

Clinical assistant and associate physician licences in Canada

The province-by-province summary, from where you stand today

PATHWAY	SOURCE	LAST REVIEWED
Clinical assistant and associate physician	MCC e-book, adapted	July 2026
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This guide summarizes the clinical assistant and associate physician licences available to internationally trained physicians in Canada. It is the take-away companion to the interactive guide at filipesantosmd.com/licensing-guide.html, and it is adapted from the e-book Physician Licensing in Canada, which I wrote for the Medical Council of Canada (MCC).

THE SHORT VERSION

These are supervised practice roles, not independent licences. They can put you back in a Canadian hospital or clinic while you work toward full licensure, and in some provinces the hours count toward other pathways. Requirements differ sharply by province, so match your profile against each licence before you apply.

1 How these roles work

A clinical assistant or associate physician practises under the supervision of a fully licensed physician and is never the most responsible physician. The role is open to family physicians and specialists in most provinces. Sponsorship or an employment offer from a health authority is usually part of licensure.

Two points deserve attention before you plan around these roles. First, in most provinces there is no direct pathway from this role to independent practice, and Newfoundland and Labrador states this explicitly. Second, the hours can still matter elsewhere: Saskatchewan's SIPPA counts licensed clinical assistant or associate physician work toward currency of practice, and Nova Scotia may consider associate physician experience for currency at its discretion. Ontario is the exception in the other direction: clinical assistant work there is unregulated and is not recognized as Canadian practice hours by regulators or Practice-Ready Assessment programs.

2 Licence snapshots, province by province

These follow the order used in the source e-book. Full requirements and application steps are in the interactive guide and on each regulator's website.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Associate physician licence

Exams	None. BC and PEI are the only provinces that issue a limited-role licence without the MCCQE, the NAC Examination, or an accepted alternative.
Training	Minimum 1 year of accredited postgraduate training, matched to the setting: acute care, community primary care, or surgical assisting.
Currency	960 hours (24 weeks full time) within the preceding 3 years.
Route in	Health authority sponsorship through Health Match BC, then licensure with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia. As of July 2026, applications for the community primary care setting were paused; confirm current intake.

ALBERTA

Associate physician, limited practice registration

Exams	MCCQE, plus English language proficiency.
Training	Minimum 1 year of hospital-based postgraduate training in acute care clinical services.
Currency	At least 6 months of postgraduate training or independent practice within the last 3 years.
Route in	Letter of offer from Alberta Health Services or Covenant Health, completion of their orientation and assessment, then limited practice registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta.

SASKATCHEWAN

Clinical assistant, limited roles licensure

Exams	MCCQE, United States licensing examinations acceptable to the College, or other acceptable proof of medical knowledge. English proficiency required.
Training	No fixed postgraduate training requirement in the comparison table; the Saskatchewan Health Authority defines the role and sponsors candidates.
Currency	5 months of clinical practice within the past 5 years, or an assessment and retraining at your expense.
Route in	Restricted to tertiary hospitals under supervision. The Saskatchewan Health Authority decides when to open limited-role positions.

MANITOBA

Clinical assistant

Exams	NAC Examination, or enrolment as a Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada (LMCC), plus English proficiency.
Training	No postgraduate training or independent practice requirement in the comparison table. Several educational backgrounds qualify, including a medical degree from an approved faculty.
Currency	None listed.
Route in	Registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba. An employment offer is not needed to apply, but registration is not granted without one. Applications stay valid for 6 months.

ONTARIO

Clinical assistant role (no licence exists)

Status	Ontario does not issue a clinical assistant or associate physician licence. The work is unregulated employment under delegation of controlled acts, with the supervising physician fully accountable.
Entry	Determined by the hiring physician or institution. No provincial exam requirement, no register, no protected title. Employers may ask for the MCCQE or the NAC Examination.
Caution	Hours worked as a clinical assistant in Ontario are not recognized as Canadian practice hours by regulators or Practice-Ready Assessment programs. Since April 1, 2025, physician assistant is a separate regulated class with protected titles; an international medical degree does not qualify you for it.

