



CANADIAN  
BAR ASSOCIATION  
Alberta

# Internationally Trained Lawyer

## Hiring Guide



Prepared by the Equity, Diversity & Inclusion Committee

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# Introduction

The legal profession thrives on diversity and collaboration. Internationally Trained Lawyers (“ITLs”) bring invaluable perspectives shaped by global experience and legal systems. However, navigating the process of hiring professionals who have completed their education and training outside of Canada can be challenging for firms, in-house counsel and recruiters. This results in ITLs facing barriers in securing articling and associate positions, in addition to the other unique challenges they encounter.

The CBA Alberta Internationally Trained Lawyer Hiring Guide for Firms (the “Guide”) is designed to provide law firms, legal professionals, and human resource professionals with the tools to effectively identify and collaborate with internationally trained legal talent. This Guide is for general informational purposes only and does not constitute legal advice.

Throughout this Guide the term “Firm” is used, however it is not intended to be exclusionary. The term “Firm” includes law firms, solo practitioners looking to hire lawyers, and organizations (public, private or nonprofit) that employ lawyers to work as legal counsel.

This Guide covers four essential topics:

1. Accreditation of ITLs - general information on the process of obtaining accreditation to practice law in Alberta, including information on the National Committee on Accreditation and various other pathways for licensing.
2. Inclusive Hiring Practices - Suggested practices for employers and human resources professionals to recruit and integrate ITLs.
3. Value of ITLs to the legal profession - Exploring the unique perspectives, skills and expertise that ITLs bring to the legal profession.
4. Additional Resources - A collection of additional resources to assist ITLs and employers in accessing further support and information on this topic

The resources in this Guide aim to foster an inclusive and vibrant legal community in Alberta, where the contributions of ITLs are recognized and celebrated. By embracing the strengths of ITLs Alberta’s legal profession can continue to grow and thrive.

We thank the 2024–25 and 2025-26 CBA Alberta Equity Diversity & Inclusion Committee (the “Committee”) members, and the Committee’s ITL Working Group, for their contributions to this Guide.

# Accreditation of ITLs

The National Committee on Accreditation (“NCA”) is a standing committee of the Federation of Law Societies of Canada, responsible for assessing the legal education and professional experience of individuals who obtained their credentials outside of Canada or in a Canadian civil law program. The NCA’s primary mandate is to protect the public interest by ensuring that ITLs and law graduates meet the standards of knowledge and skills necessary to practise law in Canada. The accreditation process for ITLs is designed to ensure that their knowledge of Canadian law is comparable to that of graduates from approved Canadian common law programs.

The following information was taken from the National Committee on Accreditation’s website, [nca.legal](http://nca.legal) and is only intended to be a general summary. We encourage Firms to visit the NCA website for the most up-to-date information on the accreditation process.

## The NCA Assessment Process

The NCA assessment process is a crucial step for ITLs seeking to practise in Canada. This evaluation determines the requirements for obtaining a Certificate of Qualification, which is necessary to apply for admission to a law society in a Canadian common law jurisdiction.

The process typically involves the following steps<sup>1</sup>:

- 1. Self-Assessment:** Candidates can use the NCA’s online self-assessment tool to determine if they qualify for an NCA Assessment.
- 2. Application Submission:** Candidates submit an online application along with required documentation and payment.
- 3. Credential Review:** The NCA reviews and assesses the candidate’s credentials, taking into account their educational and professional background.
- 4. Assessment Notification:** The NCA notifies the candidate of any assignments or deficiencies identified during the assessment. Candidates must complete the assigned requirements, which may include passing examinations or completing specific law school courses.
- 5. Certificate Issuance:** Upon successful completion of all requirements, the NCA issues a Certificate of Qualification.
- 6. Bar Admissions:** Upon obtaining the Certificate of Qualification from the NCA, candidates are eligible to apply for bar admission programs in all Canadian common law jurisdictions, which comprise all provinces and territories except Quebec.

