

## Bar Admittance Requirements in Each State for Foreign-Trained Attorneys



**Summary:** Review the bar admittance guidelines in each state and territory in the U.S. for foreign-trained attorneys.

Read [Comprehensive Guide to Eligibility of Foreign Attorneys to Waive into Different State Bars](#) to learn more.

Foreign attorneys face a different set of challenges when they try to come to the United States to practice law. There are some states that don't allow foreign lawyers to waive the bar or place additional requirements on them to receive a license. Luckily over half of the states in the country and its territories allow foreign-trained law graduates to be admitted to their bars.

Here is just a look at the largest, most popular destinations in the United States:

### California

Non-American trained attorneys are able for admission by taking the California bar examination. They must also obtain additional education at an ABA-approved law school, have experience practicing law in a foreign jurisdiction, be admitted in another US jurisdiction, and obtain a determination of educational equivalency.

The National Conference of Bar Examiners and the American Bar Association states, "Foreign law school graduates must request individual evaluation to determine legal education equivalency. Graduates from foreign law school may qualify to take the California bar exam if they obtain an LL.M. degree or complete an additional 1 year of law study at an ABA-approved or California-accredited law school which includes a certain number of credits in bar examination subject matter. Foreign-educated law students who did not graduate are not eligible to take the exam and are required to either graduate with a J.D. degree at an ABA-approved or California-accredited law school or complete 4 years of law study at a law school registered in California and pass the First-Year Law Students' Exam. Foreign law school graduates who are admitted to the active practice of law in good standing in their countries do not have to complete any additional law study to qualify to take the bar exam."

### District of Columbia

D.C. requires passage of the bar exam and additional education or they can submit a waiver if they admitted into another US jurisdiction. The NCBE and ABA state, "The applicant has been a member in good standing for 5 years of a court of general jurisdiction of any U.S. state or territory. Applicant may be permitted to take the bar examination upon successful completion of at least 26 semester hours of study in subjects tested on the bar examination in a law school that at the time of such study was ABA-approved. All such 26 semester hours shall be earned in courses of study, each of which is substantially concentrated on a single tested subject. Classes that began before March 1, 2016, will count towards this total if they were in subjects tested on the DC bar exam through February 2016. Classes beginning after March 1, 2016, will count towards the total if they are in subjects tested on the Uniform Bar Examination."

### Florida

Florida allows foreign-trained attorneys that have either been admitted in another US jurisdiction or pass the bar exam. The NCBE and ABA states, "After 10 years' active practice in another jurisdiction (District of Columbia or other states in the United States or in federal courts in the United States or its territories, possessions, or protectorates) in which applicant has been duly admitted, the applicant may file a representative compilation of work product for evaluation by the Board."

### Illinois

With bar exam passage plus experience practicing law in a foreign jurisdiction and determination of educational equivalency, a foreign-trained attorney can be admitted in Illinois. The NCBE and ABA states, "The foreign law school graduate must have been licensed to practice in the country in which the degree was conferred and/or in a U.S. jurisdiction for a minimum of 5 years; the lawyer must be in good standing as an attorney or equivalent in that country or U.S. jurisdiction where admitted; during each of no fewer than 5 of the 7 years immediately prior to making application in Illinois, the lawyer must have verifiably devoted an annual minimum of 1,000 hours to the practice of law in such country and/or U.S. jurisdiction where licensed; and the applicant must achieve passing

score on MPRE and meet character and fitness standards.”

### **New York**

Foreign-trained attorneys can be admitted into New York with additional education, a determination of educational equivalency and passage of the bar examination. The NCBE and ABA state, “Applicant must complete period of la study equivalent in duration and substance to that specified in New York rules in law school recognized by competent accrediting agency of the government of such foreign country. All applicants must have their transcripts evaluated by the Board of Law Examiners to determine if further study is required in the form of a qualifying LL.M. degree from an ABA-approved law school in the United States.”

### **Texas**

Texas wants to see additional education, experience practicing law in a foreign jurisdiction, and passage of the bar exam from foreign-trained attorneys. The NCBE and ABA states, “An applicant with an initial law degree from a foreign law school not based on English common law must, in part, be authorized to practice law and have a qualifying LL.M. degree. An applicant with an initial law degree from a foreign law school based on English common law must, in part, either have a qualifying LL.M. degree or satisfy a 3-year practice requirement.”

**To learn more about foreign-trained attorney obstacles, read these articles:**

- [Australian Attorneys Most Sought after by Law Firms](#)
- [Alternative Legal Careers for Attorneys](#)
- [ABA Votes against Foreign Law School Accreditation](#)

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