

CAREER PATHWAYS IN ARCHITECTURE:

Using Your Foreign Education in the U.S.

E-GUIDE
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The information contained in this e-guide is currently undergoing additional review by experts in the field of architecture.



INTRODUCTION

Immigrating to the United States is an opportunity to use your international training to either advance in your field or pursue a new career that builds on your education and experience. Because practicing architecture involves obtaining a license—a process that can be costly and time-consuming—it is especially important to fully consider your options.

The Pathways Guide at a Glance

If you have completed your education in another country and are now starting your career in the United States, you will need to understand to what extent you meet the academic requirements of your chosen career.

- The **Gaining Recognition for Your Foreign Education** section (p. 8) will explain how to determine the U.S. equivalency of your foreign degree to help you explore career pathways in architecture and other fields.
- The **Educational Pathways in the Field of Architecture** section (p. 10) provides examples of careers in architecture that may match your qualifications.
- If you want to continue your architecture career in the United States, you must obtain a U.S. license to practice. See the **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Architecture** section (p. 16).
- Not all internationally trained architects decide to pursue an architecture license in the United States, either because of the time and expense involved, or because they want to pursue a different career. See the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section (p. 19).

Let's get started!

Strategies for Success

Ask Lots of Questions

While you may have a strong idea of what your career will be in the United States based on the professional experience you already have, establishing yourself in a new country is a chance to reach new goals and possibilities. Analyzing your career options in the U.S. can be challenging, but by remaining flexible you can use the education and experience you already have to take steps to succeed in the U.S.

As you research your options, ask yourself:

- What are my short-term and long-term employment goals?
- What options are available to me based on my skills and qualifications?
- What are the steps and requirements in terms of time, costs, and additional training to pursue my goal?
- Whom can I talk to about my options?

Make a Plan

After you have explored some of the career options available to you in the United States, it is time to make decisions and come up with a plan. In the U.S., developing your career path requires a life-long commitment to learning, networking, and taking risks.

A successful plan includes realistic steps and time frames for completion. Your plan should also make it possible for you to work towards multiple goals at once and allow for some setbacks along the way. It will take patience to reach your goals and it is normal to change your mind or adapt to new circumstances as you move forward.

Think about the steps it will take to reach your goal. A clear goal-oriented plan may look something like this:

GOAL: Improve my language skills.

STEPS TO GOAL:

- Take an English language course that suits my needs.
- Meet with an English language conversation partner weekly.
- Learn terminology and professional language in my field.
- Read the newspaper every day.

You can use the **SMART Goal Worksheet** (p. 24) to guide you as you outline your plan.

Take Initiative

Although your **academic and professional credentials** are very important in your professional success, so are skills like your communication style, English language level, and ability to adapt to U.S. workplace culture. **Networking** with architecture professionals you know, meeting professionals in the field, joining a professional association, and attending conferences are great ways to practice the skills you will need to succeed in your job.

Finding meaningful work as an immigrant can take time and you may face challenging obstacles. Although many factors are out of your control, try to remain flexible, be persistent, and take initiative. As you explore this guide, you will find a number of helpful resources to support you.

GLOSSARY

Academic and professional credential: The degree, diploma, or license you receive when you complete a program, pass examinations, or meet a set of requirements

Networking: Interacting with other people to exchange information and develop contacts, especially to further one's career.

YOUR CAREER PATHWAY IN THE UNITED STATES

Like many immigrants, you may initially struggle to gain entry into your professional field in the U.S. While you may have adequate knowledge or experience, the challenge often occurs in translating your skills and qualifications in a way that local employers will value and understand. You may also need further education and training, an understanding of your local labor market, and knowledge of how to navigate your options to choose a **career pathway**.



Your career pathway is made up of the educational and professional decisions that will open doors to new opportunities. Education and training are the building blocks of your career—with the skills you acquire, you can earn promotions and take on additional professional responsibilities.

To start thinking about your career options, you will need to understand the difference between regulated and non-regulated professions.