Clinical assistant licence

Exams	Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada (LMCC) or an acceptable alternative. Language requirements follow the College's bilingual policy.
Training and practice	2 years of postgraduate training plus 1 year of independent practice, or 1 year plus 2 years.
Currency	At least 450 hours of clinical practice within the 5 years preceding application.
Route in	Sponsorship by a regional health authority (Horizon or Vitalité) for a College-approved program. Application through physiciansapply.ca with a \$450 non-refundable fee.

Clinical assistant licence (practises as an associate physician)

Exams	LMCC or an acceptable alternative, including complete USMLE, FLEX, NBME, COMLEX-USA, or a minimum of 5 years of recent postgraduate training and practice. Note: from January 1, 2027, CPSNS no longer accepts new IELTS Academic or CELPIP General results; results dated before then remain usable within their 24-month validity, even for applications submitted after that date. Only Nova Scotia has this rule.
Training and practice	2 years of postgraduate training plus 1 year of independent practice, or 1 year plus 2 years.
Currency	450 hours in the intended scope within the 5 years before the practice start date, and no more than 5 years out of independent practice.
Route in	Review of qualifications through physiciansapply.ca, then a letter of offer from Nova Scotia Health or IWK Health before the licence is issued.

Associate physician licence and clinical assistant licence

Two licences	PEI is the only province with both, and they are not interchangeable. The associate physician licence requires no jurisdictional examination; the clinical assistant licence requires the MCCQE or an equivalent and LMCC enrolment or an accepted alternative.
Training	Associate physician: a completed postgraduate program, or qualifications the College considers substantially equivalent, plus certification in family medicine or the discipline from another jurisdiction. Clinical assistant: 2 years of training plus 1 year of practice, 1 year plus 2 years, or equivalent qualifications.
Currency	450 hours of clinical practice within the last 5 years for both licences.
Route in	Registration with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI, practising only under an approved supervisor.

Clinical assistant licence

Exams	MCCQE or an acceptable alternative, plus Advanced Cardiac Life Support (or the equivalent for your domain) and English proficiency.
Training and practice	A discipline-appropriate postgraduate program of at least 12 months plus 2 years of acute care practice experience, or a program of 2 years or more with no practice experience required.
Currency	6 continuous months of clinical practice within the 4 years preceding application. Practice where you were not the most responsible physician counts, so supervised posts such as a registrar in a non-training program in the United Kingdom or Australia may qualify, provided all other requirements are met. Confirm with CPSNL.
Route in	Sponsorship and continuous employment in a College-approved division within a secondary or tertiary care setting. There is presently no pathway from clinical assistant to independent practice.

3 Your next steps

This month

- ☐ Open a physiciansapply.ca account and start source verification of your medical degree and training documents.
- ☐ Write down your totals: months of postgraduate training, years of independent practice, and clinical hours in the last 3, 4, and 5 years. Each province counts currency differently.
- ☐ Shortlist the provinces where you meet the requirements today, and note which exams, if any, you still need.

Next

- ☐ Watch the health authority job boards: Health Match BC, Alberta Health Services and Covenant Health, Nova Scotia Health, and the regional health authorities in the other provinces. Sponsorship or an offer is usually the gate.
- ☐ Confirm the current requirements with the regulator before spending on exams. Rules change, sometimes without notice.
- ☐ If independent practice is your goal, plan the bridge now: which Practice-Ready Assessment program you will target, and whether your supervised hours will count there.

4 Resources

The interactive guide	Every licence above in full detail, with application steps and the comparison table. filipesantosmd.com/licensing-guide.html
The source e-book	Physician Licensing in Canada, the free MCC e-book this guide is adapted from. mcc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Physician-licensing-in-Canada.pdf
physiciansapply.ca	The MCC portal for source verification and applications for medical registration. physiciansapply.ca
MCCQE preparation	The 100-Day MCCQE Study Plan, and Ethics for the MCCQE and NAC, from the Path to Practice Series. filipesantosmd.com/books.html
1:1 consultation	If you want this mapped to your own CV, province by province, book a consultation. filipesantosmd.com/book-a-consultation.html

Use the supervised role as a bridge, not a destination, and plan the next step before you take this one.

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This guide is provided for educational purposes and summarizes publicly available information from Canadian medical regulatory authorities, adapted from the e-book Physician Licensing in Canada published by the Medical Council of Canada. Requirements change frequently and vary by province, other factors may be considered in individual cases, and the final decision on eligibility and licensure always rests with each regulator and program. Confirm current details with the relevant bodies before acting.

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