing research analyst" position, the petitioner seeks to classify her as a nonimmigrant worker in a specialty occupation pursuant to section 101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1101(a)(15)(H)(i)(b).

The director denied the petition, concluding that the petitioner failed to demonstrate that the proffered position qualifies for classification as a specialty occupation.

The record of proceeding before the AAO contains the following: (1) the Form I-129 and supporting documentation; (2) the director's request for additional evidence (RFE); (3) the petitioner's response to the RFE; (4) the director's letter denying the petition; and (5) the Form I-290B and supporting documentation.

Upon review of the entire record of proceeding, the AAO finds that the petitioner has failed to overcome the director's ground for denying this petition. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed, and the petition will be denied.

To meet its burden of proof in establishing the proffered position as a specialty occupation, the petitioner must establish that the employment it is offering to the beneficiary meets the following statutory and regulatory requirements.

Section 214(i)(1) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1184(i)(1) defines the term "specialty occupation" as one that requires:

- (A) theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and
- (B) attainment of a bachelor's or higher degree in the specific specialty (or its equivalent) as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

The term "specialty occupation" is further defined at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) as:

An occupation which requires [(1)] theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge in fields of human endeavor including, but not limited to, architecture, engineering, mathematics, physical sciences, social sciences, medicine and health, education, business specialties, accounting, law, theology, and the arts, and which requires [(2)] the attainment of a bachelor's degree or higher in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, as a minimum for entry into the occupation in the United States.

Pursuant to 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), to qualify as a specialty occupation, the position must also meet one of the following criteria:

- (1) A baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position;
- (2) The degree requirement is common to the industry in parallel positions among similar organizations or, in the alternative, an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree;
- (3) The employer normally requires a degree or its equivalent for the position; or
- (4) The nature of the specific duties [is] so specialized and complex that knowledge required to perform the duties is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree.

As a threshold issue, it is noted that 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must logically be read together with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). In other words, this regulatory language must be construed in harmony with the thrust of the related provisions and with the statute as a whole. *See K Mart Corp. v. Cartier Inc.*, 486 U.S. 281, 291 (1988) (holding that construction of language which takes into account the design of the statute as a whole is preferred); *see also COIT Independence Joint Venture v. Federal Sav. and Loan Ins. Corp.*, 489 U.S. 561 (1989); *Matter of W-F-*, 21 I&N Dec. 503 (BIA 1996). As such, the criteria stated in 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) should logically be read as being necessary but not necessarily sufficient to meet the statutory and regulatory definition of specialty occupation. To otherwise interpret this section as stating the necessary *and* sufficient conditions for meeting the definition of specialty occupation would result in particular positions meeting a condition under 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) but not the statutory or regulatory definition. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d 384, 387 (5th Cir. 2000). To avoid this illogical and absurd result, 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) must therefore be read as providing supplemental criteria that must be met in accordance with, and not as alternatives to, the statutory and regulatory definitions of specialty occupation.

As such and consonant with section 214(i)(1) of the Act and the regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii), U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) consistently interprets the term "degree" in the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to mean not just any baccalaureate or higher degree, but one in a specific specialty that is directly related to the proffered position. *See Royal Siam Corp. v. Chertoff*, 484 F.3d 139, 147 (1st Cir. 2007) (describing "a degree requirement in a specific specialty" as "one that relates directly to the duties and responsibilities of a particular position"). Applying this standard, USCIS regularly approves H-1B petitions for qualified aliens who are to be employed as engineers, computer scientists, certified public accountants, college professors, and other such occupations. These professions, for which petitioners have regularly been able to establish a minimum entry requirement in the United States

of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position, fairly represent the types of specialty occupations that Congress contemplated when it created the H-1B visa category.

