



## Information for International Law Client Wanting to Practice Law in BC

### OVERVIEW

In BC, lawyers are qualified as both *barristers* (who work primarily as counsel in court or before tribunals) and *solicitors* (who do varied office work for clients, including giving corporate or tax advice, handling real estate transactions, drafting contracts and preparing all types of documents). A lawyer may choose to practice as a barrister, solicitor or both.

Lawyers advise clients on legal matters, draft legal documents and represent clients before courts, tribunals and administrative bodies. They may specialize in areas such as Aboriginal rights; international law; intellectual property; patents and trademarks; environmental law; internet law; entertainment law; immigration law; construction; or mediation.

Lawyers work in law firms, prosecutor's offices, federal, provincial and municipal government departments, various business establishments or may be self-employed.

An Internationally Educated Lawyer (IEL) with a law degree from outside Canada may be recognized in BC, but the applicant must first apply to the National Committee on Accreditation to acquire a Certificate of Qualification before then applying to the Law Society of BC Admission Program. If there are concerns about the character or fitness of any applicant, the application may be forwarded to the Law Society's Credentials Committee, which may order a formal credentials hearing. After meeting all the requirements, an applicant is welcomed to the Bar in a call ceremony or by swearing an oath before a judge or practicing lawyer.

Law is regulated in Canada (and notary in Quebec) and to practice law in BC must be a member of the Law Society of British Columbia and to be governed by its rules.

### PROCESS FOR A FOREIGN TRAINED LAWYER TO JOIN THE LAW SOCIETY OF BC

A lawyer who has obtained a law degree in a country other than Canada or a law degree in the Civil Code may be called to the Bar in BC, but must first obtain either a Canadian LLB degree or a Certificate of Qualification issued by the National Committee on Accreditation.



A person qualified to practise law in a country other than Canada who wishes to give legal advice in BC respecting the laws of that country may apply for a Practitioner of Foreign Law Permit.

The National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) assesses the legal education and professional experience of individuals who obtained their credentials outside Canada and may impose further educational requirements before it will issue a certificate. The NCA will review the applicant's legal education and professional experience (if any) and may require the applicant to do the following:

- acquire Canadian legal knowledge through self-study and/or courses at a Canadian law school; and
- successfully complete several examinations.

These requirements may take a substantial amount of time and can cost a significant amount of money. The UBC Distance Learning Program offers online courses designed to meet the needs of foreign-trained lawyers and law students.

Once obtained, a Certificate of Qualification from the National Committee on Accreditation may be used to seek entry to the Law Society of BC and then apply to enrol in the Law Society Admission Program. A Certificate of Qualification does not guarantee acceptance into the law society

A lawyer with practice experience in a common law jurisdiction outside Canada may apply for a reduction in the nine-month articling term or an exemption from all or part of the Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC).

The Law Society of BC has no contact with the NCA on individual applications and will neither overrule a decision of the NCA nor waive the requirements for a Certificate of Qualification in lieu of a Canadian LLB. It is the transferring lawyer's responsibility to first arrange for completion of the NCA's requirements.

## **STEPS TO BEING CALLED TO THE BAR**

Step 1 – Apply to the National Committee on Accreditation (NCA)

Step 2 – Complete self-study/courses and examinations as required

Step 3 – Obtain Certification of Qualification and seek entry to the Law Society of BC

Step 4 – Apply for and complete the Law Society Admission Program (LSAP)

Step 5 – Complete the Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC)



## Step 6 – Call and Admission to the Bar in BC

### NATIONAL COMMITTEE ON ACCREDITATION (NCA)

The National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) assesses the legal education and professional experience of those with credentials acquired outside of Canada. The first step is to complete the [self-assessment](#) to determine eligibility to [apply](#). To be eligible to apply to the NCA an applicant must have a Qualifying Law Degree, the usual designations for which are LL.B, J.D., B.C.L., and LL.L.

The NCA assesses the legal education and experience those wanting to enter law society bar admissions in Canadian common law jurisdictions. After the assessment, the NCA assigns requirements to be completed, to assure knowledge of Canadian law is similar to a law degree acquired through an approved Canadian law school program.

The assessment process includes submission of the application with appropriate documentation and payment. NCA then assesses the applicant's legal education and experience against the national requirement and according to its policies. Base on this assessment the applicant may be required to undertake '[assignments](#)' to qualify for Law Society bar admission. These assignments may involve writing NCA exams or taking courses at a Canadian law school. Upon successful completion of these assignments NCA issues a [Certificate of Qualification](#).

