



# LAWYER

## FOREIGN CREDENTIALS REFERRAL OFFICE



## WELCOME

The Federation of Law Societies of Canada (Federation) is the national coordinating body for Canada's 14 law societies mandated by provincial and territorial law to regulate Canada's 100,000 lawyers and 4,000 Quebec notaries in the public interest. Canada's law societies ensure that people in Canada are served by legal professionals who meet high standards of education, competence and professional conduct.

The Federation assists law societies in fulfilling their public interest mandates by assessing the legal education and professional experience of individuals who obtained their credentials outside of Canada or in a Canadian civil law program. The Federation's National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) carries out this role. We encourage you to carefully research your career options to determine whether pursuing a legal career in Canada is best for you.

Information is available on the Federation's website ([www.flsc.ca/en/nca](http://www.flsc.ca/en/nca)) and on the website of the law society in the province or territory where you wish to live. These are the best places for you to start your research.



### Law in Canada

There are 14 law societies in Canada. Each province and territory has one law society except Quebec, which has two. In most Canadian provinces, the practice of law is based on English common law traditions. In Quebec, the legal tradition is based on French civil law and there are two law societies – the Barreau du Québec, which regulates lawyers, and the Chambre des notaires du Québec, which regulates notaries. The NCA assesses the credentials of internationally trained lawyers intending to practise in Canada, but not in Quebec. **If you intend to practise law in the province of Quebec, contact the two provincial law societies indicated above.**

### Before You Come to Canada

While you are waiting to go to Canada, there are many important things you can do to improve your chance of success.

The Foreign Credentials Referral Office ([www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca)) is an organization of the Government of Canada that provides you with helpful resources such as the *Planning to Work in Canada?* workbook and the Working in Canada Tool ([www.workingincanada.gc.ca](http://www.workingincanada.gc.ca)). Use these resources to collect important information and to develop your job search plan.

The practice of law requires advanced language ability in reading, writing and speaking. You may need to prove your language skills in English or French or be tested. If you need to improve your language skills, start before you come to Canada. Try the Canada Language Benchmarks online language self-assessment test at [www.clb-osa.ca](http://www.clb-osa.ca).

Your official education, work and identity documents are important. It is much easier for you to gather your documents while still in your home country.

If your documents are neither in French nor in English, verify the translation requirements. In most cases, your translations will have to be certified. You may have to use a professional translation service in Canada.

## Becoming a lawyer in Canada

The Federation's National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) encourages you to start the assessment process before you leave your home country. Your application will not be processed until the NCA has received all the required documents and the prescribed fee. Detailed information about the NCA assessment process and the documents required is available on its website at [www.flsc.ca/en/nca/applying-to-the-nca/how-to-apply](http://www.flsc.ca/en/nca/applying-to-the-nca/how-to-apply).

Send a completed application form to the NCA along with the following:

- an original set of your final academic transcripts issued by the institution where you completed your undergraduate (non-legal), post-secondary or university studies. Copies will not be accepted;
- a detailed résumé of your education and work experience; and
- payment of a non-refundable application fee of CAN\$450.

[www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

It is important for you to learn about the steps you need to take to get your credentials and qualifications recognized in Canada. Citizenship and Immigration Canada also recommends that you review the resources on our website for helpful information about the immigration process and living in Canada.

Make arrangements for the following documents to be sent directly to the NCA by the institutions mentioned below:

- an official copy of your academic transcripts issued by the institution where you obtained your legal education;
- if applicable, a certificate or letter of membership in good standing issued by the local regulatory authority that governs your admission to the practice of law in that jurisdiction; and

- if applicable, an official copy of your transcripts issued by the local regulatory authority that governs your admission to the practice of law in that jurisdiction, for any courses or examinations required by such authority.

## Assessment

The NCA assessment process is designed to determine if an applicant has a thorough understanding and knowledge of Canadian law, equivalent to that of a graduate of a Canadian common law degree program. Those who are found to have such understanding and knowledge are issued a Certificate of Qualification from the NCA. The detailed policies and procedures the NCA follows in this process are available on its website at [www.flsc.ca/en/nca/nca-resources/policies](http://www.flsc.ca/en/nca/nca-resources/policies).