To determine whether a particular job qualifies as a specialty occupation, USCIS does not rely simply upon a proffered position's title. The specific duties of the position, combined with the nature of the petitioning entity's business operations, are factors to be considered. USCIS must examine the ultimate employment of the beneficiary, and determine whether the position qualifies as a specialty occupation. *See generally Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F. 3d at 384. The critical element is not the title of the position nor an employer's self-imposed standards, but whether the position actually requires the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge, and the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty as the minimum for entry into the occupation, as required by the Act.

In its April 25, 2012 letter of support, the petitioner described itself as a "45-bed skilled nursing facility," and claimed that in anticipation of the demands of its projected growth and to provide quality services to its clients, it required the services of a "marketing research analyst." In this position, the petitioner claimed that the beneficiary would perform the following duties:

- Oversee, manage[,] coordinate the projects and campaigns that Marketing managers teams are working on.
- Manage the entire strategic marketing communication to create demand and awareness across the company's products.
- Market the healthcare sales activities in support of inpatient programs.
- Maintain positive relationships with current referral sources.
- Manage and take the lead on shaping the client's marketing message to all of their various audiences.
- Maintain[,] develop[,] and manage a cohesive marketing strategy for the entire corporation that integrates marketing across all facility departments.

The petitioner also stated that the suitable candidate for the proffered position must have at least a bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent in "business management, arts, MIS, related field or related experience."

The petitioner also submitted a Labor Condition Application (LCA) with the petition. The LCA was certified (1) for a "Marketing Research Analyst," (2) pursuant to SOC (O*NET/OES) code 13-1161 pertaining to Market Research Analysts and Marketing Specialists, (3) within Santa Clara County, California, and (4) at a Level I (entry) prevailing wage of \$30.35 per hour.

The director found the initial evidence submitted insufficient and consequently an RFE was issued on September 26, 2012. In the RFE, the director requested additional evidence demonstrating that the proffered position was a specialty occupation. The director outlined the specific evidence to be submitted.

In response, the petitioner, through counsel, submitted an updated description of the duties of the proffered position along with a percentage breakdown of the time to be spent on each task, along with a copy of the petitioner's organizational chart, job postings, and an opinion letter from Dr. [REDACTED]

Regarding the new description of duties for the proffered position, counsel stated that the following is a detailed description of the proffered position's duties:

Duties	Work Percentage	Work Description
Market research and marketing consulting	30%	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Conduct an extensive market research and understand the view and opinions of the customer, especially with respect to the services to the client.2) Determine new markets for potential growth through research and analysis of market conditions.3) Analyze company's past attempts at sales through research of industry practices, technologies and procedures.4) Coordinate with market [researchers] and interviewers to get the most comprehensive set of data.5) Ensure research project documents are [complete], current, and stored appropriately.
Liaison	30%	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) To conduct organizational studies and evaluations, and prepare operations and procedures manuals to assist management in operating more efficiently and effectively.2) Handle cultivation and public relations of potential and current customers to solicit sales for the company by gathering information on competitors, prices, sales, and methods of marketing and distribution.3) Liaison between the company, clientele, and vendors.
Miscellaneous	40%	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Responsible to find information the company needs in the healthcare industry.2) Manage consumer information, develop appropriate research designs, and transform

		<p>market research data into marketing recommendations, presentation of findings planning and executing market – research projects and driving consumer perspective.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">3) Responsible for Market trends, Analyses, Opportunity, Projection, Sales and Marketing Strategies, specifics on market share.4) Determine appropriate revenue recognition, ensures timely and accurate invoicing, and monitors receivables.5) Identify business development and add-on opportunities related to specific project.6) Collect and analyze data to evaluate existing and potential markets.7) Assist in day-to-day operational aspects of the projects and scope.8) Evaluate competitors and review marketing and financial feasibility to ensure optimal services offerings and elevate market presence.9) Minimize company's exposure and risk on project.10) Assist with setting and managing client expectations.11) Develop comprehensive reports based on marketing, sales trends, and demographic data analysis.
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The director denied the petition on March 6, 2013, finding that the petitioner had failed to establish that the proffered position qualified as a specialty occupation. On appeal, counsel contends that the director's findings were erroneous, and submits a brief and additional evidence in support of this contention.

