

UNION OF SAINTS

U.S.–Canada–Quebec Legal Qualification Pathway

A practical route for obtaining U.S. legal education, Canadian common-law qualification, and eventual Quebec practice

Purpose. This document outlines a streamlined professional pathway for a person who earns a law degree in the United States and ultimately wishes to qualify in Canada, including Quebec and Montreal. It is intended as an educational planning guide rather than legal advice. Licensing authorities make individual determinations, and requirements can change.

Recommended Route

- 1. Earn one U.S. JD** — Complete an appropriately accredited U.S. Juris Doctor program. A carefully selected online or hybrid program may provide the greatest geographic flexibility, but Canadian recognition should be verified before enrollment.
- 2. Apply to the National Committee on Accreditation** — After the U.S. JD, submit the foreign legal education for assessment by Canada's National Committee on Accreditation (NCA). The NCA evaluates the applicant's education and assigns the Canadian-law requirements necessary for a Certificate of Qualification.
- 3. Complete the NCA assignments** — Complete the subjects assigned by the NCA through examinations, approved law-school courses, or the combination permitted by the assessment. NCA examinations can currently be written from any location with internet service, making this portion particularly compatible with continued residence in the United States.
- 4. Obtain the NCA Certificate of Qualification** — After all assigned requirements are satisfied, request the Certificate of Qualification. The certificate is not a Canadian law degree; it confirms that the NCA requirements have been completed and permits entry into the bar-admission process of a Canadian common-law jurisdiction.
- 5. Qualify in a common-law province** — Enter a provincial licensing process, with Ontario being a practical jurisdiction to investigate because it has an established licensing system and can serve as the applicant's first Canadian bar membership.
- 6. Become a licensed Canadian lawyer** — Complete the province's examinations, experiential-training requirements, good-character requirements, and other licensing steps. Once admitted, maintain authorization to practise in that Canadian province.
- 7. Seek Quebec mobility** — A lawyer already authorized to practise in another Canadian province can pursue Quebec's Canadian-lawyer mobility routes rather than approaching Quebec solely as a foreign-trained U.S. graduate.
- 8. Complete Quebec-specific requirements** — For a full Quebec permit, the Barreau du Québec currently requires Canadian lawyers to pass Quebec knowledge examinations covering Civil Law I, Civil Law II, and Quebec legislation, regulation, and professional ethics. Proof of adequate French is also part of the permit process.

9. Enter the Barreau du Québec — After satisfying the applicable permit and admission requirements, complete the required administrative steps, professional liability insurance, dues, and oath or pledge to be entered on the Roll of the Barreau du Québec.

Why This Route May Be Simpler

The key strategy is to avoid unnecessarily earning two complete law degrees. A U.S. JD can first be evaluated through the NCA for entry into a Canadian common-law licensing system. Once the individual becomes a lawyer in another Canadian province, Quebec provides specific mobility pathways for Canadian lawyers. This does not eliminate Quebec-specific requirements, but it creates a defined Canadian-lawyer route rather than relying solely on foreign-degree equivalency.

Quebec Full-Permit Knowledge Examinations

Examination	Principal Areas
Civil Law I and related proceedings	Persons, family, matrimonial regimes/divorce, successions, property, obligations, extracontractual civil liability, and potentially consumer protection.
Civil Law II and related proceedings	Nominate contracts, evidence and procedure, business law, prescription, prior claims and hypothecs, publication of rights, and private international law.
Quebec legislation, regulation and professional ethics	Quebec-specific legislation, regulatory requirements, and ethical/professional obligations applicable to legal practice.

French-Language Requirement

Quebec professional orders may issue permits only to persons who demonstrate adequate knowledge of French under the Charter of the French Language. A person planning to practise in Montreal should therefore treat professional French as part of the licensing plan from the beginning rather than as a final administrative detail.

Alternative: Limited Quebec Practice

A lawyer licensed in another Canadian province may not always need a full Quebec permit immediately. The Barreau du Québec also offers a special Canadian legal advisor permit. That permit can authorize advice on the law of the Canadian province where the lawyer is licensed, federal-law matters, and public international law, subject to the permit's limits. This can be relevant to lawyers living or working in Montreal whose practice does not initially require unrestricted Quebec civil-law practice.

Planning Timeline

Stage	Location/Flexibility	Result
U.S. JD	United States; online/hybrid options may be possible	Juris Doctor
NCA assessment & assignments	Much can be completed from the United States; NCA exams	Certificate of Qualification

	are online	
Provincial licensing	Province-specific; requirements vary	Canadian common-law licence
Quebec mobility	Quebec-specific examinations and admission requirements	Quebec permit / Barreau membership
Montreal practice	Quebec	Practice within scope of Quebec authorization

Important Cautions

- The NCA Certificate of Qualification is not itself a licence to practise law.
- The NCA assessment is individualized; a U.S. graduate should not assume a fixed number of examinations before receiving the assessment.
- Quebec full mobility for Canadian lawyers still includes Quebec civil-law and professional-ethics examinations.
- French-language competence is a material Quebec licensing requirement.
- Online or hybrid U.S. JD programs should be checked against both U.S. bar-eligibility rules and current NCA policies before enrollment.
- Provincial and Quebec licensing rules should be rechecked at each stage because regulatory requirements may change.

Official Authorities

National Committee on Accreditation (Federation of Law Societies of Canada)

<https://nca.legal/>

NCA Assessment Process

<https://nca.legal/process/assessment-process/>

NCA Certificate of Qualification

<https://nca.legal/process/certificate-of-qualification/>

Barreau du Québec — Canadian Lawyers

<https://www.barreau.qc.ca/en/prospective-members/canadian-lawyer/>

Barreau du Québec — Full Permit for Canadian Lawyers

<https://www.barreau.qc.ca/en/prospective-members/canadian-lawyer/permanent-mobility/full-permit-canadian-lawyers/>

Barreau du Québec — Special Canadian Legal Advisor Permit

<https://www.barreau.qc.ca/en/prospective-members/canadian-lawyer/permanent-mobility/special-canadian-legal-advisor-permit/>

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