Understanding Regulated Professions

Each state decides which professions it will regulate and what level of formal education or training is required for entry into the field. In the United States, specific authorities or regulatory bodies are responsible for recognizing professional credentials required for state licensing. Since the time and cost associated with licensing varies by state, contact the relevant regulatory body before deciding to proceed with licensing. In this guide, careers usually requiring licensure are clearly marked – but again, this varies from state to state.

GLOSSARY

Career pathway: A series of connected education and training programs that enable individuals to secure a job or advance in an industry or occupation.

Understanding Non-Regulated Professions

Some occupations in the United States are either internally regulated by professional associations, or are entirely non-regulated. However, although less strict than **regulated professions**, certain standards of professional practice or **designations** might still be preferred by employers and professional associations in non-regulated professions. You can demonstrate that you meet these standards through a certification process linked to training programs provided by employers or community colleges.

Can I work as an architect in the United States?

If you do not have a United States architecture license, your options for working in the field of architecture in the U.S. are more limited.

The architecture industry in the U.S. is highly regulated to protect public safety. That means that most architecture occupations in the U.S. require either a license or **certification** to practice.

The architecture license you may have from your home country is not valid in the U.S. Internationally trained architects need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated architects.



In this guide, occupations that require a state certification or licensure process are clearly marked.

Many internationally trained professionals decide not to pursue employment in regulated professions due to the challenges of **relicensing**. The architecture field provides access to less-regulated employment opportunities, often with voluntary certification.

If you decide against relicensing as an architect in the United States, you can still work in the field of architecture in a non-regulated occupation. Some related careers are discussed in the **Transferable Skills and Using Them in Related or Alternative Careers** section of this guide (p. 19).

GLOSSARY

Regulated professions: Professions that require a license or certification.

Designation: A title earned by an individual through a certification process.

Certification: A voluntary credentialing process by a non-governmental, private professional association.

Relicensing: Having to meet licensing requirements in the United States, even if you have a license from another country.

THE ARCHITECTURE PROFESSION IN THE UNITED STATES

Architecture is a regulated profession that combines skills in both mathematics and physics with a deep understanding of history and art. Architects design buildings and other habitable spaces for functionality, safety, and aesthetics.

There are a variety of careers in the field of architecture requiring different levels of training and licensure, and focusing on different aspects of building design and construction. Architects spend much of their time working in offices, but also visit work sites during the planning and construction stages of their projects. Architects can specialize in certain kinds of structures, such as residential buildings or hospitals, or in certain methods like green design.

Working as an Architect in the United States

An architect's roles and responsibilities in the United States may be different from other countries where the profession refers to more general practice. Internationally trained architects need to meet the same requirements as U.S.-educated architects, so even if you have many years of experience, you must obtain a new license in the U.S. if you plan to work as an architect.

In the U.S., each state/territory regulates the practice of architecture and establishes its own set of requirements and **scope of practice** concerning professional licensure.

Internationally educated or licensed architects can obtain licenses in the U.S., although it can be a costly and time-consuming process.

For example, to register as an architect in New York in 2018, you would have to pay an application fee of \$100, a \$2,225 fee to have your foreign education evaluated against the NCARB Education Standards through **Education Evaluation Services for Architects** (EESA), a transmittal fee of \$400 for the NCARB to transmit your record to your chosen architectural registration authority, a fee of \$1,260 to take the ARE exam (cost increasing in October 2018), and a \$377 state processing fee.¹

The costs associated with relicensing change over time and vary depending on your state, so check what the specifics are for your location.

GLOSSARY

Scope of practice: The procedures, actions, and processes a practitioner is permitted to undertake in keeping with the terms of their professional license.

It is recommended that internationally educated or licensed architects contact the National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) for assistance in obtaining a license in the U.S. NCARB will help you determine which pathway to licensure is appropriate for your experience, and help you navigate the process. See the **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Architecture** section (p. 16) of this guide for more information.

