



**NEW MAINERS
RESOURCE CENTER**



MAINE LAWYER LICENSING GUIDE

FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED PROFESSIONALS

nmrcmaine.org



WHO WE ARE

The New Mainers Resource Center (NMRC) is a state-wide program serving internationally trained professionals (ITPs). We offer resources to assist New Mainers in overcoming barriers to entering the US workforce. Our services include: career advising, licensing and credential support, job readiness skills, and networking with employers, colleges and universities.

The Purpose of this Guide

The purpose of this guide is to provide internationally trained lawyers with the information they need to make informed decisions about their options to practice law in Maine.

For additional information or assistance from the New Mainers Resource Center contact:



nmrcmaine.org
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DATA CURRENCY DISCLAIMER: Labor market, wage, and cost information presented in this guide is based on data collected in August 2025. Employment conditions, licensing requirements, wages, and associated costs may change over time and may vary by employer, region, or individual circumstances. This guide is intended as an informational resource and does not guarantee employment, wages, or licensing outcomes.

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PROCESS FOR INTERNATIONALLY TRAINED LAWYERS IN MAINE



1

APPLY FOR EDUCATION EQUIVALENCY

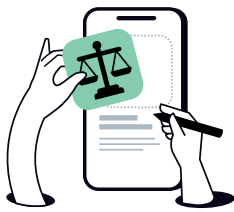
Submit your transcripts to the **Maine Board of Bar Examiners** to see if your education is equivalent to a US ABA (American Bar Association) accredited law degree. This is called the **'advanced determination of equivalency of foreign education'**.



2

COMPLETE REQUIRED COURSEWORK

If you have an international law degree, the Maine Board of Bar Examiners may require you to take additional coursework or pursue an additional degree to practice law in Maine.



3

APPLY TO THE BAR EXAM

Once you have completed the 'advanced determination of equivalency of foreign education' and your education has been found equivalent, and you have completed the required coursework mandated by the Board of Bar Examiners and been reassessed for educational equivalency, you may apply to take the bar exam.



4

TAKE THE BAR EXAM

The Maine Bar Exam consists of four exams: The Multi-State Bar Exam, the Multi-State Essay Exam, and the Multi-State Performance Test—which make up the Uniform Bar Exam.

The fourth exam—the Multi-State Professional Responsibility Exam—is administered separately.



[LEARN MORE ABOUT THE STEPS TO LICENSURE](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Will my international law background allow me to practice in Maine?

While it is possible to meet the qualifications needed generally, the transcript review by the Maine Board of Bar Examiners will often find that an international degree does **not provide sufficient evidence of 24 credit hours in US law and Maine law**. The Board will then recommend that an individual take courses specifically in US and Maine law, **with 16 of those credit hours required in the following categories:**

- Constitutional Law
- Evidence
- Taxation
- Procedure
- Uniform Commercial Code
- Decedents' Estates
- Real Property
- Corporations or Business Organizations
- Torts

If the applicant is missing significant educational requirements, the Board may recommend pursuing a **JD or LL.M. degree**.

2. What is the difference between a Juris Doctor (JD) and an LL.M. (Master of Laws) degree in the United States?

A **JD** is the entry-level professional law degree in the US, required to become a lawyer.

- Pursued after a **bachelor's degree** (any major is acceptable), and it takes 3 years to complete
- The JD is the **required degree to sit for the bar exam** in any US state. After passing the bar, graduates can **practice law in the US**.

An **LL.M.** is an advanced law degree for those who already have legal training, often used to specialize or to qualify international lawyers for certain US bar exams.

- Commonly pursued by **internationally trained lawyers** who want US legal exposure, this degree often takes one year to complete (full-time).
- Also for JD holders who want to **specialize** (e.g., tax law, international law, human rights)

3. How do I become a licensed lawyer in Maine?

Apply to the [Maine Board of Bar Examiners](#) to see if your law degree is **substantially equivalent** to a US law degree, using the **'advanced determination of equivalency of foreign legal education'** form. Your law school will need to send official transcripts.

