

# MICHIGAN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT LICENSING GUIDE

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## 1. HOW THE PROFESSION IS ORGANIZED IN MICHIGAN

### OVERVIEW

This guide looks at things that you as a foreign-educated Landscape Architect must do to become eligible for landscape architect licensing in Michigan. At the same time, it includes some background and tips on the larger landscape architect profession to give you an idea of the variety of opportunities available as you work to rebuild your career.

### REGULATING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

The Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA), Bureau of Professional Licensing (BPL) regulates the practice of landscape architects in the state of Michigan.

- Practice of landscape architecture:
  - (i) The performance of professional services such as consultation, investigation, research, planning, design, or responsible field observation in connection with the development of land areas while preserving, enhancing, or determining proper land uses while maintaining natural drainage and considering inherent problems of the land relating to erosion, use and stress, blight, or other hazards.
  - (ii) The location and arrangement of tangible objects and features.
- Exemptions: A person may perform or offer services as a landscape designer, landscape gardener, landscape contractor, or landscape nursery operator as long as that person does not use the term "landscape architect".

### A LONG PATH TO LICENSING

The landscape architect licensing process is complex and takes years - even for graduates from a program accredited by the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA). However, if your US or foreign school is not accredited by the ASLA, the requirements are even more demanding. You may, however, be able to use education outside the US towards this requirement.

Many people choose not to license. There are many challenging and well-paid careers in landscape architecture that do not require it. Most graduates of US schools offering a landscape architect program go on to work in their fields of study, but never become licensed landscape architects. Whatever you decide about future licensing for your career, non-licensed positions are a way to first enter the field in the US. If you want to become licensed in the future, a non-licensed position can

support you and your career goals during this long-term process. Some employers even support qualifying candidates with training or pay their licensing fees.

## 2. ELIGIBILITY FOR LICENSING

### OVERVIEW OF LICENSING CRITERIA

This guide assumes that you are not licensed as a landscape architect anywhere in the US. To become licensed in Michigan you must follow the process of licensure by acceptance of examination. Landscape Architects with a license in another state of the US can pursue licensure by reciprocity.

Foreign-educated landscape architectural candidates need to meet several requirements to receive a license as a landscape architect in Michigan. Throughout the process you will work closely with The Council of Landscape Architectural Boards (CLARB).

Steps to licensing are as follows:

#### I. EVALUATE YOUR FOREIGN DEGREE WITH EDUCATIONAL CREDENTIAL EVALUATORS (ECE)

If your college or university degree was in a landscape architect discipline, you must work with the Educational Credential Evaluators (ECE) to have it evaluated.

First, ECE compiles information on your degree, including original, official transcripts from your college or university. If your materials are in a language other than English, you should check if your university will translate them and provide copies in English to ECE. If this is not possible, you will need to have your own copy of your transcript translated and provide this to ECE from another source. Verify with ECE before to make sure what types of translation sources they will accept (e.g., university offices, consular offices, American Translator Association members).

Next, ECE compares your educational materials to their standards to determine any deficiencies. If deficiencies are noted, you will have to go back to school and take the types of classes your evaluation describes before you can move to other steps in the licensing process. You may even have to go back and take a full year of courses.

#### II. SHOW AT LEAST 2 YEARS OF QUALIFYING EXPERIENCE UNDER A LEGALLY PRACTICING LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT OF THE US OR CANADA

As an immigrant professional who has worked in landscape architecture in your home country, you will need to find out whether your professional experience counts as "qualifying experience" or whether you need to start again in the US workplace.

#### DOES YOUR PRIOR EXPERIENCE COUNT?

- You must be able to get documentation that shows the number of years you worked under the direct supervision of a legally practicing landscape architect and actually provided landscape architectural services. Do not stop at documenting two years if you have more as more may be required based upon the degree you hold. You must be able to prove that you reported to a person who was legally practicing landscape architect licensed in the US or Canada at the time your experience was received.

- You cannot certify your own experience.

#### HOW DO I EARN QUALIFYING EXPERIENCE IN THE US?

If you do not have the appropriate qualifying experience, then you will need to earn the rest in a US workplace. Again, you will need to work under a licensed landscape architect and your work will have to include supervised landscape architectural activities.

- Look for employment in a firm or other workplace with a licensed landscape architect on staff and get permission for the landscape architect's participation in your program.
- You will have to document your work for the landscape architect and receive his or her recommendation to meet the qualifying experience standards.
- Your exact job title is not relevant; you just need to work under a licensed landscape architect with increasing responsibility.
- If you change employers and/or supervising landscape architects, you must have all landscape architects submit documentation to account for the full amount of qualifying experience.
- Once you have gathered all documentation, submit it together with the application for approval through CLARB.

#### III. CLARB AND THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT REGISTRATION EXAMINATION (LARE)

You will begin the registration process to take the LARE examination through CLARB in which you must establish a council record. The CLARB Council Record is a verified history of your education, experience, examination, licensure history and professional references and is used throughout your career to apply for examination, licensure and certification. You must have an active Council Record is required to register for the LARE. The cost to establish your council record is \$150.

CLARB will review your education and experience to determine your qualifications to sit for the LARE examination. If approved, you will be provided instructions on how to register for the examination.

#### IV. PASS THE LARE EXAM AND RECEIVE LICENSURE AS A LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

The LARE exam will be discussed in detail in the next section. Once you have passed the exam, you must submit a [Landscape Architect application](#) to BPL with the required \$260 or \$320 fee. You will be granted licensure as a Landscape Architect in the state of Michigan after your education, experience, and examination information has been approved. Your landscape architect license must be renewed by July 31 of the even-numbered years. Please refer to the section *Beyond Licensing* for basic information on requirements to maintain licensure.

