



What kind of experience counts?

Working as a paraprofessional in a regulated profession isn't always a stepping stone to full licensing. But it may be.

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In Ontario, at least, experience as a technician is a factor that would enable some applicants to work as Licensed Engineering Technologists (LETs) in a specific area of practice, under the supervision of a professional engineer. Although regulation changes to support the LET designation were still in development as of April 2007, their evolution through PEO's policy and regulation making processes show a change in the engineer-technologist relationship.

Overall, however, engineering remains similar to other regulated professions, where an applicant's experience in a related paraprofession has limited weight as a qualifier for eventual licensing.

For example, working as a paralegal to gain relevant experience in pursuit of a licence as a lawyer wouldn't be the ideal course of action. The same is true for internationally educated lawyers looking to use their experience as law clerks or in another of the legal paraprofessions in Ontario, as a stepping stone to becoming licensed by the Law Society of Upper Canada (LSUC).

In fact, the National Committee on Accreditation (NCA) for lawyers makes no mention of paralegal experience as a qualifier for eventual licensing.

Foreign lawyers who wish to become members of a Canadian law society must apply to the NCA for an evaluation of their legal credentials and experience.

The NCA was established to evaluate credentials of those applying from outside Canada for admission to one of the Canadian law societies and to evaluate degrees from the province of Quebec for the purposes of entry into the bars of the common law provinces.

As well, there is little likelihood of an internationally educated doctor seeking to work as a nurse practitioner to get a leg up on an application for a medical degree in Ontario. Such a candidate would first have to qualify as a practical nurse or nursing assistant—a course of action clearly at odds with the speedy accommodation of international medical talent in the Ontario labour force.

Standards remain key

For accounting professionals, there are some examples of certified management accountants using their experience toward eventual qualification as a chartered accountant. In fact, the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario (ICAO) offers advanced entry to CA qualification, and thereby to public accounting licensing eligibility, for members of the Certified General Accountants Association of Ontario (CGAs) and the Society of Management Accountants of Ontario (CMAs).

A number of CGAs and CMAs, after obtaining those designations, have determined they would like to practise public accounting and have taken advantage of the institute's advanced-entry provisions.

As well, the recent *Public Accountants Act* has opened up public accounting to all three designations (CA, CMA and CGA), if practitioners can meet the ICAO-determined standards that were already in place in Ontario.

The ICAO is prepared to wait and see if the other designations feel it is worth the time and effort to upgrade their standards to the satisfaction of the Public Accountants Council,

which is the licensing body for public accounting.

Despite their predominance in determining the standards by which paraprofessionals can qualify for professional licensure, all regulated professions appear to recognize the need to accommodate new players.

Efforts to regulate paraprofessionals as part of the engineering team appear at present to revolve around the granting of limited licences in Ontario and some other Canadian provinces, and the creation of a licensed engineering technologist designation as a class of limited licence in Ontario.

These efforts, however, won't have an effect on the requirements to obtain a full professional engineer licence, which, in addition to Canadian citizenship or permanent resident status, good character, age and Professional Practice Exam requirements, comes down to basic academic and experience criteria.

A person must satisfy all of the requirements before a licence can be granted.

How does PEO handle applications from technologists, then?

As a first step, the Academic Requirements Committee (ARC) reviews the academic transcripts of applicants who have at least a three-year degree in engineering technology. In all likelihood, such applicants would be assigned a number of technical examinations, the intent of which is to bring their academic qualifications up to the same level as the PEO syllabus for their disciplines. Passing the assigned exams would then translate into meeting PEO's academic requirements.

It is usually only after such applicants have met the academic requirements for licensure that their experience would begin to count toward the required 48 months of professional engineering experience. ▀