NCA may also require proof of English proficiency which for English is International English Language Testing System (IELTS) test with a minimum score of 7.0 across all of writing, speaking, reading and listening.

### EDUCATION AND UPGRADING PROGRAMS IN BC

A list of law programs approved by the Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC) can be found [here](#). There are three institutions in BC offering common-law degrees – University of British Columbia [Peter A. Allard School of Law](#), [University of Victoria](#) and [Thompson Rivers University](#) (Kamloops).

Online Learning available at Allard (UBC) provides foreign-trained law students and lawyers the opportunity to work towards NCA requirements for practicing law in Canada. [Admission criteria](#) include a valid NCA Assessment or a completed file with the NCA in queue for assessment, a prior first law degree (LL.B. or J.D. or its equivalent) and may be required to provide proof of English Proficiency.



While the Online Learning courses have been designed in consultation with the NCA to help students demonstrate competency in these subject areas It is up to the individual student to confirm with the NCA that the courses will be accepted for their NCA Assessment

## LAW SOCIETY ADMISSION PROGRAM (LSAP)

To be called to the BC Bar, applicants are required to complete a 12-month [Law Society Admission Program \(LSAP\)](#) which is supervised and administered by the Credentials Committee of the Law Society and includes:

- nine months of articles in a law firm or other legal workplace;
- the 10-week Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC); and
- two qualification examinations based on the PLTC Practice Material and course work.

An IEL must have a Certificate of Qualification to apply to the LSAP program and must also have an articling agreement in place. The IEL is responsible for securing an articling position. All documentation must be completed and filed with the Law Society 30 days before the commencement date of articles.

Non-Canadian law students or NCA students can contact the Career Services Office at the UBC Faculty of Law to order a Legal Careers Guide which provides advice on the articling job search in BC: <http://www.allard.ubc.ca/alumni/services/career-services/ubc-lawcareer-guides>.

Admission documentation for the LSAP includes:

- Law Society Admission Program Enrolment application form, including an attached passport quality photograph;
- Articling Agreement;
- [Articling Skills and Practice Checklist](#);
- NCA Certificate of Qualification if legal qualifications were acquired outside Canada;
- Enrolment fee (payable to the Law Society of BC) of \$3,018.75.

### Reduction of articling term:

The regular nine-month articling term can be reduced by the completion of practice experience in a common law jurisdiction outside Canada. Applicants may be eligible for a maximum reduction of five months in the nine-month articling term, resulting in a



minimum articling period of four months. (See the information sheet Reductions in the Articling Term and Exemption from PLTC).

### **Articling on a part-time basis:**

Articles may be completed on a part time basis if all terms and conditions are met including the proposed articling term is a continuous period that will give work experience equivalent to the regular nine-month articling period, and articles are completed within two years of the articling start date. An application for part-time articling must be received at least two months in advance of commencement and include a letter from the applicant and prospective principle outlining their express approval of part-time arrangements; the type of experience to be provided; the hours per day and length of the proposed articling term.

## **THE PROFESSIONAL LEGAL TRAINING COURSE (PLTC)**

The Professional Legal Training Course (PLTC) is the Law Society's Bar admission course and part of the Law Society Admission program. It is an intensive full-time, 10-week legal procedure and skills course designed to help bridge the gap between law school and practice. It is based on a definition of professional competency, including a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes. The course is taught at the Law Society building, 845 Cambie Street in Vancouver, and during the May session at Camosun College (Lansdowne Campus) in Victoria and Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops. There are usually 22 students and one instructor to a class. Daily attendance is mandatory and there are mandatory assignments and exercises that must be satisfactorily completed. Successful completion of the course is one of the requirements for becoming a lawyer in BC.

PLTC is part of the articling year and students must have a commitment of articles before applying for a PLTC session. A student may be registered for a PLTC session before they are enrolled in the admission program but registration in PLTC does not constitute approval of enrolment in the admission program. There are three PLTC sessions each year in February, May and September. PLTC is offered in Vancouver for all three sessions, and additionally in Kamloops and Victoria for the May session. All three locations have space for a limited number of students. The course requires a substantial amount of work outside class time including reading and assignments.