Roles and Responsibilities

In the U.S., architects are responsible for:

- Working with a variety of clients on projects that can include residential, corporate, retail, academic, or public spaces. Architects may specialize in a certain style, method, or type of building.
- Designing each project to meet clients' requirements, goals, and budget.
- Directing a team of workers to prepare supporting drawings and documents for designs.
- Ensuring that contractors follow design specifications during project construction.²

Understanding Job Titles

If you have the equivalent of a Bachelor or Master of Architecture degree (BArch or MArch) but little to no professional experience and no license, you may still apply for entry-level positions with titles such as:

- Junior Architect
- Architectural Associate or Associate Architect
- Architect I

If you are licensed and have more than five years of professional experience, you may apply for mid-level positions with titles such as:

- Project Architect or Project Manager
- Lead Architect
- Architect I (some positions require more professional experience; licensure may or may not be required, depending on experience)
- Architect II (licensure may or may not be required, depending on work experience)

If you are licensed and have ten or more years of professional experience, you may apply for positions with titles such as:

- Lead Architect
- Senior Architect
- Architect III (Required minimum experience can range from 5-15 years)

You can read more about academic and professional credentials in the **Educational Pathways in the Field of Architecture** section of this guide (p. 10).

GAINING RECOGNITION FOR YOUR FOREIGN EDUCATION

Your education is the foundation of your career. Although there may be challenges to using your foreign credentials in the United States, you do not have to start over. For an internationally trained professional, exploring career pathways begins with an understanding of the value of the education you received in your home country.

Obtaining a **foreign credential evaluation** is often the first step an immigrant takes to gain access to educational and employment opportunities in the U.S. A credential evaluation helps you gain recognition for your previous studies by considering your country's educational system, the status of the institution you attended, the content of the program, and any entry and graduation requirements.



A credential evaluation compares the education you received in your country to a similar degree or diploma in the United States and provides a **degree equivalency**.



In the United States, employers, licensing boards, and universities use credential evaluations to judge the quality and level of your academic achievements in comparison to U.S.-educated candidates.

- Universities, for example, use the information to make admissions decisions and to award transfer credit or advanced standing in a program.
- Employers and licensing boards refer to credential evaluations to evaluate whether or not you meet their academic requirements.

Unlike many other countries, the U.S. does not have a national education ministry to evaluate foreign degrees. As a result, some academic institutions and state licensing boards—and nearly all employers—rely on agencies to examine official documents. Others perform their own evaluations or use preferred agencies. **Architectural licensing boards may require that evaluations be performed through Education Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA), depending on the applicant's education and foreign licensure status.**

GLOSSARY

Foreign credential evaluation: An expert analysis of a foreign degree or diploma.

Degree equivalency: The extent to which a degree or diploma earned abroad compares to a similar U.S. credential.

Architects in the U.S. should refer to **NCARB's step-by-step overview** of the licensing process for foreign-educated architects.

See the **Licensing and Certification Requirements in Architecture** section (p. 16) of this guide for more information.

Before requesting a credential evaluation from any agency, contact the institution that needs the evaluation to understand their requirements. These institutions are responsible for the final recognition decision.

If you are exploring a new career, it may be helpful to have an idea of the U.S. equivalency of your foreign credentials.

WES allows you to preview the U.S. equivalency of your highest completed degree by using the **WES free equivalency tool**.

Note: This preview does not replace a formal credential evaluation that may be needed for official purposes.

Many regulated professions in the U.S. require you to have your foreign degree evaluation conducted by a professional association or preferred provider. If you are applying for a license or certification, always remember to check with your state's licensing board and/or educational institution to ensure that a WES evaluation is recognized and accepted. If so, you can apply for a **WES Credential Evaluation.**



Watch the **WES Credential Evaluation & Recognition** video to learn more about credential evaluation.

Advanced Standing and Transfer Credit

If you are applying to an academic program, you may be eligible for advanced standing or transfer credit for previous education.

- **Advanced standing:** This means you may be allowed to skip prerequisites for admission into a course, or not repeat a required course, reducing the time to complete a degree.
- **Transfer credit:** This means that your previous education is counted toward the total number of credits required for the degree.

For internationally educated individuals, advanced standing and transfer credit is usually determined at the time of application through a foreign credential evaluation.

EDUCATIONAL PATHWAYS IN THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE

Once you know the value of your foreign degree, you can use the information in this section to move forward in your career.