If your transcripts show that you have the required 24 credit hours in US law and Maine law, you will also need to demonstrate that:

- You are licensed to practice law in another country, and
- You have practiced law for at least three of the last five years.

If you meet these requirements you may apply on motion to determine your eligibility for the Maine Bar.

If your education, license, and work experience are deemed equivalent, you can apply to take the **Maine Bar Examination**.

If approved it is highly encouraged to register for a Maine Bar Examination prep course.

4. If I am required to complete coursework by the Maine Board of Bar Examiners, what level of English proficiency is required to register for courses?

Law programs in the United States are likely to require a standardized English proficiency exam, such as the **TOEFL or the IELTS**, as part of the admissions process for students whose native language is not English and who received an undergraduate degree from an institution in which English was not the primary language of instruction.

- While the score required may vary, expect a **score requirement between 79–100 on the TOEFL** or a **6.5 or higher on the IELTS** for a JD program.
- The Maine School of Law requires a 79 **TOEFL** or a 6.5 on the **IELTS**.

Overview of the Profession

Attorneys and the practice of the legal profession are regulated at the state level. The Maine Board of Overseers of the Bar has the power to license attorneys to practice law in Maine and to carry out disciplinary action against them.

The American Bar Association (ABA) is another important organization that influences the practice of law in Maine and nationally. It is a professional association that accredits US law schools and provides continuing legal education, among other activities.

Once you receive a license to practice law in Maine, you will need to renew it every year by registering with the Maine Board of Overseers of the Bar and paying the annual fees. Additionally, every Maine attorney must complete 12 credit hours of continuing legal education (CLE) each year.

Eligibility for Licensure

The Maine Bar Exam is the set of three exams listed below:

- Multi-State Bar Examination (MBE)—a multiple-choice exam containing fundamental and federal legal content.
- Multi-State Essay Examination (MEE)—an essay exam with content similar to the MBE.
- Multi-State Performance Test (MPT)—a written exam simulating a real-life legal scenario.

It is administered by the Maine Board of Bar Examiners. The Maine Bar Exam is offered twice per year, in February and July. You must receive approval from the Maine Board of Bar Examiners to take the Maine Bar Exam.

A fourth exam is required for licensure and is administered directly in a separate testing session. This exam is usually taken by law school students before graduation, but you can sit for it after receiving special approval:

- Multi-State Professional Responsibility Examination (MPRE)—a professional conduct exam.
- This exam is usually offered in March and November.

Licensing Options for Internationally Educated Attorneys

This guide assumes that you:



Are a graduate of an international law school or degree program



Already have professional experience as a lawyer in your country of origin



Do not already have a license to practice law in any US jurisdiction



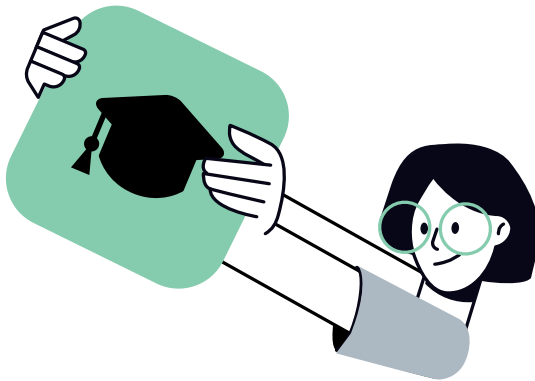
Wish to pass the Maine Bar so that you can practice law in the state of Maine

Steps to Licensure

1 APPLYING FOR EDUCATION EQUIVALENCY

If you have completed a law degree in another country, you can submit your transcripts to the **Maine Board of Bar Examiners** to see if your education is equivalent to a US ABA (American Bar Association) accredited law degree. This is called the ‘**advanced determination of equivalency of foreign education**’.

The Board will use its own educational standards to see if your education is equivalent. Review the checklist below to see if you have the required documentation and education to submit your transcripts to the Board.



See the [checklist and application here](#).