As a preliminary matter, the AAO finds that upon consideration of the totality of all of the petitioner's duty descriptions, including its assertions made in the initial filing, in response to the director's RFE, and counsel's assertions made on appeal, the evidence in the record of proceeding does not establish the depth, complexity, or level of specialization, or substantial aspects of the matters in which the petitioner says that the beneficiary will engage. Rather, the proposed duties of the proffered position, and the position itself, are described in relatively generalized and abstract terms that do not relate substantial details about either the position or its constituent duties. Further, the AAO finds that the petitioner has not supplemented the job and duty descriptions with documentary evidence establishing the substantive nature of the work that the beneficiary would perform, whatever practical and theoretical applications of highly specialized knowledge in a specific specialty would be required to

perform such substantive work, and whatever correlation may exist between such work and associated performance-required knowledge and attainment of a particular level of education, or educational equivalency, in a specific specialty.

That being said, the AAO will now discuss the application of each supplemental, alternative criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A) to the evidence in this record of proceeding, with the understanding that, for economy's sake, the above comments and findings are deemed to be incorporated into the analysis of each criterion that follows below.

The AAO will first discuss the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(I), which is satisfied by establishing that a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position that is the subject of the petition.

The AAO recognizes the U.S. Department of Labor's (DOL) *Occupational Outlook Handbook (Handbook)* as an authoritative source on the duties and educational requirements of the wide variety of occupations it addresses.¹ The AAO agrees with counsel and the petitioner that the proposed duties generally align with those of market research analysts.

In relevant part, the *Handbook* summarizes the duties typically performed by market research analysts as follows:

Market research analysts typically do the following:

- Monitor and forecast marketing and sales trends
- Measure the effectiveness of marketing programs and strategies
- Devise and evaluate methods for collecting data, such as surveys, questionnaires, or opinion polls
- Gather data about consumers, competitors, and market conditions
- Analyze data using statistical software
- Convert complex data and findings into understandable tables, graphs, and written reports
- Prepare reports and present results to clients or management

¹ The *Handbook*, which is available in printed form, may also be accessed online at <http://www.stats.bls.gov/oco/>. The AAO's references to the *Handbook* are from the 2012-13 edition available online.

Market research analysts perform research and gather data to help a company market its products or services. They gather data on consumer demographics, preferences, needs, and buying habits. They collect data and information using a variety of methods, such as interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, market analysis surveys, public opinion polls, and literature reviews.

Analysts help determine a company's position in the marketplace by researching their competitors and analyzing their prices, sales, and marketing methods. Using this information, they may determine potential markets, product demand, and pricing. Their knowledge of the targeted consumer enables them to develop advertising brochures and commercials, sales plans, and product promotions.

Market research analysts evaluate data using statistical techniques and software. They must interpret what the data means for their client, and they may forecast future trends. They often make charts, graphs, or other visual aids to present the results of their research.

U.S. Dep't of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, 2012-13 ed., "Market Research Analysts," <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Business-and-Financial/Market-research-analysts.htm#tab-2> (last visited Oct. 9, 2013).

The *Handbook* states the following with regard to the educational requirements necessary for entrance into this field:

Market research analysts need strong math and analytical skills. Most market research analysts need at least a bachelor's degree, and top research positions often require a master's degree.

Market research analysts typically need a bachelor's degree in market research or a related field. Many have degrees in fields such as statistics, math, or computer science. Others have a background in business administration, one of the social sciences, or communications. Courses in statistics, research methods, and marketing are essential for these workers; courses in communications and social sciences—such as economics, psychology, and sociology—are also important.

Many market research analyst jobs require a master's degree. Several schools offer graduate programs in marketing research, but many analysts complete degrees in other fields, such as statistics, marketing, or a Master of Business Administration (MBA). A master's degree is often required for leadership positions or positions that perform more technical research.

Id. at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/Business-and-Financial/Market-research-analysts.htm#tab-4> (last visited Oct. 9, 2013).