Architecture is a growing and rewarding field that offers many exciting career options. In this section you will find some examples of architecture careers that you may be qualified for, including their key roles and responsibilities and where further education may be helpful. You will also find information on how to meet the academic requirements for some popular architecture careers.

There are many ways to enter the architecture field. Some internationally trained architects gain U.S. experience in entry-level professions as they pursue licensing and certification. Others begin by enrolling in degree programs to gain access to higher-level jobs.



HELPFUL TIPS

Research shows that immigrants who add a U.S. degree or certification to their foreign education and training are more likely to progress faster in their careers.



A career pathway is a series of connected education and training programs that lead to successively higher educational credentials and job opportunities.

ASSOCIATE
DEGREE

BACHELOR'S
DEGREE

MASTER'S
DEGREE

DOCTORATE
DEGREE

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURAL TECHNOLOGY

ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE IN ARCHITECTURAL DRAFTING

Architectural Drafter

- Work with architects to create detailed drawings of their building designs, using computer-aided drafting (CAD) equipment or traditional drafting techniques.



Certification is optional, but may increase your chances of finding employment. An associate degree is not required to take certification exams.

Architectural Specifications Writer

- Inform builders about the use of materials in construction projects.
- Ensure that materials used in the various parts of a construction project are compatible.

Most employers prefer that you have a bachelor's degree in architecture, but many will consider a candidate who has an associate degree plus work experience as a specifications writer.



Licensure not required.



GO FURTHER

Although you can find jobs with an Associate of Science in Architectural Technology or Drafting, a bachelor's degree may increase your chances of finding employment at a higher level.



BA or BS vs. B.Arch

Bachelor's degrees in architecture fall into two categories: professional degrees (five years in length) and pre-professional degrees (four years in length). A pre-professional four-year BA or BS degree does NOT qualify graduates to practice as a licensed professional architect; only a B.Arch allows graduates to become licensed. However, a BA or BS can qualify you to work in fields related to architecture, such as interior design, industrial design, construction management, and computer-aided design or drafting. (See **Related Careers** (p.21) for more information.) It will also allow you to pursue a Master of Architecture degree.

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE (BS) IN ARCHITECTURE – FOUR YEAR DEGREE

BACHELOR OF ARTS (BA) IN ARCHITECTURE – FOUR YEAR DEGREE

Architectural Historian

- Assess the condition of historic properties.
- Conduct the research necessary to understand the history of the property and how best to restore it. May require use of software such as CAD, ArcGIS, and Sketchup.



No licensure required.

Architectural Engineer

- Focus on the safety and utility of a building, rather than its aesthetics.
- Design the functional aspects of a building, such as electrical, plumbing, and ventilation systems.



No licensure required. However, many employers prefer that you at least be in the process of pursuing licensure.

BACHELOR OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE (BLA)

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE (BSLA)

Landscape Architect

- Plan and design the environments where people live and work, including parks, public spaces, and the outdoor spaces of residential complexes and campuses.
- Decide locations of buildings, roads, and other features within the landscaped environment.
- Use computer-aided drafting (CAD) software to visually render design plans, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to analyze reports on environmental conditions.



All 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico require licensure, although requirements vary. All states require candidates to pass the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE).



GO FURTHER

While you can find work related to the field of architecture with a four year Bachelor of Science (BS) or Bachelor of Arts (BA) in Architecture degree, a five-year Bachelor of Architecture (B.ARCH) degree will allow you to pursue a career as a licensed architect.

BACHELOR OF ARCHITECTURE (B.ARCH) – FIVE YEAR DEGREE

Architect

- Plan and design structures such as houses, residences, and office buildings, or even entire neighborhoods.
- Direct architectural drafters and other workers.
- Can be employed by public and government agencies, urban planning and construction firms, or community development corporations.



All 50 states plus the District of Columbia, as well as most US territories, require licensure, although requirements vary.

Architectural Manager

- Must have experience working as an architect.

- Direct and coordinate activities of architectural staff.
- Manage work at building sites.
- Prepare budgets and hire staff.



