

FILIPE SANTOS MD

PATH TO PRACTICE



FREE GUIDE

Practice-Ready Assessment programs in family medicine

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

PATHWAY

Practice-Ready Assessment, family medicine

SOURCE

MCC e-book, adapted

LAST REVIEWED

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This guide summarizes the Practice-Ready Assessment (PRA) programs open to internationally trained family physicians and general practitioners 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

Eligibility differs more by province than most candidates expect. Before you spend money on exams or applications, match your postgraduate training, your years of independent practice, and your recency of practice against each program below. Most candidates qualify in some provinces and not in others.

1 How the PRA route works

A Practice-Ready Assessment is a supervised period of real clinical work, usually about 12 weeks, in which experienced assessors evaluate whether you are ready for independent practice as a family physician. Candidates who pass move to a provisional licence under supervision, and most programs require a return of service, commonly three years, in a community assigned by the province.

The common building blocks across provinces are a medical degree from a school listed in the World Directory of Medical Schools, source verification of your credentials through physiciansapply.ca, a defined amount of postgraduate training and independent practice, proof that your practice is current, language proficiency, and one or more of the Medical Council of Canada Qualifying Examination (MCCQE), the National Assessment Collaboration (NAC) Examination, and the Therapeutics Decision-Making (TDM) Examination.

2 Program 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 program's website.

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Practice Ready Assessment BC (PRA-BC)

Exams	TDM Examination before the clinical field assessment. The MCCQE and the NAC Examination are not required.
Residency status	Immigration status in Canada is not required to apply. Overseas applicants are guided toward permanent residency after selection.
Training and practice	2 years of postgraduate training leading to registration as a general or family physician, with 7 core rotations, plus at least 2 years of independent practice.
Currency	960 hours of clinical practice as a family physician in the preceding 3 years.
Structure	1-week orientation in Vancouver, then a 12-week clinical field assessment. 3-year return of service. Two intakes per year, applications accepted year-round.

ALBERTA

Practice Readiness Assessment Alberta (PRA-AB)

Exams	A registration exam (the MCCQE, or the complete United States Medical Licensing Examination as an equivalent), plus the TDM Examination for family medicine.
Residency status	Permanent residency is not required.
Training and practice	All postgraduate training required for the discipline, from a university-affiliated program, including 4 months of community-based primary care and 8 weeks in at least 3 of pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, surgery, and internal medicine.
Currency	At least 1 year of recent practice or postgraduate training in the intended specialty within the last 3 years.
Structure	Two parts of 12 weeks each: a preliminary clinical assessment, then a probationary assessment. Sponsorship is secured through DoctorJobsAlberta.com.

SASKATCHEWAN

Saskatchewan International Physician Practice Assessment (SIPPA)

Exams	MCCQE, plus the NAC Examination (or the MCCQE Part II taken in 2021 or before), plus the TDM Examination.
Residency status	Permanent residency is not required. A work permit is your responsibility.
Training and practice	A family medicine postgraduate program of at least 12 months with generalist rotations. If the program was under 24 months, 3 years of full-scope family practice are required.
Currency	6 months in the last 3 years. Licensed clinical assistant or associate physician work counts toward currency.
Structure	About 5 weeks of orientation, then a 12-week clinical field assessment. 3-year return of service in a rural community. Saskatchewan residents can apply for a grant of up to \$6,000 for eligibility expenses.

MANITOBA

Practice Ready Assessment Manitoba, Family Practice (PRAMB-FP)

Exams	NAC Examination, plus the TDM Examination for top-ranked candidates.
Residency status	Preference is given to established residents of Manitoba.
Training and practice	2 years of accredited family medicine postgraduate training, or 1 year plus at least 3 years of family practice in the preceding 5 years.
Currency	A minimum of 3 years of independent practice as a general or family practitioner within the 5 years before the application deadline.
Structure	3 months: 4 weeks of emergency department work and two 4-week clinic rotations. Return of service in rural, underserved Manitoba.

ONTARIO

Practice Ready Ontario (PRO)

Exams	MCCQE with the Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada (LMCC), plus the NAC Examination (or the MCCQE Part II taken in 2021 or before), plus the TDM Examination for shortlisted candidates.
Residency status	Canadian citizenship or permanent residency is required. This is the strictest immigration requirement of any PRA program.
Training and practice	48 months of combined training and practice as a general or family physician, with 7 core rotations. Practice experience can cover up to 3 rotation gaps, with attestation.
Currency	960 hours in the last 3 years. Up to 25 percent can be virtual care.
Structure	Two screening phases, then a 12-week clinical field assessment. 3-year return of service with the Ministry of Health.

