

## Western Canada Competency Profile Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

The Western Canada Competency Profile (WCCP) is a joint initiative between the Law Societies of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan to identify and validate the competencies needed for entry to legal practice. The finalized WCCP was approved by the all four jurisdictions in April 2024.

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### 1. What is the Western Canada Competency Profile (WCCP)?

Over the last year and a half, the Law Societies of Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan have been working on a project to identify and validate the competencies needed for entry to legal practice. This initiative resulted in the development of the Western Canada Competency Profile (WCCP), which will inform lawyer training and education, including bar admission program development and experiential learning opportunities in the coming years.

### 2. How will the WCCP be used moving forward?

The WCCP will not serve as an additional layer of requirements for an articling student to meet. Rather, it will be used to evaluate and improve the bar admission process going forward.

The WCCP establishes a foundation that will allow us to explore the following opportunities:

- Work with existing bar admission programs to evaluate which competencies they currently address and where they could be adjusted to better align with the WCCP.
- Evaluate current articling systems/experiential learning activities to understand which competencies should be acquired during this term.
- Develop better guidance for principals about the competencies students are expected to obtain through experiential learning and how principals will be expected to assess those competencies.
- Explore alternative experiential learning options that would provide students with the tools to develop the required competencies of the WCCP.

### 3. What has changed now that the WCCP has been developed?

Nothing. While the WCCP has been approved by all four western provinces, it is not being implemented at this time.

The WCCP is the first step in a larger initiative and it will take time to fully implement. There is still work to be done to determine how the WCCP will be used.

For the time being, students will not be assessed at the time of bar call based on the competencies listed in the WCCP, nor are principals responsible to integrate the competencies into learning plans. No action is required from articling students or principals at this time.

**4. I am a student. Do I have to meet all of the WCCP competencies upon bar call?**

No, the WCCP is not being implemented at this time. For the time being, students will not be assessed at the time of bar call based on the competencies listed in the WCCP. No action is required from articling students at this time.

**5. I am a principal. Am I responsible for teaching all of the competencies in the WCCP?**

No, the WCCP is not being implemented at this time. For the time being, principals are not responsible to integrate the competencies into learning plans. No action is required from principals at this time.

**6. How are competencies in the WCCP assessed?**

There is a significant amount of work that still needs to be done with the WCCP, particularly around where and how these competencies will be acquired and the appropriate method of assessment for these competencies.

Participating law societies will collaborate with the relevant stakeholders to complete this work. More information and resources will be shared as they are developed, but it will take time.

**7. Why are you sharing the WCCP now?**

We are sharing the WCCP now to keep the profession updated on our work around lawyer competency.

**8. How does this fit with other competency frameworks in Canada for the legal profession?**

There are other existing competency profiles within the legal profession in Canada. These apply to lawyers and students at various points in their careers, but the WCCP fills a gap in lawyer development.

The National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) Competency Profile outlines the competencies required for internationally trained lawyers or students to demonstrate that their legal education and experience are roughly equivalent to those of graduates of Canadian common law programs. The National Requirement sets out the minimum requirements that a law school must meet within their curriculum to be accredited. This translates to include the skills and competencies

law graduates from Canada must have to qualify for entry to law society bar admission programs. The WCCP does not repeat any of the substantive knowledge competencies included in the National Requirement or NCA Profile. These are assumed to have been acquired before the point of entry to practice.

## **Background**

### **9. Why was the WCCP developed?**

The purpose of the WCCP is to develop a framework of competencies for individuals to demonstrate at entry to legal practice that is consistent across the four western Canadian provinces – Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The WCCP serves as a foundational document that will help the law societies build a better system for lawyer competence moving forward. It will create a common benchmark for performance across all bar admission requirements that didn't previously exist.

It is our responsibility as the regulator to ensure the training requirements within the articling system expose students to key competencies that will help them begin successful legal careers.

### **10. Why is a standard framework of competencies at entry to legal practice needed?**

There is inconsistency in the competencies learned during articling and the quality of mentorship and feedback is a challenge for both students and principals/mentors.

Improved identification and assessment of entry-level competence benefits legal practitioners and the public by providing a more reliable, transparent and accurate gauge to determine the readiness of a candidate for licensure to take on the duties of a lawyer. Licensing candidates, and other stakeholders in the lawyer formation process, ought to know the competencies that must be possessed by those individuals seeking to gain entry into the legal profession in BC.

### **11. How was the WCCP developed?**

An Advisory Committee made up of representatives from each law society was created to oversee the WCCP project and set guidelines for the work.

The Advisory Committee appointed a diverse group of practitioners, educators, Benchers, articling supervisors and other key stakeholders from across the four provinces—the WCCP Task Force—who then drafted and finalized the WCCP after consultation with the profession via focus groups and a validation survey in 2023.

The WCCP Task Force conducted a rigorous review and feedback from the profession was thoughtfully considered and incorporated into the final draft.

The finalized WCCP was approved by the Law Society of British Columbia Benchers at the April 26, 2024 board meeting and was officially approved by the other three jurisdictions as of April 26, 2024.

## **12. Why did all four western provinces collaborate on this?**

Following the Bencher decision in September 2022 to develop a Competency Profile, we learned that the Law Societies of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba were also embarking on a project of defining the competencies that need to be acquired for lawyer licensing, which made it a timely opportunity to bring greater consistency to bar admission standards in Western Canada.

Broader collaboration allows for cross-provincial comparisons and offers valuable insight into how we can enhance lawyer competence and, ultimately, the articling experience in our jurisdictions.

## **Content and Next Steps**

### **13. What is included in the WCCP?**

The competencies outlined in the WCCP define the knowledge, skills and abilities that an individual should have at the time they are called to the bar in any of the four western jurisdictions. Once the WCCP is implemented, these will be the universal competencies for all individuals at entry to practice in the four western provinces, regardless of practice area or setting.

The WCCP is made up of seven domains (or areas of competency), each containing two to five competencies for a total of 25 competencies. Each competency has two to seven performance indicators for additional guidance on how that competency might be demonstrated.

The WCCP outlines seven domains in which competencies are categorized:

- Ethics and Professional Responsibilities
- Communication
- Truth and Reconciliation
- Professional Relationship Management
- Critical Thinking and Analysis
- Advice and Advocacy

- Practice Management and Well-being

Performance indicators show how these competencies can be demonstrated. They provide examples of different aspects of the competency that an individual should exhibit.

#### **14. What are the next steps to implement the WCCP?**

The western Canadian law societies will continue to work together in the next steps of this project over the next couple of years. This will involve developing guidance for bar admission programs and principals/supervisors.

#### **15. Who do I contact if I have more questions about the WCCP?**

More information will be shared as we work towards developing guidance and resources to implement the WCCP over the next few years.

If you have questions about the WCCP in the interim, contact [professionaldevelopment@lsbc.org](mailto:professionaldevelopment@lsbc.org).