All 50 states plus the District of Columbia, as well as most US territories, require licensure, although requirements vary.



If you already have a BA or BS in Architecture or any other area of study, a Master of Architecture (M.Arch) degree will allow you to pursue licensure as an architect. It will also allow you to teach at the university level. However, most universities prefer that professors hold a doctorate (PhD) degree in their subject.



B.Arch vs. M.Arch

In most fields of study, a master's degree builds upon a bachelor's degree, so that a master's degree is considered more advanced. Architecture is different, in that a Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) and a Master of Architecture (M.Arch) are functionally equivalent degrees: they are simply two different ways to achieve the education necessary to pursue licensure. Holding a B.Arch or an M.Arch will qualify you for the same jobs upon graduation.

The M.Arch degree exists mostly to serve students who have bachelor's degrees in different fields, but who later decided to pursue a career as a licensed architect instead. It may also be an option for you if the EESA evaluation does not find your foreign architecture degree to be equivalent to a U.S. professional architecture degree, but does find it to be a valid bachelor's degree. In that case, rather than going back to school to complete a five year B.Arch, you could apply to M.Arch programs, which can usually be completed in just 3 to 3.5 years.

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE (M.ARCH)

DOCTOR OF ARCHITECTURE (D.ARCH)

Professor of Architecture

- Plan and teach courses in the architecture program of a university.
- Work closely with students to help them achieve their academic and career goals.
- Stay informed about changes and innovations in the field of architecture.



Most universities require that you have worked some years as a practicing licensed architect before hiring you as a professor of architecture. In some cases, having worked as a licensed architect in a foreign country may fulfill this hiring requirement, even if you are not licensed in the U.S.

Academic Requirements in Architecture

Consider these educational requirements for careers in the field of architecture, from entry-level to advanced professions.



Requirements for CAD Designer/Technician

- ✓ Requires specialized knowledge generally acquired through a two-year associate degree. However, an associate degree is not always necessary if you have acquired relevant knowledge through other experience.



Requirements for Architect

- ✓ Must earn a five-year Bachelor of Architecture (B.Arch) or a three- to three-and-a-half-year Master of Architecture (M.Arch) degree from an NAAB accredited program, or must hold a degree from a foreign program that meets the NCARB Education Standard.
- ✓ Must obtain state licensure.
- ✓ For admittance to B.Arch programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.
- ✓ For admittance to M.Arch programs, you must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, although it does not need to be in architecture.



Requirements for Landscape Architect

- ✓ Must earn a Bachelor of Landscape Architecture (BLA), Bachelor of Science in Landscape Architecture (BSLA), or Master of Landscape Architecture (MLA) degree, preferably from an LAAB accredited program. Must also obtain state licensure.
- ✓ Some states offer alternative pathways to licensure for candidates with degrees from non-accredited programs, or even for candidates with a four-year degree in a different subject, if they also have a certain number of years of experience working in the field of landscape architecture.
- ✓ For admittance to BLA or BSLA programs, you must have the equivalent of a high school diploma.
- ✓ For admittance to MLA programs, you must have the equivalent of a bachelor's degree, which does not need to be in landscape architecture.



Requirements for Professor of Architecture

- ✓ Must hold a master's degree or doctorate (PhD) in architecture. While a master's degree may meet the minimum requirements for the job, most employers prefer a PhD.
- ✓ For admittance to PhD programs, you must hold a bachelor's degree or a master's degree, depending on the program.
- ✓ Must have experience working as a professional architect, and licensure is required to work as a professional architect in the U.S. However, if you have already acquired work experience as a professional architect in a foreign country, you may not need to have licensure in a U.S. state/territory.



Apply to Architectural School as an Advanced Standing Student

Many U.S. architectural programs enable internationally trained architects to receive credit for previous education and gain advanced standing. For example, an architectural drafter with the equivalent of an associate degree who wants to obtain a bachelor's degree for better career prospects or professional advancement may find that the credits they earned for that associate degree could be accepted in place of some of the credits required for the bachelor's degree. When researching schools, be sure to check with the admissions office to determine if advanced standing can apply to you.

LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS IN ARCHITECTURE

This section of the guide provides general information on licensing and helpful resources to guide you as you move forward. Consult The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards (NCARB) for up-to-date information.

Licensure for Architects

If you want to practice as an architect or enroll in advanced architecture degree programs in the United States, you must either obtain a state-issued license or meet the prerequisites for admission.

- Licensing requirements for internationally trained architects vary by state/territory. Each state/territory has a board of architecture that regulates licenses. You can search The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards' (NCARB) **Licensing Requirements Tool** for state-specific information on how to become an architect where you live.

NCARB provides a **step-by-step overview** of the licensing process for foreign-educated architects. However, you should always consult with your state's board of architecture to learn about state-specific requirements and steps.

NCARB offers two main paths to certification for foreign architects. The requirements vary depending on whether you have simply completed an architecture degree or whether you are a licensed architect in a foreign country.

If you are an internationally educated applicant (you received an architecture degree in a foreign country but do not hold a license), you must:

- Create an **NCARB Record**.
- Complete an **EESA evaluation**.
- Complete the **Architectural Experience Program** (AXP).
- Pass the **Architect Registration Examination** (ARE).

If you are a foreign architect (you hold a foreign license), you must:

- Create an **NCARB Record**. You must include and document your architecture degree and transcripts, and foreign registration/licensure.
- You do NOT need to complete an EESA evaluation.
- Complete the **Architectural Experience Program** (AXP).
- Pass the **Architect Registration Examination** (ARE).

Since architecture license requirements vary by state/territory, consider these key points:

- Not all states/territories accept NCARB Certificates earned through the Foreign Architect path. You can use NCARB's **licensing requirements tool** to find out information specific to your location.
- All U.S. architecture boards require candidates to pass the Architect Registration Examination (ARE).
- NCARB also offers an alternative path to certification for experienced foreign architects. If you are a citizen of Australia, Canada, Mexico, or New Zealand, you may be able to pursue architectural licensure in the U.S. through the appropriate mutual recognition agreement. Note: Not all U.S. states/territories accept mutual recognition agreements.³
- See **Licensing Resources** (p. 26) for more information.

Through the **Canberra Accord**, certain professional degrees in architecture from accredited programs in Australia, Canada, China, Korea, Mexico, and members countries of the Commonwealth Association of Architects may qualify for accelerated EESA evaluation processing by the **National Architectural Accrediting Board** (NAAB). In addition, the NAAB has evaluated a number of foreign architecture degree programs outside the Canberra Accord for “substantial equivalency,” meaning that these programs have been found to be comparable to NAAB-accredited programs. If you hold an architecture degree from **one of these programs**, you may also qualify for an accelerated EESA evaluation.

Landscape Architecture

There is no path to licensure in the U.S. specific to internationally trained landscape architects.

- All 50 states and Puerto Rico license landscape architects, and all require candidates to pass the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE), administered by the Council of Landscape Architectural Registration Boards (CLARB).
- Many states also require candidates to have completed a degree from a program accredited by the Landscape Architectural Accreditation Board (LAAB) and to have experience practicing under the supervision of a licensed landscape architect.
- For licensure requirements by state, contact your state licensing board.⁴

There are two different types of landscape architecture licensing known as “title acts” and “practice acts.” In states with “title acts,” no one without a license may call themselves a landscape architect. In states with “practice acts,” no one without a license may perform the work of a landscape architect. So, in states with “title acts,” you may be able to find work as a landscape architect as long as you do not use the title of “landscape architect.”⁵

Licensing takes time. Make sure to plan sufficient time for this process.

Certifications for Architects

If you are unable to pursue licensure at this time, a certification could make you more competitive in the market for other jobs in the field of architecture. An associate degree is not required to take these certification exams:

- **Certified Drafter**
- **Autodesk Certified Professional (ACP)**

Interstate Licensing Agreements: Working in Other States

The NCARB Certificate is an additional optional credential that can enable you to work in every state or jurisdiction. Although it is possible to gain a reciprocal license without this certification, all 55 jurisdictions (the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands) accept the NCARB Certificate, and 25 of them require it.