DEADLINE: This checklist must be returned with the required documentation at least two months before the application deadline (advanced determination deadline is March 20 for the July exam, October 20 for the February exam).

FEE: \$250, by check or money order, made payable to the Maine Board of Bar Examiners. The fee is nonrefundable, but may be used as a credit towards a Bar application, in the event the applicant is found eligible.

Before the Maine Board of Bar Examiners determines the equivalency of any international legal education, you must submit all documentation listed below. If any required documentation is not provided, your request for a determination will be returned.

- A transcript from all international and US law schools, directly from the issuing institution, with certified English translation if applicable.
- A memorandum, letter, or other writing identifying which courses on the applicant's transcript(s) meet the Board's regulation. It must specifically identify the following:
 - 24 credit hours reflected on the applicant's transcripts dealing with either the law of the United States or the law of one of the US states, and

- 16 of those 24 semester credit hours must fall within at least 5 of the following categories:

- | | |
|----------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1. Constitutional Law | 6. Decedents' Estates |
| 2. Evidence | 7. Real Property |
| 3. Taxation | 8. Corporations or Business Organizations |
| 4. Procedure | 9. Torts |
| 5. Uniform Commercial Code | |

- A concise description and link to the webpage, if applicable, of those courses that deal with either the law of the United States or the law of one of the US states, with English translation if applicable.

Generally, the transcript review by the Maine Board of Bar Examiners will find that an international legal degree does not show evidence of a background in US law and Maine law. If this is the case, the Board will recommend that an individual take courses at a law school specifically in US and Maine law. If the applicant is missing significant educational requirements, the Board may recommend a LL.M. or JD degree.

2 COMPLETE REQUIRED COURSEWORK

If you have an international law degree, the Maine Board of Bar Examiners may require that you take coursework in US and Maine law before being eligible to sit for the bar exam. In other situations, because of your educational background, you may need to pursue either a JD (Juris Doctor/US law degree) or an LL.M. (Master of Laws degree) to practice law in Maine.

The University of Maine School of Law is the only ABA-accredited law school in the state of Maine, with both JD and LL.M. programs offered in-person at the Portland campus. You might also want to consider hybrid and fully remote law school programs offered by regional universities across the country.



Before deciding on any program or enrolling in any courses, you should seek the advice of the University of Maine Board of Bar Examiners, the Maine School of Law, or any individual who understands what you need to be eligible to take the Maine Bar Exam.



Why complete a JD (JURIS DOCTOR) Law Degree?

A JD curriculum is designed to give students a solid foundation in legal analysis and practical lawyering skills that will serve them well in any pursuit.

- If you do not already hold a US law degree, you may need to complete an ABA-accredited JD program to be eligible for the Maine Bar Exam.
- The University of Maine School of Law has a three-year JD curriculum.

Why complete a LL.M. (Masters Of Laws) Degree?

The LL.M. is a Master of Laws degree where candidates learn about many aspects of the US legal system as well as international law.

- It is designed for both **US and international students who already have a law degree and have practiced law.**
- The LL.M. academic program typically requires students to complete twenty-four credits.
- This program can be used to ensure an internationally educated lawyer has the required educational background in US law. **However, it may be possible to fulfill these requirements through only taking a course or two; therefore, speak with law school admissions counselors before enrolling.**
- LL.M. degree candidates must have completed a law degree at an ABA-accredited law school in the United States or earned an equivalent degree at an accredited international university.
 - Follow [this link](#) to see which degree is required based on the country you are coming from.