The NCA considers a number of factors:

1. the type of legal system on which the legal education was based (common law, civil law, hybrid, etc.);
2. the length and nature of the legal education program;
3. the subject areas studied;
4. the academic performance in respect of the core subject areas required by the NCA, as well as overall academic performance;
5. whether the legal education program is recognized and approved by the local regulatory authority that governs admission to the practice of law in that jurisdiction;
6. whether the mode of study was full-time, part-time, in-person or through distance learning;
7. professional legal experience and qualifications; and
8. the nature and length of the professional legal experience.

NCA assessments focus on the competence of applicants in core common law subjects, including four Canadian subjects that are mandatory for all applicants: Principles of Canadian Administrative Law; Canadian Constitutional Law; Canadian Criminal Law and Procedure; and Foundations of Canadian Law. The other core common law subjects also assessed by the NCA are contracts, torts, property, corporate law (business associations), evidence, and professional responsibility.

After the application has been considered, the NCA issues an assessment to the applicant indicating the requirements, if any, that must be met for a Certificate of Qualification to be issued. There are three possible types of requirements:

1. passing examinations set and administered by the NCA in prescribed subject areas of law; and/or
2. taking courses in prescribed subject areas of law at a Canadian law school; or
3. completion of a Canadian common law degree program.

### Bar Admission Process

Obtaining an NCA Certificate of Qualification allows you to apply to the bar admission course and articling process with a law society. However, it does not guarantee acceptance to either because the law society has the exclusive authority to determine whom it will admit. For the articling period, you will be required to find your own job with a lawyer who is qualified to supervise your work for the period. Once all requirements are met, you can be “called to the bar,” a ceremony where you receive the law society’s official documents which entitle you to practise law in that jurisdiction.

### Finding a Job in Canada

The most common route to begin practising as a lawyer is networking during law school with the objective of finding summer jobs or articling positions with law firms. You may be eligible for a bridging program. Bridging programs ease the transition from your international training and experience to the Canadian workplace. Do some research to learn which law firms, law schools, companies or immigrant-serving organizations have bridging programs.

### Provincial Law Societies

Law Society of British Columbia  
[www.lawsociety.bc.ca](http://www.lawsociety.bc.ca)

Law Society of Alberta  
[www.lawsocietyalberta.com](http://www.lawsocietyalberta.com)

Law Society of Saskatchewan  
[www.lawsociety.sk.ca](http://www.lawsociety.sk.ca)

Law Society of Manitoba  
[www.lawsociety.mb.ca](http://www.lawsociety.mb.ca)

Law Society of Upper Canada  
[www.lsuc.on.ca](http://www.lsuc.on.ca)

Barreau du Québec  
[www.barreau.qc.ca](http://www.barreau.qc.ca)

Chambre des notaires du Québec  
[www.cdnq.org](http://www.cdnq.org)

Law Society of New Brunswick  
[www.lawsociety-barreau.nb.ca](http://www.lawsociety-barreau.nb.ca)

Nova Scotia Barristers’ Society  
[www.nsbs.org](http://www.nsbs.org)

Law Society of Prince Edward Island  
[www.lspei.pe.ca](http://www.lspei.pe.ca)

Law Society of Newfoundland and Labrador  
[www.lawsociety.nf.ca](http://www.lawsociety.nf.ca)

Law Society of Yukon  
[www.lawsocietyyukon.com](http://www.lawsocietyyukon.com)

Law Society of the Northwest Territories  
[www.lawsociety.nt.ca](http://www.lawsociety.nt.ca)

Law Society of Nunavut  
[www.lawsociety.nu.ca](http://www.lawsociety.nu.ca)

### Additional Resources

University of Toronto Faculty of Law  
Internationally Trained Lawyer Program  
[www.law.utoronto.ca/itl](http://www.law.utoronto.ca/itl)

York University, Osgoode Hall Law School  
NCA Exam Prep Course  
[www.osgoodepd.ca/cle/2011-2012Fiscal/2011\\_NCA\\_June/index.html](http://www.osgoodepd.ca/cle/2011-2012Fiscal/2011_NCA_June/index.html)

List of Canadian law schools  
[www.cclid-cdfdc.ca/schools.html](http://www.cclid-cdfdc.ca/schools.html)

Canadian Bar Association  
[www.cba.org](http://www.cba.org)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada  
[www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

Service Canada  
[www.servicecanada.gc.ca](http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca)

Foreign Credentials Referral Office  
[www.credentials.gc.ca](http://www.credentials.gc.ca)