To obtain an NCARB Certificate, you must:

- Be licensed with a U.S. architectural registration board.
- Submit your record to the NCARB for evaluation.⁶

The information presented in this guide should not be considered exhaustive. It is always important to consult state licensing boards and professional associations for the latest and most authoritative guidance. See the **Additional Resources in the Field of Architecture** section of this guide (p.25) for a list of helpful resources.

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS AND USING THEM IN RELATED OR ALTERNATIVE CAREERS

Transferable Skills

Many immigrants find that they may not be qualified for the same job they had in their home country because job titles and requirements in their field are different in the United States. Because of a lengthy licensing process or a need for immediate employment, they may pursue other options that use their training and experience.



The key to finding alternative paths to a fulfilling career is to identify your skills (what you know how to do), knowledge (what you know), competencies (what you are good at), and aptitudes (what is easy for you to learn) that can be useful in a related or alternative career. These **transferable skills** are essential for career success and will enable you to adapt to changing circumstances, especially when your education and experience are from another country.

As you identify your transferable skills, it can be helpful to think about the difference between hard skills and soft skills. Employers place great value on soft skills, such as your ability to communicate, lead others, organize projects, and work effectively on a team—skills you probably already use on a daily basis. You can also apply your more technical hard skills, such as computer skills, foreign language fluency, and understanding specialized vocabulary, to a completely different career.

Soft skills in particular depend on your ease and ability to communicate in English, which can be a challenge when it is not your first language. In order for your soft skills to benefit you in a U.S. job search, you must practice both your written and spoken English, and familiarize yourself with English terminology that is specific to your field. You may want to consider taking a course or pursuing a course of self-study that will teach you the vocabulary specific to working in your industry. The following are some options for learning English for architecture:

- **Career Paths: Architecture** is an educational resource for architectural professionals seeking to improve their English communication in a work environment.
- **English for Architecture and Interior Design** is a reading textbook for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) who have a basic knowledge of English, designed specifically for architecture and interior design students, architects, and interior designers.
- The **English for Architects and Interior Designers Workbook** offers activities and readings incorporating field-specific vocabulary into more general ESL lessons.

GLOSSARY

Transferable skills: Skills developed in one situation or occupation that can be transferred to another context.

- Dictionaries such as this **illustrated architecture dictionary** can be helpful in building elevated and technical vocabulary specific to the field of architecture.

Are you including your transferable skills on your résumé?

Architecture professionals typically have the following skills and expertise that could be applied to a different career:

- Attention to detail
- Creative problem solving
- Comfort with public speaking
- Managing multiple tasks simultaneously
- Meeting the different needs and wishes of clients and investors
- Incorporating feedback to improve outcomes
- Collaborating with other professionals on an interdisciplinary team⁷

Related and Alternative Careers in Architecture

Why Consider a Different Career?

Finding employment in a related or alternative job can:

- Open doors to new career possibilities.
- Provide income while you work toward your license.
- Grow your **professional network** in the United States.
- Help you gain U.S. work experience.

If you have spent many years committed to an occupation, it is understandable to feel that your career—just like your relationships, hobbies, and beliefs—is a key part of your identity. It is not unusual to experience a sense of identity loss or failure at having to explore a new career path.⁸ In the United States, however, going back to school to switch careers is quite common.

Some of the careers described in this section require additional education or training. It is possible to find options that take only a few months, as well as more in-depth options that can take a year or more.

GLOSSARY

Professional network: Acquaintances with whom you stay in contact based on professional rather than personal connections.

Examples of Related Careers

Some careers in the field of architecture require licensure or certification – which is less difficult and costly to acquire than an architectural license – or do not require you to be licensed or certified at all. These are ideal options for internationally licensed architects who want to continue working in the field of architecture but do not want to undergo the process to relicense as an architect, or who want to work while relicensing in the United States.

Interior Designer

- Design interior spaces to be beautiful, safe, and functional, in compliance with building codes and inspection regulations.
- May specialize in specific types of buildings, such as hospitals or hotels, or certain kinds of rooms, such as bathrooms or kitchens.
- Bachelor's degree required, including classes in interior design and computer-aided design (CAD).