<sup>1</sup> Federation of Law Societies of Canada National Committee on Accreditation, “Overview Understanding the whole picture” (2026), online: < [Process - Federation of Law Societies of Canada](#)>

The legal tradition of the country where the ITL studied law influences the assessment given by the NCA. If a candidate is from a non-common law jurisdiction, or a mixed jurisdiction, and their legal education or work experience includes little or no common law exposure, they may receive no or minimal recognition for their qualification.<sup>2</sup> Candidates must also demonstrate proficiency in one of Canada's official languages, English or French, and may be required to undergo language testing.<sup>3</sup>

Following assessment, candidates can pursue one of three pathways to fulfill NCA requirements: they may need to pass NCA exams, complete assigned courses at a Canadian law school, or combine both options. Candidates are typically required to demonstrate competence in specific Canadian law subjects, including Canadian Administrative Law, Canadian Constitutional Law, Canadian Criminal Law, Canadian Professional Responsibility and Foundations of Canadian Law.<sup>4</sup>

The NCA may also assign additional subjects based on an individual's qualifications<sup>5</sup>. Candidates typically have five years from the date of assessment to complete all required examinations or courses.<sup>6</sup> NCA candidates are limited to three attempts to pass each NCA exam. If a candidate fails a subject four times, they are required to complete that subject through coursework at a Canadian law school.<sup>7</sup>

The NCA process is a comprehensive and rigorous pathway for ITLs to become qualified to practise law in Canada. It ensures that all legal professionals in Canada meet the high standards required to protect the public interest. While challenging, the process provides a clear route for international legal professionals to integrate into the Canadian legal system and contribute their diverse experiences and perspectives to the profession.

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<sup>2</sup>Federation of Law Societies of Canada National Committee on Accreditation, 'Jurisdictions Policy', Ottawa, 2021, online: < <https://nca.legal/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/NCA-Jurisdictions-Policies-Oct-2021.pdf> > (accessed January 19, 2026)

<sup>3</sup>Federation of Law Societies of Canada National Committee on Accreditation, 'Policy Manual in effect July 1, 2025, Ottawa, 2022, online:<<https://nca.legal/resources/nca-policies-and-guidelines/>> (accessed January 19, 2026)

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid at page 8*

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid at page 20*

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*

# Inclusive Hiring Practices

The Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion highlights a few of the benefits of inclusive hiring:

“Inclusive hiring practices promote equal employment opportunities, improve the workplace environment, and promote the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences, particularly for candidates and employees with marginalized identities. Additionally, inclusive hiring fosters creativity, innovation, and problem-solving abilities by bringing together employees with a range of backgrounds and perspectives.”<sup>8</sup>

“Inclusion is about the collective. It is about creating a culture that strives for equity and embraces, respects, accepts and values difference.”<sup>9</sup>

**The following are suggestions on inclusive hiring practices that Firms and human resources professional may want to consider or adopt:**

## 1. Self-assessment & maintenance

- **Review existing policies, practices and procedures:** On a regular basis, look at your policies, practices, and procedures. Determine if there are any gaps in how you recruit and retain underrepresented groups. Ask yourself: where can you improve? What do you do well already?
- **Stay Current:** Pay attention to how Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (“DEI”) is evolving, including best practices.
- **Identify systemic barriers:** what are institutional-level policies, practices or values that block or create unequal access to employment?
- **Examine unconscious bias:** an attitude, stereotype, motivation, or assumption that results from life experiences. Everyone has unconscious biases, for example, gender, culture, race or ethnicity, age, and language. “Decisions made based on unconscious bias can compound over time to significantly impact the lives and opportunities of others who are affected by the decisions one makes.” (CRC)

## 2. Job Postings

- **Use plain language:** seeking abilities or skills, rather than experience and that is inclusive and free of terms implying bias, gender, or age.
- **Highlight DEI Commitments:** If reflective of your Firm, include statements about DEI commitments, policies or practices.

<sup>8</sup>Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, “Inclusive hiring practices: Toolkit for transforming hiring practices to attract and retain diverse talent” (November 2023) [Toolkit - Inclusive hiring practices - EN - Final](#), [CCDI] (accessed 22 December 2025)

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*

## Law Society of Alberta Guidance on Job Postings

Rules 50, 50.1 and 50.2 of the [Rules of the Law Society of Alberta](#) govern the academic requirements for prospective members of the Law Society of Alberta with Canadian common-law degrees, Canadian civil law degrees (LL.B. and J.D.) and non-Canadian law degrees. Specifically, Rule 50(2) provides that the academic requirements for admission as a student-at-law are met when the applicant has qualification equivalent to the requirements of a LLB or JD from a faculty of common law at a Canadian University and their non-Canadian law degree and legal practice is evaluated by the Federation of Law Societies' NCA.

It is important for Firms to recognize both Canadian law degrees and accreditation through the NCA process in their job postings. It is suggested that Firms use inclusive language in their job postings as it relates to academic requirements for candidates. For example, to require that applicants have a law degree from a “recognized Canadian law school,” without also noting that candidates who have completed an equivalent program approved by the NCA or have received their Certificate of Qualification, limits the potential applicants and may exclude ITLs from applying.