In general, provided the specialties are closely related, e.g., chemistry and biochemistry, a minimum of a bachelor's or higher degree in more than one specialty is recognized as satisfying the "degree in the specific specialty" requirement of section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act. In such a case, the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" would essentially be the same. Since there must be a close correlation between the required "body of highly specialized knowledge" and the position, however, a minimum entry requirement of a degree in two disparate fields, such as philosophy and engineering, would not meet the statutory requirement that the degree be "in *the* specific specialty," unless the petitioner establishes how each field is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position such that the required body of highly specialized knowledge is essentially an amalgamation of these different specialties.² Section 214(i)(1)(b) of the Act (emphasis added).

Here, although the *Handbook* indicates that a bachelor's or higher degree is "typically" required, it also indicates that baccalaureate degrees in various fields are acceptable for entry into the occupation. In addition to recognizing degrees in disparate fields, i.e., social science and computer science as acceptable for entry into this field, the *Handbook* also states that "others have a background in business administration." Although a general-purpose bachelor's degree, such as a degree in business administration, may be a legitimate prerequisite for a particular position, requiring such a degree, without more, will not justify a finding that a particular position qualifies for classification as a specialty occupation. See *Royal Siam Corp. v. Chertoff*, 484 F.3d at 147. Therefore, the *Handbook's* recognition that a general, non-specialty "background" in business administration is sufficient for entry into the occupation strongly suggests that a bachelor's degree *in a specific specialty* is not a normal, minimum entry requirement for this occupation. Accordingly, as the *Handbook* indicates that working as a market research analyst does not normally require at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent for entry into the occupation, it does not support the proffered position as satisfying the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(I).

Nor does the record of proceeding contain any persuasive documentary evidence from any other relevant authoritative source establishing that the proffered position's inclusion in this occupational category is sufficient in and of itself to establish the proffered position as, in the words of this criterion, a "particular position" for which "[a] baccalaureate or higher degree or its equivalent is normally the minimum requirement for entry."

Regarding the expert opinion letter submitted by counsel in response to the RFE and on appeal, Dr. [REDACTED] opinion is not based upon sufficient information about the market research analyst position proposed here. USCIS may, in its discretion, use as advisory opinions statements submitted as expert testimony. However, where an opinion is not in accord with other information or is in any

² Whether read with the statutory "the" or the regulatory "a," both readings denote a singular "specialty." Section 214(i)(1)(B) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii). Still, the AAO does not so narrowly interpret these provisions to exclude positions from qualifying as specialty occupations if they permit, as a minimum entry requirement, degrees in more than one closely related specialty. As just stated, this also includes even seemingly disparate specialties provided the evidence of record establishes how each acceptable, specific field of study is directly related to the duties and responsibilities of the particular position.

way questionable, USCIS is not required to accept or may give less weight to that evidence. *Matter of Caron International*, 19 I&N Dec. 791 (Comm'r 1988).

Specifically, the content of Dr. [REDACTED] letter does not demonstrate that his opinion is based upon sufficient information about the particular position at issue. First, the letter reveals that his knowledge of the position is limited to the duties submitted by the petitioner to USCIS. Second, Dr. [REDACTED] does not relate any personal observations of those operations or of the work that the beneficiary would perform, nor does he state that he has reviewed any projects or work products related to the proffered position. Third, Dr. [REDACTED] opinion does not relate his conclusions to specific, concrete aspects of this petitioner's business operations to demonstrate a sound factual basis for his conclusions about the educational requirements for the particular position here at issue.

Therefore, the AAO finds that the letter from Dr. [REDACTED] does not establish that the proffered position is a specialty occupation.

As the evidence in the record of proceeding does not establish that at least a baccalaureate degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is normally the minimum requirement for entry into the particular position that is the subject of this petition, the petitioner has not satisfied the criterion at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(1).