In consultation with their principals, students are required to choose when they will attend PLTC and when they will do the articling portion of the program. Most students take PLTC either at the beginning or end of articles. However, some law firms and students prefer to split the office requirement with attendance at PLTC. If unable to successfully complete the course, the student is required to do remedial work.



The course covers three areas:

- Knowledge

The substantive and procedural areas and transactions covered are representative of areas that articling students and newly called lawyers will encounter and are taught in a fashion that gives students a feel for how law is practised and some techniques for educating themselves in new practice areas. The knowledge areas covered are Business, Family, Civil, Practice Management, Criminal, Real Estate, Ethics, and Wills.

- Skills

Students learn skills that they can use during their articles and when practising law and given opportunities to practise the skills, provide and receive feedback. Skills taught are Advocacy, Legal Research, Writing, Mediation, Interviewing, Negotiation and Drafting

- Attitudes

PLTC teaches ethical issues in the knowledge and skill areas most likely to come up in practice. Students learn a practical approach to ethical matters. In addition to professional responsibility, PLTC teaches students about practice management within knowledge and skill contexts.

Successful completion of the PLTC involves passing four skills assessments and two 3-hour open book qualification examinations. The skills assessments are in the areas of writing, drafting, advocacy and interviewing. The writing assessment involves writing an opinion letter. The drafting assessment involves drafting a simple contract based on facts provided. These are take-home exams that must be completed by the due dates set out in the PLTC schedule. The advocacy assessment is done in pairs in a mock Chambers setting, with one student being the applicant and the other the respondent. The interviewing assessment is also done in pairs, with one student playing the lawyer and the other student playing the client. Both the advocacy and interviewing assessments are individually scheduled and videotaped. A passing mark in all skills assessments is 70%.

Qualification Examinations are scheduled at the end of the course and based on PLTC work and the Practice Material. The examinations are open book and consist of short answer essay type questions and some multiple choice. A passing mark is 60%. Sample examination questions and practice manual can be found [here](#).

As a lawyer qualified in a foreign country, an applicant may apply to the Credentials Committee to be exempted from all or a portion of PLTC.



## CALL AND ADMISSION TO THE BAR IN BC

To qualify for call to the bar and admission as a solicitor of the Supreme Court of British Columbia the articling term, the PLTC, and any other requirements imposed by the Credentials Committee must be satisfactorily completed. The barristers and solicitors' oath must be taken prior to becoming eligible for practice.

After completing these requirements, the Law Society issues a package including an application for call and admission, plus membership options and fees due. Being presented formally to the court in a call and admission ceremony, where the barristers and solicitor's oath is taken is required before being eligible to practice law in British Columbia.

## CHARACTER AND FITNESS TO BE A LAWYER

For the protection of the public and the profession, the *Legal Profession Act* imposes a statutory obligation on the Law Society governors, called Benchers, to be satisfied that each applicant for enrolment is of good character and is fit to become a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court. The onus is on the applicant to satisfy the Benchers in this regard.

Law Society staff screen all prospective articulated students, applicants for call and admission, applicants for reinstatement and applicants for transfer to ensure they are of good character and repute and are fit to become a barrister and a solicitor of the Supreme Court. This could include investigation of any criminal charges, financial difficulties, drug or alcohol abuse, treatment for serious illnesses or any other factors that may affect an applicant's character or fitness for practice.

If Law Society staff have concerns about the character or fitness of a candidate transfer the application is referred to the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee can review the matter in question and any relevant factors.

Once the review is completed, the committee can:

- approve the application;
- approve the application with conditions;
- defer consideration pending further information or the completion of an investigation; or
- order a credentials hearing.

Anyone applying for admission and call to the Bar is advised to answer all questions fairly and fully and to disclose to the Law Society anything that the applicant considers might adversely affect the application. The applicant should give the fullest details possible and provide supporting documentation.



## RESOURCES

Association of Legal Aid Lawyers (BC) - <https://www.bclegalaidlawyers.ca/>

BC Human Rights Tribunal (BCHRT) - <http://www.bchrt.bc.ca/>

BC Ministry of Attorney General -  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/ministries/justice-attorney-general>

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

Canadian Bar Association BC Branch (CBABC) - <https://www.cbabc.org/Home>

Canadian Bar Association (BC) Journal - <https://www.cbabc.org/BarTalk/home>

Canadian Lawyer Magazine - <https://www.canadianlawyermag.com/>

Federation of Law Societies of Canada (FLSC) - <https://flsc.ca/>

LawyerEdu.org (Canada) - <https://www.lawyeredu.org/canada.html>

Law Society of BC - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/>

Law Society of BC Admissions Info -  
<https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/Website/media/Shared/docs/forms/MS-admissions/admission-info.pdf>

Law Society of BC Articling Information - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/admission-program/articling-centre/>

Law Society of BC PLTC Information - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/becoming-a-lawyer-in-bc/admission-program/professional-legal-training-course/>

Legal Aid BC - [https://legalaid.bc.ca/legal\\_aid](https://legalaid.bc.ca/legal_aid)

Legal Aid Society of BC -  
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/governments/organizational-structure/ministries-organizations/crown-corporations/legal-services-society>

National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) - <https://nca.legal/>





National Committee on Accreditation - Policy Manual - <https://nca.legal/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/NCAPolicyJune2020.pdf>

Peter A. Allard School of Law at UBC - <https://allard.ubc.ca/programs/online-learning-allard>

The Continuing Legal Education Society of BC (CLEBC) - <https://www.cle.bc.ca/>

WorkBC - <https://www.workbc.ca/Jobs-Careers/Explore-Careers/Browse-Career-Profile/4112>

- **Law Firm Directories**

Canadian Law List - <https://www.canadianlawlist.com/>

Canadian Legal Expert Directory- <https://www.lexpert.ca/directory/>

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Access ProBono (Lawyers only)- <http://accessprobono.ca/ways-volunteer>

BC Law Institute (BCLI) - <https://www.bcli.org/careers>

BC Law Society (Volunteers) - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/about-us/volunteers-and-appointments/>

Canadian University (information about Justice and Legal Organizations in Vancouver offering volunteer opportunities) - [http://www.canadian-universities.net/Volunteer/Justice\\_and\\_Legal-British\\_Columbia-Vancouver.html](http://www.canadian-universities.net/Volunteer/Justice_and_Legal-British_Columbia-Vancouver.html)

Go Volunteer (search on law, legal) - <https://www.govolunteer.ca/>

People's Law School - <https://www.peopleslawschool.ca/volunteer>

Volunteer BC - <https://volunteerbc.bc.ca/>

West Coast Environmental Law (Volunteer opportunities) - <https://www.wcel.org/about/work-with-us/volunteer-opportunities>

West Coast Leaf- <http://www.westcoastleaf.org/take-action/volunteer/>



## JOB BOARDS

Canadian Bar Association (BC Branch) Job Board - <https://www.cbabc.org/Publications-and-Resources/Job-Board>

Clear Legal Jobs (Home) - <https://clearlegaljobs.com/>

Clear Legal Jobs (Vancouver) - [https://clearlegaljobs.com/jobs/?listing\\_type%5Bequal%5D=Job&action=search&keywords%5Ball\\_words%5D=&GooglePlace%5Blocation%5D%5Bvalue%5D=Vancouver&GooglePlace%5Blocation%5D%5Bradius%5D=50](https://clearlegaljobs.com/jobs/?listing_type%5Bequal%5D=Job&action=search&keywords%5Ball_words%5D=&GooglePlace%5Blocation%5D%5Bvalue%5D=Vancouver&GooglePlace%5Blocation%5D%5Bradius%5D=50)

Hunter West Legal Recruitment - [https://www.hunterwest.ca/?qclid=EA1a1QobChMIpcWTKbjl6gIVRAnnCh0magp7EAMYASAAEqJX-PD\\_BwE](https://www.hunterwest.ca/?qclid=EA1a1QobChMIpcWTKbjl6gIVRAnnCh0magp7EAMYASAAEqJX-PD_BwE)

Indeed.ca - <https://ca.indeed.com/Lawyer-jobs>

Legal Jobs - <https://www.legaljobs.ca/>

Law Society of BC - <https://www.lawsociety.bc.ca/about-us/careers-at-the-law-society/job-postings/>

Law Times - <https://www.lawtimesnews.com/jobs>

## LEGAL RECRUITING AGENCIES

Arlyn Recruiting - <https://arlynrecruiting.com/job-postings/>

Eva Lee & Associates - <https://www.evalee.ca/>

R Johnson Legal Recruiting - <https://rjohnsoncorp.com/legal-jobs/>

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