### 3. TESTS

#### LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT REGISTRATION EXAMINATION (LARE)

The Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE) assesses the ability of prospective licensees to protect the public's health, safety and welfare.

The LARE is administered three times a year over a two-week period in April, August and December. Information regarding this exam can be found on the CLARB website at [www.clarb.org](http://www.clarb.org).

The LARE exam consists of 4 sections. Content/knowledge, length of examination, and types of questions asked are as follows:

- Section 1: 2 ½ hours in length involving 100 multiple-choice and multiple-response items covering Project and Construction Management
- Section 2: 2 hours in length involving 80 multiple-choice and multiple-response items covering Inventory and Analysis
- Section 3: 3 ½ hours in length involving 100 advanced item types, multiple-choice and multiple-response items covering Design
- Section 4: 4 hours in length involving 120 advanced item types, multiple-choice and multiple-response items covering Grading, Drainage, and Construction Documentation

Sections 1 and 2 of the examination cost \$350 per section. Sections 3 and 4 of the examination cost \$540 per section. For each section of the examination, a scaled score of 650 must be achieved to pass.

#### 4. TIME AND COSTS

##### FACTORS THAT CAN INFLUENCE TIME AND COST OF PROCESS

Evaluating your foreign degree and achieving licensing as a landscape architect in Michigan depends on many factors:

- The completeness of your educational and professional records (the more documentation, the better)
- The size of the gap between your degree and CLARB criteria
- Your performance on the LARE exam and their timing
- Your access to employment that can bring you necessary qualifying experience
- Your free time and what you can afford to spend on licensing

We provide two hypothetical scenarios to show some of the variety of results that immigrant professionals may find when they seek to become professional landscape architects in Michigan. Please consider these scenarios as two examples out of many possibilities. Your experience will vary.

##### TWO POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR PE LICENSING:

<b>Step</b>	<b>More Efficient Scenario <i>Approximate Time and Cost</i></b>	<b>Less Efficient Scenario <i>Approximate Time and Cost</i></b>
1 Degree Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your university documents arrive at ECE within a month</li> <li>• The original documents are in English, so no translation is needed</li> <li>• 2 months + \$210</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It takes 4 months for your documents to arrive to ECE</li> <li>• Your documents must be translated</li> <li>• 6 months + \$210</li> </ul>
2 Satisfy Education Deficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You have a Masters degree in an accredited landscape architect program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your degree equivalency lacks 12 courses (36 credit hours)</li> <li>• 3 years + \$10,000</li> </ul>

<b>Step</b>	<b>More Efficient Scenario <i>Approximate Time and Cost</i></b>	<b>Less Efficient Scenario <i>Approximate Time and Cost</i></b>
3 Qualifying experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have the appropriate documented qualifying professional experience</li> <li>No additional time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You need an additional year of qualifying experience</li> <li>You work full time completing your qualifying professional experience 1 year</li> <li>1 year</li> </ul>
4 Pass LARE Exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You pass the LARE exam on the first try</li> <li>6 months + \$1,930</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You have to retake Section 1 of the LARE examination</li> <li>9 months + \$2,280</li> </ul>
5 Apply for licensure and receive license	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BPL approves your application 2 months after receipt</li> <li>2 months + \$260</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>BPL approves your application 5 months after receipt</li> <li>5 months + \$260</li> </ul>
	<b>More Efficient Total</b> <i>About 10 months + \$2,400</i>	<b>Less Efficient Total</b> <i>About 5.5 years + \$12,750</i>

## 5. OTHER CAREERS AND CREDENTIALS

The breadth of the landscape architectural field and the high numbers of positions that do not require licensing make other careers in landscape architecture very attractive to foreign-educated professionals, including, being a landscape gardener, landscape contractor, landscape designer, or a landscape operator.

Preparing for licensing takes a significant amount of time, money, and effort. Some professionals choose to seek lower-level positions in landscape architecture to help them meet longer-term licensing goals. If you take a job with fewer responsibilities but with access to a licensed supervising landscape architect, you may find some distinct advantages. These include the ability to build job security, polish technology skills and adapt to the US workplace culture in a lower-pressure environment, and to have more energy left over to focus on preparing for licensing exams. You should be honest with your employer about your long-term plans and be sure that they understand how you can contribute to their company's objectives.

## 6. BEYOND LICENSING

### MAINTAINING LICENSURE

Once you are licensed as a landscape architect you must maintain your Michigan license by renewing by July 31 of the even-numbered years. You will be notified in the mail and can renew on BPL's website using online payment. If your license expires, you will be required to apply for relicensure to reactivate your license.

### LICENSING MOBILITY (RECIPROCITY)

Some people with a landscape architect license from one state want to practice landscape architecture in another state. The autonomy of each state's professional regulation creates differences that complicate licensing mobility. The state of Michigan does not participate in any agreements with other states and individuals who wish to be licensed must complete an application and meet Michigan's licensing requirements.

If you are a licensed landscape architect from another state and are seeking to practice landscape architecture in Michigan, you must:

- Show that your education, experience, and examination meet all Michigan eligibility criteria for licensing as a landscape architect
- Apply for and receive a Michigan license in addition to your existing license

Conversely, when Michigan landscape architects want to work in other states, they must research and meet the licensing guidelines of their destination state.

## 7. IMPORTANT LINKS

FOREIGN DEGREE EVALUATION:

- The [Educational Credential Evaluators \(ECE\)](#).

REGULATION:

- The Michigan [Bureau of Professional Licensing](#) is the state regulatory agency for landscape architects in Michigan. The website specifically for landscape architects is [www.michigan.gov/landscapearchitects](http://www.michigan.gov/landscapearchitects), which includes useful information with links to forms and applications.

TESTING:

- The [Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards \(CLARB\)](#) for the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE).