

How to Obtain a

Nursing Permit

from the Ordre des infirmières
et infirmiers du Québec

Note – In accordance with the OIIQ’s editorial policy, to make for easier reading, the feminine pronoun is sometimes used in this document to denote both women and men.

IMPORTANT

This guide does not replace the official legislative texts and is not intended to be exhaustive. We recommend that you consult the original version of the legislation governing the practice of nursing in Quebec. The OIIQ is not responsible for any discrepancy between this guide and the legislation in force. The official version of the legislation may be consulted on our Website at www.oiiq.org

This guide briefly describes the Quebec professional system, professional nursing practice as defined in the *Nurses Act*, and the steps for obtaining a nursing permit in Quebec^{1,2}.

The professional system

All professionals working in Quebec are required to belong to a “professional order.” Quebec’s professional system currently includes 300,000 members who belong to a total of 45 professional orders, 23 of which are in the health care sector. Each professional order is governed by the same fundamental tenet: to protect the public. Adherence to this principle ensures that the public has access to safe, quality services, delivered by professionals with integrity.

Among other activities, professional orders are in charge of delivering permits, determining the conditions for access to the profession, such as requiring an admission examination, and implementing methods to monitor their members. Professional orders are not unions that negotiate working conditions, nor are they teaching institutions. Teaching institutions are governed by the Ministère de l’Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (MELS).

With a body more than 70,000 members (mainly women), the **Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec (OIIQ)** is the largest professional order in Quebec. **Anyone aspiring to work as a nurse in Quebec must first become a member of the OIIQ.**

The nursing profession in Québec

There are numerous and varied employment opportunities for nurses in Quebec. Nurses are found in every region, working in hospital centres, local community service centres (CLSCs), long-term residential facilities (CHSLDs), medical clinics and health centres. They also work in education, research and management.

In Quebec, nursing practice is governed by legislation that clearly recognizes the expertise and central role of nurses in health care. This practice is not limited by a list of specific acts but rather by a list of activities reserved for nurses or shared with other health professionals. Here is an extract from the *Nurses Act* that describes nurses’ scope of practice and the activities reserved for nurses.

1. This guide does not supersede the provisions of current legislation and regulations, but is simply a reference to help you better understand each one’s role.
2. *Regulation respecting the standards for a diploma equivalence or training equivalence for the issue of a permit by the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec*, available at www.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca.

Nursing practice

The practice of nursing consists in assessing a person's state of health, determining and carrying out of the nursing care and treatment plan, providing nursing and medical care and treatment in order to maintain or restore health and prevent illness, and providing palliative care (*Nurses Act*, section 36, par.1).

The field of practice of the members of an order includes disseminating information, promoting health and preventing illness, accidents and social problems among individuals and within families and communities to the extent that such activities are related to their professional activities (*Professional Code*, section 39.4).

The 14 reserved nursing activities (*Nurses Act*, section 36, par. 2)

- Assessing the physical and mental condition of a symptomatic person.
- Providing clinical monitoring of the condition of persons whose state of health is problematic, including monitoring and adjusting the therapeutic nursing plan.
- Initiating diagnostic and therapeutic measures, according to a prescription.
- Initiating diagnostic measures for the purposes of a screening operation under the *Public Health Act* (chapter S-2.2).
- Performing invasive examinations and diagnostic tests, according to a prescription.
- Providing and adjusting medical treatment, according to a prescription.
- Determining the treatment plan for wounds and alterations of the skin and teguments and providing the required care and treatment.
- Applying invasive techniques.
- Participating in pregnancy care, deliveries and postpartum care.
- Providing nursing follow-up for persons with complex health problems.
- Administering and adjusting prescribed medications or other prescribed substances.
- Performing vaccinations as part of a vaccination operation under the *Public Health Act*.
- Mixing substances to complete the preparation of a medication, according to a prescription.
- Making decisions as to the use of restraint measures.

Procedure for obtaining a permit to practice nursing in Quebec

When you contact the OIIQ³ to start qualification procedures to **practise nursing** in Quebec, you must also begin immigration procedures with the Canadian and Quebec governments to obtain permission **to work in Quebec, a step that includes obtaining a work permit**⁴.