The Law School Application Process

Applying to Law School in the United States is a multistep process that takes significant preparation and planning. Below is a brief outline of the key steps along the way:

- **Get started by creating an LSAC online account**
 - Your LSAC online account will help you track the status of every step you take as you apply to your selected schools. Each school has specific application requirements and timelines.
- **Register, Prepare, and Take the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) exam**
 - Most JD law schools require the LSAT, and many will require you to take the test by November/December for admission the following fall. However, taking the test earlier, in June or September/October, is advisable.
- **Research Law Schools**
 - Develop a list of law schools that meet your needs and interests.
 - Meet law school recruiters in-person or remotely.
- **Register for a Credential Assembly Service (CAS)**
 - Upload all information required for JD/LL.M. program applications.
- **Applicants for whom English is not their first language may be required to take the TOEFL**
 - **English proficiency scores:** TOEFL score of 79 or above (internet-based), or IELTS score of 6.5 or higher, will also need to be submitted to LSAC.
 - **LL.M. Applicants at Maine School Of Law:** Submission of a writing sample for review by the Graduate Programs Director and/or Graduate Admissions Committee as well as completion of an in-person or video conference interview with the Graduate Programs Director or other Graduate Admissions Committee member.

Please see more details on the additional reference letters, statements and documents required as part of the application process for international students.

About the LSAC

The Law School Admissions Council (LSAC) is in charge of administering the LSAT exam and also assembling and assessing credentials for admissions to LL.M. and JD programs.

- Essentially, they gather your credentials and materials before you apply to your law program. You will have to send transcripts and letters of recommendation to LSAC, who will then send it on to the law programs you apply for.

About the LSAT

The Law School Admission Test (LSAT) is a challenging and rigorous test that is required of all students looking to begin a JD law degree program.

- It is a half-day standardized test administered six times each year at designated testing centers in each state.
- The LSAT assesses reading comprehension, logical, and verbal reasoning proficiency.

About the CAS

LSAC's Credential Assembly Service (CAS) simplifies the law school application process for both candidates and law schools.

- With CAS, your transcripts, letters of recommendation, and any other documents required for each of your law school applications only need to be sent one time to LSAC.
- All ABA-approved law school applications are available electronically through your CAS account. LSAC combines your documents with your LSAT score and forwards a full report to all the schools you apply to.



3 APPLYING TO THE BAR EXAM

If you have a law degree which is:

- **Found to be substantially equivalent;**
- AND you have been **admitted to practice law** in the same jurisdiction where you studied;
- AND you have **three or more years of practicing law** (out of the last five years).

Then you can apply to take the **bar exam in Maine**.

You are only ready to apply to sit for the Maine bar examination if:

- You have completed the 'advanced determination of equivalency of foreign education,' and your education was found to be equivalent.
- You have taken the required coursework mandated by the Board of Bar Examiners **and** have been reassessed for educational equivalency.



In order to apply, you will need:

- **'ADVANCED DETERMINATION OF EQUIVALENCY OF FOREIGN EDUCATION'** will need to be completed and show that your education is equivalent to a US law degree.
- **PROOF OF BEING ABLE TO PRACTICE LAW IN ANOTHER COUNTRY**, including:
 - Date(s) of admission
 - Confirmation of good standing
 - An explanation of any breaks in good standing status (ie. Administrative suspension, inactive status)
- **PROOF OF PRACTICING LAW FOR 3 YEARS:** Evidence that the applicant has been actively practicing law or teaching law for at least 3 of the last 5 years in a jurisdiction in which the applicant is admitted to practice law (e.g., a sworn statement from employer describing the work that was done), including:
 - A detailed description of the attorney's practice or teaching throughout the three-year period of active practice, including position(s) held
 - A description of the work conducted, and dates and location(s) of employment

How long will this take?

When you are ready to take the bar exam, your completed application must be received by the Maine Board of Bar Examiners no later than:

- May 20 for the July examination
- December 20 for the February examination
- Please note that **all application requirements** must be completed within one year of the date of filing the application.

How much will it cost?

- All internationally trained bar exam applicants must pay a total fee of **\$900**.
- If you have completed the 'advanced determination of equivalency of foreign education', the **\$250** fee previously paid can go towards the application fee.

Please read the application procedures carefully [here](#).

You can access the forms to apply to sit for the Maine Bar exam [here](#).



4 TAKING THE BAR EXAM

Once you have been approved to take the Maine Bar Exam you will need to begin a rigorous course of study for the exam.