Firms are encouraged to contact the Law Society of Alberta's [Office of the Equity Ombudsperson](#) for more information.

### 3. Hiring Committees

- **Training:** Hiring committee members should be trained on DEI, anti-racism, inclusive communications, and unconscious bias.
- **Screen Questions:** Ensure all interview questions are appropriate for an applicant to answer.

### 4. Interview

- **General information:** Advise candidates in advance how long the interview will be, who will be interviewing them, and the types of questions they will be asked. Hiring committee members should introduce themselves, keep their cameras on (look at the camera), and microphones on mute when not speaking.
- **Hiring Committee:** Ensure the hiring committee members all understand selection criteria before they screen applications. You might use a written evaluation matrix.
- **Location and time:** Choose an interview location that has low ambient noise. Consider time zones and time of day when scheduling interviews.
- **Standardization:** Where possible and if appropriate, consider using the same structured process and questions for each candidate.
- **Types of Questions:** Choose specific questions over open-ended questions that beg the candidate to sell themselves. For example, instead of asking “What are your strengths?”, ask “Can you tell me about a time when you were able to complete a project ahead of schedule?”
- **Bias:** Avoid affinity bias, which favours candidates who are similar to the interviewer. Be aware of what you mean when you say someone “fits” or not.

- **Technology:** When considering virtual interviews, keep in mind that not all candidates have access to updated technology or private living spaces. Ensure the candidate knows who they can call if they have technical difficulties. Also ensure the hiring committee members know how to use virtual technology.

## Hiring Decisions

- **Accommodation:** Ensure hiring committee members are aware they cannot hold a candidate's need for accommodation against them.
- **Artificial Intelligence:** Note that the use of artificial intelligence to screen applications may result in qualified candidates being disqualified.

## Inclusive Hiring Practices Resources:

Dr. Pragya Agarwal, "Here Is How Bias Can Affect Recruitment In Your Organisation," Forbes, 19 October 2018 [Here Is How Bias Can Affect Recruitment In Your Organisation](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

Iris Bohnet, "[How to Take the Bias Out of Interviews](#)," Harvard Business Review, 18 April 2016 [How to Take the Bias Out of Interviews](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

Canada Research Chairs, [Creating an Equitable, Diverse and Inclusive Research Environment: A Best Practices Guide for Recruitment, Hiring and Retention](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

Canadian Centre for Diversity and Inclusion, "Inclusive hiring practices: Toolkit for transforming hiring practices to attract and retain diverse talent" (November 2023) [Toolkit - Inclusive hiring practices - EN - Final](#), [CCDI] (accessed 22 December 2025)

Jennifer Kiesewetter, "A Look Into the Benefits of Standardized Interview Processes," Cangrade, (no date) [A Look Into the Benefits of Standardized Interview Processes - Cangrade](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

Charlotte Lytton, "AI Hiring Tools May be Filtering out the Best Job Applicants" BBC, 16 February 2024, [AI hiring tools may be filtering out the best job applicants](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

Dr. Katie Maras, "What to do when interviewing an autistic person for a job," University of Bath, (no date) [What to do when interviewing an autistic person for a job](#) (accessed 22 December 2025)

# The Unique Value of ITLs in Alberta's Legal Profession

The legal landscape in Alberta is evolving, with diversity, adaptability, and global perspectives becoming increasingly valuable in today's interconnected world. One of the most effective ways for Firms to stay competitive and innovative is by hiring ITLs — professionals who bring a wealth of unique experiences, skills, and perspectives to the practice of law.

## The Benefits of Hiring ITLs

### 1. **Diverse Perspectives and Global Experience:**

ITLs are trained in different legal systems, providing valuable insights into comparative law, international transactions, and cross-border legal issues. Their diverse legal education and professional experience allow Firms to approach problems from multiple angles, leading to more well-rounded legal strategies.

### 2. **Strong Adaptability and Resilience:**

Successfully transitioning into the Canadian legal profession requires perseverance, adaptability, dedication to hard work, and an exceptional work ethic. These are qualities that ITLs have demonstrated by navigating the NCA process, securing licensing, and integrating into a new legal environment. This resilience translates into a strong drive for success, making ITLs highly motivated team members.