QUEBEC

Restrictive permit, family medicine

Exams	MCCQE or the United States Medical Licensing Examination Step 2 CK, plus French proficiency (Office québécois de la langue française examination or accepted proof).
Training and practice	Postgraduate training generally equivalent to Quebec's requirements, and 12 months of competent practice in the field within the last 3 years.
Structure	Sponsorship through Recrutement Santé Québec, then a 12-week assessment preceded by a week of observation. The permit is limited to institutions, renewed annually, and convertible to a regular permit later. The process averages 9 to 18 months.

NEW BRUNSWICK

Practice Ready Assessment New Brunswick (PRA-NB)

Exams	MCCQE. The NAC Examination is preferred but not required. TDM Examination if not previously passed. The only fully bilingual program, with English and French streams.
Residency status	Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or legally entitled to work in New Brunswick.
Training and practice	2 years of postgraduate training plus 1 year of independent practice, or 1 year plus 2 years, with 7 core rotations.
Currency	450 hours of clinical practice in the last 3 years. No more than one unsuccessful Canadian PRA attempt in the last 5 years.
Structure	Continuous intake. Interviews and matching with a regional health authority, then orientation, an observership, and two 6-week supervised assessment periods. 3-year return of service.

NOVA SCOTIA

Nova Scotia Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence (NS PACE)

Exams	None. The MCCQE, the NAC Examination, and the TDM Examination are not required.
Residency status	Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or legally entitled to work in Nova Scotia.
Training and practice	24 months of training plus 12 months of practice, or 12 months of training plus 24 months of practice, in family medicine or general practice, with core rotations and defined substitution rules.
Currency	450 hours of clinical practice in the last 5 years.
Structure	A centralized model: an orientation (the Welcome Collaborative) plus an assessment in the PACE clinic. Rolling entry, about 12 weeks on average, maximum 20. Applications run through the More Than Medicine website.

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Practice Ready Assessment Newfoundland and Labrador (PRA-NL)

Exams	MCCQE (for the provisional licence eligibility letter), plus the NAC Examination (or the MCCQE Part II taken in 2021 or before), plus the TDM Examination.
Training and practice	2 years of postgraduate training, or 1 year with required rotations plus 3 years of independent practice.
Currency	450 hours in the last 3 years. No more than one prior unsuccessful Canadian PRA attempt.
Structure	Selection interview and committee review, then a 12-week clinical field assessment in the sponsoring health zone. Passing the assessment does not guarantee full licensure.

3 Watch-outs before you apply

IMMIGRATION STATUS

Ontario requires citizenship or permanent residency at the time of application. Most other programs accept overseas applicants, and BC and Saskatchewan say so explicitly. Check your status against the province before anything else.

ONE FAILED ATTEMPT CAN CLOSE DOORS

New Brunswick and Newfoundland and Labrador both cap prior unsuccessful Canadian PRA attempts at one. Choose your first application carefully rather than applying everywhere at once.

THE TDM EXAMINATION IS NEARLY UNIVERSAL

Every program except NS PACE and Quebec uses the TDM Examination at some stage. If your plan spans several provinces, passing it early protects your options.

4 Your next steps

This month

- ☐ Open a physiciansapply.ca account and start source verification of your medical degree and training documents. Verification takes time and every program relies on it.
- ☐ Write down your totals: months of postgraduate training, rotations completed, years of independent practice, and clinical hours in the last 3 and 5 years.
- ☐ Shortlist the provinces where you meet the training, practice, and currency requirements today.

Next

- ☐ Confirm the current requirements on each shortlisted program's own website. Rules change, sometimes without notice.
- ☐ Plan your exams around your shortlist: MCCQE, NAC Examination, and TDM Examination as required.
- ☐ If your language test results are older than 24 months, plan a retake before you apply.

5 Resources

The interactive guide	Every program above in full detail, with application steps and comparison tables. 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

Pick the provinces where you already qualify, verify early, and apply once, well.

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This guide is provided for educational purposes and summarizes publicly available information from Canadian medical regulatory authorities and Practice-Ready Assessment programs, 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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