Next, the AAO finds that the petitioner has not satisfied the first of the two alternative prongs of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2). This prong alternatively calls for a petitioner to establish that a requirement of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is common to the petitioner's industry in positions that are both: (1) parallel to the proffered position; and (2) located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner.

In determining whether there is such a common degree requirement, factors often considered by USCIS include: whether the *Handbook* reports that the industry requires a degree; whether the industry's professional association has made a degree a minimum entry requirement; and whether letters or affidavits from firms or individuals in the industry attest that such firms "routinely employ and recruit only degreed individuals." See *Shanti, Inc. v. Reno*, 36 F. Supp. 2d at 1165 (D.Minn. 1999) (quoting *Hird/Blaker Corp. v. Sava*, 712 F. Supp. 1095, 1102 (S.D.N.Y. 1989)).

Here and as already discussed, the petitioner has not established that its proffered position is one for which the *Handbook* reports an industry-wide requirement of at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent. Also, there are no submissions from professional associations, individuals, or similar firms in the petitioner's industry attesting that individuals employed in positions parallel to the proffered position are routinely required to have a minimum of a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent for entry into those positions.

In response to the RFE, the petitioner submitted three job vacancy announcements in an attempt to establish that a requirement of a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is common to the petitioner's industry in positions that are both parallel to the proffered position and

located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner. These postings, however, are insufficient for the reasons set forth below.

The first posting is for a "Consultant/Industry Analyst" with [REDACTED] a growth company with more than 40 offices on six continents. Based on the basic information provided in this posting, it is evident that this company differs from the petitioner, which is a 45-bed, skilled nursing facility. Moreover, the posting indicates that an advanced degree and/or commensurate experience in a related area is strongly preferred, not required.

The second posting is for a "Payor Market Research Analyst" with [REDACTED]. The posting provides no background information regarding the company's business, other than identifying it as part of the biotechnology/pharmaceutical industry. In addition, the company will accept a variety of bachelor's degrees in various fields, such as business, mathematics, or statistics, thereby establishing that a degree in a specific specialty is not required.

The third posting is for a "Market Research Analyst" with [REDACTED] a national insurance company. The petitioner has not demonstrated that it is similar to Progressive in terms of the type and level of services provided such that they could be found to be similar organizations. Moreover, while the posting states that a bachelor's degree is required, it does not name a specific specialty, and further claims that a master's degree in a variety of fields such as business, marketing, psychology, or a related field is preferred.

The petitioner has not satisfied the first of the two alternative prongs described at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2), as the evidence of record does not establish a requirement for at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty as common to the petitioner's industry in positions that are both (1) parallel to the proffered position and (2) located in organizations that are similar to the petitioner.

Next, the AAO finds that the petitioner did not satisfy the second alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2), which provides that "an employer may show that its particular position is so complex or unique that it can be performed only by an individual with a degree."

In this particular case, the petitioner has failed to credibly demonstrate that the duties the beneficiary will perform on a day-to-day basis constitute a position so complex or unique that it can only be performed by a person with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or the equivalent.

As reflected in this decision's earlier comments and findings regarding the absence of evidence establishing the substantive nature and substantive knowledge requirements of the proffered position and its constituent duties, the record of proceeding does not contain evidence establishing relative complexity or uniqueness as aspects of the proffered position, let alone that the position is so complex or unique as to require the theoretical and practical application of a body of highly specialized knowledge such that a person with a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent is required to perform that position. Rather, the AAO finds, the petitioner has not

distinguished either the proposed duties, or the position that they comprise, from generic market-research-analysis work, which, the *Handbook* indicates, does not necessarily require a person with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

The petitioner therefore failed to establish how the beneficiary's responsibilities and day-to-day duties comprise a position so complex or unique that the position can be performed only by an individual with a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent.

Consequently, as it has not been shown that the particular position for which this petition was filed is so complex or unique that it can only be performed by a person with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, the petitioner has not satisfied the second alternative prong of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(2).