Here are the main steps to follow to qualify to practice nursing in Quebec

1. Establish a file to begin the equivalence recognition process

Fill out the enclosed forms and attach the required documents and the file processing fees. For more information, please read the Guidelines enclosed with the forms.

2. Obtain recognition of equivalence

The OIIQ **Admission by Equivalence Committee** is the body that studies all applications for recognition of equivalence submitted to the Order. Each application submitted by a nurse who received a diploma outside Quebec undergoes a comparative study based on the diplomas and training offered in Quebec.⁵ The **Admission by Equivalence Committee** also takes into account any additional training or professional experience, and makes a decision on a case-by-case basis.

The **Admission by Equivalence Committee** may request that you obtain **additional training** in certain areas, in adult geriatric nursing or mental health for example, if your training is not deemed to be equivalent to the training offered in Quebec. The recommended courses are offered in Quebec, but under certain conditions they may be taken in the country from which you submitted your application.

3. Successfully complete the professional integration program

To ensure the smoothest possible adaptation by all applicants to the professional context of practice in Quebec, the **Admission by Equivalence Committee prescribes a professional integration program for all nurses who received their diplomas outside Quebec.**

This program provides the following training:

- Introduction to nursing in Quebec, including the occupation's professional, legal, ethical, organizational and sociocultural aspects.
- Adapting your current competencies to nursing practice in Quebec.
- Learning the clinical skills needed to provide safe and effective services in a Quebec health-care setting.

3. For more information, visit www.oiiq.org; e-mail: bureau-registraire@oiiq.org; telephone: 1 514 935-2505, ext. 680.

4. For more information, visit www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca.

5. Refer to the box entitled "Basic Nursing Education in Quebec," p. 6.

The **Admission by Equivalence Committee** determines the length of the program, which may vary from a few weeks to a few months, depending on your personal profile.

Before beginning the professional integration program, you **must first obtain a registration certificate**.

The form for requesting a registration certificate will be sent by the OIIQ at the appropriate time.

4. Obtain the title of Candidate for the Profession of Nursing (CPN)

Once your equivalence has been recognized, the **OIIQ Registrar's Office** will confirm that you may practise as a **Candidate for the Profession of Nursing (CPN)**.

This temporary title gives you the right to perform certain activities reserved for nurses.

There are specific conditions governing this particular status: for instance, you must work under the supervision of a nurse who has the appropriate experience and who must be present in the unit in which the activity takes place. As a CPN, you are entitled to receive payment for your work. For more details on the activities you can perform as a CPN and the conditions of practice, refer to the box entitled "**Candidate for the Profession of Nursing (CPN),**" p. 7.

5. Successfully complete the professional examination

The OIIQ's professional examination is compulsory for all candidates. It assesses whether you have the knowledge, skills and judgment necessary to solve the typical clinical problems that nurses in Quebec encounter in their daily practice.

The OIIQ holds **two examination sessions a year**, in the fall and winter. You are required to take the examination when directed. If you do not sit the examination, without justification, you will be considered to have **failed**. You have the right to sit the professional examination three times within a two-year period.

The examination is given over a **two-day period** and has **theory and practical components**. The theory component consists of about one hundred open questions calling for short answers; the practical section consists of 16 clinical situations in which you are required to provide care for simulated patients according to strict instructions. For more information, you can obtain a copy of the *Professional Examination Preparation Guide of the Ordre des infirmières et infirmiers du Québec*.

6. Obtain a permanent permit

After successfully completing the examination, you must satisfy two other conditions before obtaining a **permanent nursing permit**:

a) Knowledge of French

If you studied at least three years in French in a secondary or post-secondary institution, the documents you furnished for your file are generally sufficient to substantiate that you meet the requirements of the Quebec *Charter of the French Language*. Failing this, you must successfully complete the language examination of the Office québécois de la langue française (OQLF).

b) Disciplinary, judicial and penal record

If you have been convicted of a criminal offence in Canada or another country, unless you have obtained a pardon, you must declare it to the Order.

You must also declare disciplinary decisions rendered by a Disciplinary Council of another professional order in Quebec or an equivalent organization outside Quebec, and which lead to the revocation of the individual's permit (or equivalent), striking from the Roll, the limitation or restriction of the right to practise.