Maine requires the following exams:

- **Uniform Bar Exam (UBE)**—administered by the National Conference of Bar Examiners
 - Multi-State Bar Exam (MBE)
 - Multi-state Essay Exam (MEE)
 - Multi-state Performance Test (MPT)
- **Multi-state Professional Responsibility Exam (MPRE)**—administered by Pearson Vue

How long will it take?

- The UBE exams are given the last Tuesday and Wednesday in February and July of each year. The MPRE is administered separately, see below for timing.
- Consider how long it will take you to be adequately prepared for the test.
- It takes approximately two months for UBE scores to be published.



How much will it cost?

- MPRE regular registration fee is **\$95** (late registration fee is **\$190**).
- Consider the cost of the prep programs.

See more details on the fees [here](#).

- 1. Preparation for the Bar exam.** US law students often dedicate months to full-time test preparation. The National Conference of Bar Examiners (NCBE) has information booklets for each of its tests with extensive lists of content areas and practice questions. NCBE also offers an online practice test for a fee. However, you may also want to consider a Bar exam preparation class for structured study.
- 2. The UBE passing score is a scaled score of 276.** The total score is 50% MBE multiple choice questions, 30% MEE converted essay score, and 20% MPT practical law scenario questions.
- 3.** You may request copies of past MEE and MPT questions from NCBE through their website.

[Click here](#) for all exam information specific to Maine.

- 4.** To register for the UBE through the NCBE website, [click here](#).
- 5. MPRE:** In addition to the UBE, you will need to pass and submit your scores for the MPRE.
 - The MPRE is offered at specific times, generally in March and November.
 - The MPRE has two components. The first knowledge area is the **American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct**, which dictate lawyer ethics. It also tests **ABA's Model Code of Judicial Conduct**.
 - Pearson Vue administers the MPRE.
 - You must complete the NCBE portion of the registration process, schedule your test appointment with Pearson VUE, and pay the test fee by 11:59 p.m. Central time on the registration deadline, or you will not be permitted to register for that administration of the MPRE.
 - The minimum required score on the MPRE is a scaled score of 80.
- 6.** Once you have passed all of the above examinations, you will be able to register as an attorney with the Board of Overseers of the Bar in Maine.



Other Jobs in the Legal Field

While you are pursuing licensing, you may wish to consider other jobs in the legal field. Some will require short term training and may have limited opportunities for career advancement but can provide opportunities for employment and experience within various areas of the legal system. Keep in mind that your educational credentials and degree will need to meet the requirements of a job, and an evaluation from a **NACES** approved evaluator can help to demonstrate this to an employer. Examples of positions to consider:



Paralegal / Legal Assistant

What you do: Paralegals assist lawyers (generally in a law firm) in preparing for court and perform many tasks similar to lawyers (drafting contracts and mortgages and maintaining financial records etc.).

Training: Maine does not require specific certification for paralegals, but earning a certificate may help you be prepared for the job. A certificate program can take from 6 months to 2 years to complete, and may be offered by vocational schools, community colleges, and some universities. Some employers may require an Associate's or a Bachelor's degree.

Certification: If you choose to pursue training, please see the **National Association of Legal Assistants** for more information.



Financial Services and Compliance Work

What you do: Compliance officers are often needed in many different industries. The primary duty of any compliance officer is to make sure a company is being run legally and ethically and is adhering to relevant regulations.

Training: A Bachelor's Degree is normally a minimum requirement, and some employers may look for advanced degrees, like a law degree or a Master's Degree in business administration (MBA), especially to qualify for a higher-level position.

Certification: To become a Certified Compliance and Ethics Professional (CCEP) through the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics (SCCE):

- You must have at least one year in a full-time compliance position or 1,500 hours of direct compliance job duties earned in the two years preceding your application date; and
- Your job duties directly relate to the tasks reflected in the "Detailed Content Outline" on pages 22-24 of the **Candidate Handbook**.