Next, the record of proceeding does not establish a prior history of recruiting and hiring for the proffered position persons with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent. The petitioner indicated in its April 25, 2012 letter of support that this is a newly-created position. Therefore, the petitioner has not satisfied the third criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A).³

Finally, the petitioner has not satisfied the fourth criterion of 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), which is reserved for positions with specific duties so specialized and complex that their performance requires knowledge that is usually associated with the attainment of a baccalaureate or higher degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent. Again, relative specialization and complexity have not been sufficiently developed by the petitioner as an aspect of the proffered position. In other words, the proposed duties have not been described with sufficient specificity to show that they are more specialized and complex than market research analyst positions that are not usually associated with at least a bachelor's degree in a specific specialty or its equivalent.⁴

³ While a petitioner may believe or otherwise assert that a proffered position requires a degree, that opinion alone without corroborating evidence cannot establish the position as a specialty occupation. Were USCIS limited solely to reviewing a petitioner's claimed self-imposed requirements, then any individual with a bachelor's degree could be brought to the United States to perform any occupation as long as the employer artificially created a token degree requirement, whereby all individuals employed in a particular position possessed a baccalaureate or higher degree in the specific specialty or its equivalent. *See Defensor v. Meissner*, 201 F.3d at 387. In other words, if a petitioner's degree requirement is only symbolic and the proffered position does not in fact require such a specialty degree or its equivalent to perform its duties, the occupation would not meet the statutory or regulatory definition of a specialty occupation. *See* § 214(i)(1) of the Act; 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(ii) (defining the term "specialty occupation").

⁴ Counsel contends on appeal that the proffered position qualifies as a specialty occupation on the basis that its duties are so specialized and complex. However, the duties as described lack sufficient specificity to distinguish the proffered position from other market research analyst positions for which a bachelor's or higher degree in a specific specialty, or its equivalent, is not required to perform their duties.

The evidence in the record of proceeding, therefore, fails to establish that the proposed duties meet the specialization and complexity threshold at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A)(4).

As the petitioner has not satisfied at least one of the criteria at 8 C.F.R. § 214.2(h)(4)(iii)(A), it cannot be found that the proffered position is a specialty occupation. Accordingly, the appeal will be dismissed and the petition will be denied on this basis.

The AAO does not need to examine the issue of the beneficiary's qualifications, because the petitioner has not provided sufficient documentation to demonstrate that the position is a specialty occupation. In other words, the beneficiary's credentials to perform a particular job are relevant only when the job is found to be a specialty occupation. As discussed in this decision, the petitioner did not submit sufficient evidence regarding the proffered position to determine that it is a specialty occupation and, therefore, the issue of whether it will require a baccalaureate or higher degree, or its equivalent, in a specific specialty also cannot be determined. Therefore, the AAO need not and will not address the beneficiary's qualifications.

In visa petition proceedings, it is the petitioner's burden to establish eligibility for the immigration benefit sought. Section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361; *Matter of Otiende*, 26 I&N Dec. 127, 128 (BIA 2013). Here, that burden has not been met.

ORDER: The appeal is dismissed. The petition is denied.

Moreover, as noted above, the petitioner has designated the proffered position as a Level I position on the submitted LCA, indicating that it is an entry-level position for an employee who has only basic understanding of the occupation. See U.S. Dep't of Labor, Emp't & Training Admin., *Prevailing Wage Determination Policy Guidance*, Nonagric. Immigration Programs (rev. Nov. 2009), available at http://www.foreignlaborcert.doleta.gov/pdf/NPWHC_Guidance_Revised_11_2009.pdf. Therefore, it is not credible that the position is one with specialized and complex duties, as such a higher-level position would be classified as a Level IV position, requiring a significantly higher prevailing wage. It is incumbent upon the petitioner to resolve any inconsistencies in the record by independent objective evidence. Any attempt to explain or reconcile such inconsistencies will not suffice unless the petitioner submits competent objective evidence pointing to where the truth lies. *Matter of Ho*, 19 I&N Dec. 582, 591-92 (BIA 1988).