In addition, if you have been convicted of a penal offence, you must declare to the Order the penal decisions that concern, in particular, the unlawful practice of an exclusive profession, the unauthorized use of a reserved title (i.e. the use of a title or initials reserved to the members of an order) and advising or encouraging someone to commit one of these offences.

If it is decided that the offence is related to the practice of the profession, your application for a permit may be denied.

When you have satisfied the relevant conditions, you will be granted a permanent permit. The permit is given only once and is valid for the entire length of your career.

7. Enter your name on the annual Roll of the OIIQ

Obtaining a permit is not the final step to fulfill before you can practise as a nurse. You are required to be entered on the **Roll of the OIIQ** and pay the required assessment. The Roll is the official register of the members of the OIIQ, and it is updated every year.

Shortly after your name is entered on the Roll, you will receive confirmation of your entry on the Roll in a document entitled **Attestation d'inscription au Tableau de l'OIIQ**, which you must show to your employer.

It is illegal to practise nursing without being entered on the Roll, or in other words, if you are not a member in good standing of the OIIQ.

We hope that this guide be useful as you begin the process of becoming a nurse in Quebec. We look forward to welcoming you to the profession soon.

Basic training for Quebec nurses

Basic training for nurses is offered at college or university.

- At college (CEGEP), this training lasts 3 years, after 11 years of elementary and secondary school. The technical program leads to a **Diploma of Collegial Studies**, commonly known as a DEC, **in nursing**.
- At university, this training lasts 3 years, after 13 years of elementary and secondary studies and a pre-university program. The university program leads to a **Bachelor of Science (BAC) degree in nursing**.

Both college- and university-level training in nursing comprises a minimum of 2805 hours, of which at least 2145 hours must be in nursing, distributed as follows:

- Medical and surgical nursing: at least 615 hours.
- Mental health and psychiatric nursing: at least 120 hours.
- Nursing for adults and the elderly with loss of autonomy: at least 105 hours.
- Perinatal nursing: at least 75 hours.
- Nursing for children and teens: at least 90 hours.
- Biological sciences: at least 480 hours, of which 135 must be in microbiology, immunology and pharmacology.
- Social sciences: at least 180 hours.

At least 1035 hours of the 2145 hours of specific training are spent in practical clinical training, of which 240 hours concern the practical integration of knowledge relating to the legal, ethical, organizational and sociocultural aspects of nursing.

Candidates for the Profession of Nursing

Authorized areas of supervision and practice

As a Candidate for the Profession of Nursing (CPN), you may engage in activities reserved for nurses, except those listed below, provided that you fulfill all of the following conditions:

You are required to work under the supervision of a nurse who has the appropriate experience and who is **present on the nursing unit** where the activity is performed so that rapid intervention with the patient or timely responses to your questions are possible. The care unit must not be spread over several sites or floors in a building. You are not authorized to supervise or work alone on the unit while the nurses are away or on break.

In long-term residential settings (i.e., where chronic illnesses or patients with loss of independence are treated), you must work under the supervision of a nurse who has the appropriate experience and who is **present on the nursing unit** where the activity is performed so that rapid intervention with the patient or timely responses to your questions are possible. You are not authorized to supervise the unit.

You are required to record your nursing activities in the patient's record, and then sign it, followed by the abbreviation "CPN".

Professional activities that are not authorized until a permit is obtained

- Assessing the physical and mental condition of a symptomatic person in a triage situation, an ambulatory clinic or through the medium of telecommunications.
- Providing clinical monitoring of the condition of the following persons, including monitoring and adjusting the therapeutic nursing plan:
 1. A person about to give birth who is undergoing monitoring in the case of a high-risk pregnancy;
 2. A person who is in shock, a person with multitrauma or a person who needs to be resuscitated in an emergency department or service;
 3. A person undergoing hemodynamic monitoring through the insertion of catheters in the vascular system for the purpose of surveying cardiac function, blood volume and blood circulation.
- Initiating diagnostic and therapeutic measures, according to a prescription.
- Initiating diagnostic measures for the purposes of a screening operation under the *Public Health Act*.
- Determining the treatment plan for wounds and alterations of the skin and teguments.
- Taking telephone prescriptions.
- Performing vaccinations as part of a vaccination operation under the *Public Health Act*.
- Making decisions as to the use of restraint measures.