Students who have successfully completed a certificate program from a Compliance Certification Board (CCB)-accredited university within the last two years are exempt from the work experience requirement, and can apply to sit for a CCB certification examination, provided the examination is taken within 12 months of successfully completing the CCB-accredited university program. Please see a list of **approved university programs**.



Interpreter For Courts

What you do: A court interpreter facilitates communication in legal settings for people with limited English proficiency or hearing impairments, ensuring they have equal access to justice by conveying spoken and written words accurately and impartially between English and another language.

Training: To be an official court interpreter in the Maine court system, you will need to complete the Maine Court Interpreter Orientation training, pass the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) written English examination, and pass the American Council on Teaching Foreign Languages (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI).

Certification: For more information on how to become a rostered court interpreter [visit this link](#).



Claim Adjuster

What you do: Claims adjusters, appraisers, examiners, and investigators evaluate insurance claims. They decide whether an insurance company must pay a claim, and if so, how much.

Training: A high school diploma or equivalent is typically required for a person to work as an entry-level claims adjuster, examiner, or investigator, although some positions may require a bachelor's degree or insurance-related work experience.

Certification: You must take and pass the state adjuster exam (administered by Pearson VUE). After passing the exam, you must submit your license application online through the National Insurance Producer Registry (NIPR).



Mediator

What you do: As a mediator, you can work with independent firms or you can work through the Maine judicial system as a Mediator, Arbitrator or Early Neutral Evaluator for the Court.

Training: The University of Maine offers a hybrid 40-hour, Mediation and the Process of Conflict Transformation course. There are many additional options for online courses available.

Certification: For each of these positions, there are specific qualifications, standards and procedures you must comply with. For more information on becoming a mediator in Maine, please see the State of Maine Judicial Branch [Information for Mediators](#) or the [National Association of Certified Mediators](#). Advanced English skills and familiarity with US law are required.



OTHER RELATED FIELDS TO CONSIDER

Public Sector

There are many administrative, organizational and management positions available in the public sector that would be good opportunities for foreign lawyers. This could mean working for the courts, municipalities, any of the different state departments or the public school systems. Pursuing a job in the public sector, whether or not it is directly related to law, will have many benefits. You will become familiar with the organizational structures and management systems of public organizations in Maine. Some examples of public sector jobs could include program administrator or manager, planner, policy or budget analyst.

Other examples include case management in the human services, or work in the corrections field. Correctional officers and police officers are some of the most in-demand jobs in Maine.

Non-Profit

Make connections with local non-profits who are doing work you are interested in, such as health care, the environment or social services. While non-profits may be interested in hiring someone familiar with the law, there are many other positions that will give you necessary experience in US organizations. Work could include: advocacy, policy, analysis, program management, human resources, regulations compliance, business and financial compliance, or work pertaining to the language, culture and customs of other countries. For example, non-profits who work with immigrant communities often look to hire individuals familiar with the cultural, legal and linguistic background of that community. Any position that allows you to gain experience with how organizations are run will serve you well as you pursue more specialized legal work or administrative positions.

Human Resources

Human Resource Departments have positions at a variety of levels. A background in law could be very beneficial for certain positions within HR. For example, a background in labor law or employment legislation could make you an attractive candidate for certain HR positions. Even entry-level HR positions create opportunities for you to become familiar with how organizations and companies are run in the US.

Law Enforcement Or Criminology

There are often many law enforcement positions available. Each position has its own qualification requirements and certifications and trainings. Some training, certificate programs (such as police officer), require that you have a high school degree to apply. A certificate in criminal justice or criminology is an opportunity for individuals to gain specific instruction in an area of law enforcement. An associate's degree in law enforcement prepares graduates for police careers. An associate's degree usually takes two years to complete, is a well-rounded degree with general education courses mixed in, and serves as a stepping stone to a bachelor's degree. Prior college coursework may be counted toward these degrees. Entrance requirements for the Maine Criminal Justice Academy include a physical fitness test, psychological testing, a background check and a reading/writing exam called the ALERT test.



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