### 3. **Multilingual and Multicultural Competence:**

Alberta's population is becoming increasingly diverse, and clients often seek legal professionals who understand their cultural backgrounds and languages. Many ITLs speak multiple languages and have firsthand experience with different legal, business, and cultural customs, helping Firms provide more inclusive and client-centred services.

### 4. **Expanded Professional Networks:**

ITLs bring connections from diverse communities within Alberta and Canada, in addition to their previous jurisdictions and international networks that can enhance a firm's business development, client relationships, and cross-border opportunities. This local, national, and global outlook can be beneficial for Firms to draw clients locally, nationally, and internationally.

### 5. **Commitment to Excellence and Lifelong Learning:**

ITLs often invest significant time and effort in requalifying, completing Canadian legal education, and staying up to date. This commitment reflects their strong work ethic, intellectual curiosity, and dedication to professional growth—qualities that enhance the overall competence of any legal team.

## Why Alberta Law Firms Should Hire ITLs?

The legal profession thrives on diverse ideas, experiences, and skill sets. By welcoming ITLs, Firms gain innovative problem solvers, globally minded professionals, dedicated legal practitioners, and team members with access to diverse communities. ITLs often bring a fresh perspective to legal practice, enriching the Firm culture and strengthening the Firm's ability to serve an increasingly diverse clientele.

Moreover, clients may appreciate working with lawyers who reflect their backgrounds and experiences. This fosters stronger client relationships and enhances a Firm's reputation in the community.

## Be a Leader in Diversity and Innovation

Firms that embrace diverse talent pools are likely to stand out as leaders in inclusivity and adaptability. Hiring ITLs is not just about diversity, it's about bringing in highly skilled, globally experienced lawyers who will contribute to your Firm's success in meaningful ways.

By recognizing the immense potential of ITLs, Alberta's law Firms can position themselves for long-term growth, stronger client relationships, and a dynamic legal team equipped for the challenges of the future.

# Resources

## How to know if an ITL is eligible to work in Canada

If the applicant is not a Canadian citizen or permanent resident, they will need to obtain a work permit or another form of authorization to work in Canada. The applicant will need to follow the Canadian immigration procedures and policies to obtain the appropriate work permit or authorization.

## How to find information about accredited foreign law schools and law firms outside of Canada

Alberta Firms seeking information about accredited foreign law schools and law firms outside of Canada can explore several resources:

- **Legal Regulators:** Legal regulators are excellent sources of information about certified law schools, approved firms, and legal entities (in countries where legal entities are regulated), and licensed practitioners.
- **International Legal Networks and Directories:** Many law firms and legal professionals belong to international legal networks, associations, or directories, such as the International Bar Association (IBA) or Lex Mundi. These organizations can provide valuable resources for finding accredited foreign law schools and reputable law firms outside of Canada.
  - **International Bar Association (IBA):** <https://www.ibanet.org>
  - **Lex Mundi:** <https://www.lexmundi.com>
- **Foreign Embassies and Consulates:** Foreign embassies and consulates in Canada may have resources on legal education in their home countries, which may include lists of accredited law schools. Alberta Firms may contact embassies or consulates for guidance on understanding the legal education system in different countries.
- **Global Legal Databases:** Services like Martindale-Hubbell and Chambers & Partners provide directories of law firms worldwide, which include information on their credentials, areas of practice, and global reach. Firms in Alberta can use these databases to research law firms and lawyers outside Canada.
  - **Martindale-Hubbell:** <https://www.martindale.com/>
  - **Chambers & Partners:** <https://chambers.com>
- **Law School Websites:** Firms can research specific foreign law schools directly by visiting the websites of law schools they are interested in. Many law schools provide details on accreditation, partnerships, and recognition by Canadian bodies, especially if they have programs or partnerships aimed at Canadian students or lawyers.

## List of helpful resources for Firms considering applicants who are ITLs:

- [Beginning Again: Internationally Trained Lawyers](#)  
This is an article by the Law Society of Alberta discussing the process all ITLs and internationally law graduates must complete in order to become an Alberta lawyer
- [Cultural competency in diversity hiring](#), by Olufunke Fasunon & Andrew Duran
- [Integrating into the Canadian legal community](#), by Olufunke Fasunon
- [Getting accredited](#), by Andrew Duran & Opeyemi Bello
- [Decoding Canadian Legal Research, Writing and Conventions: A Guide for Internationally Trained Lawyers](#), by Dr. Kellinde Wrightson
- [Directions for Immigrants](#) – a no cost career service for immigrant professionals that provides employment workshops, career coaching, workplace communication groups and [exam preparation study groups](#) for ITLs.