Licensure requirements vary by state. *In some states, only licensed designers may do interior design work. In other states, both licensed and unlicensed designers may do such work; however, only licensed designers may use the title “interior designer.” In still other states, both licensed and unlicensed designers may call themselves interior designers and do interior design work.*



In states where laws restrict the use of the title “interior designer,” only candidates who pass their state-approved exam, most commonly the National Council for Interior Design Qualification (NCIDQ) exam, may call themselves “registered interior designers.”⁹

- There are several different combinations of education and work experience that can lead to eligibility to take the **NCIDQ exam**. Internationally educated candidates can qualify to take the exam if, after having their transcripts translated and evaluated by World Education Services (WES) or Education Credential Evaluators (ECE), their combination of education and work experience matches one of the exam eligibility routes.



California requires a different exam, administered by the California Council for Interior Design Certification (CCIDC). Qualifications for eligibility to take the CCIDC exam include a combination of education and experience.

Sustainability Consultant (LEED Certification)

- Advise architectural firms and other businesses on how to manage their environmental impact.
- Help clients develop and implement strategies for reducing waste, energy usage, and carbon footprint.
- Educate clients' employees to understand their roles in the sustainability strategy.
- Bachelor's degree required.



A Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) credential is not required, but can help you advance in this career. The LEED Green Associate exam assesses general knowledge of sustainable building practices and how to assist clients working on LEED projects. The advanced LEED AP exam assesses knowledge about specialty areas of sustainable building.

Building Code Inspector

- Make sure that construction complies with building codes, zoning regulations, and contract specifications.
- Degree not required if you have work experience in construction, so this may be a good option if your foreign education does not meet the standards of a degree from a U.S. program.



Most jurisdictions require construction and building inspectors to have a license or certification. Some states have their own licensing programs for construction and building inspectors, while others require certification by associations such as the International Code Council, the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials, the International Association of Electrical Inspectors, and the National Fire Protection Association.

Accessibility Consultant

- Work with designers, architects, building surveyors, government agencies, and building managers to ensure that community facilities, workplaces, and homes for people with disabilities are safe and accessible.
- Ensure compliance with Fair Housing Act (FHA), Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) design standards.
- Bachelor's degree required.¹⁰

Examples of Alternative Careers

Alternative careers are careers outside of the field of architecture in which you can use the skills and knowledge you gained as an architect.

Consider these types of careers if you are interested in exploring a different career path.

3D Modeler/Computer Animator

- Create three-dimensional models or images of people and places, using a variety of computer programs and tools.
- May work in a variety of industries, including television/film and video games, as well as architecture, engineering, and scientific research.
- Degree not required, although an associate degree may help you advance your career.

Technical Writer

- Write instruction manuals and other documents to communicate technical information in an easily understandable way.
- Communicate information to people with diverse backgrounds.
- Work with computer hardware engineers, support specialists, and software developers during product development and testing.
- Bachelor's degree required.



Certification not required, although acquiring certification through an association like the **Society for Technical Communication** may help advance your career.

General Contractor/Construction Manager

- Responsible for supervising the entirety of a construction, demolition, or renovation project.
- Work closely with architects, and coordinate the work of sub-contractors and workers who perform specialty construction work like insulation or plumbing.
- Educational requirements vary. At minimum, contractors must complete an apprenticeship or earn an associate degree.¹¹
- **Licensing requirements vary by state.**

SMART GOAL WORKSHEET

Now that you have reviewed this guide, the next step is to think about your career plan. We recommend using Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Based (SMART) goals. You can use this SMART goal template to help you identify your next steps.

TIME-BASED	When?			
RELEVANT	Is it relevant to your ultimate vision?			
ACHIEVABLE	Can it be done?			
MEASURABLE	How much? How often? How many?			
SPECIFIC	Who? What? Why? Where? When?			
GOAL	What do you want to achieve?			

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES IN THE FIELD OF ARCHITECTURE

You can explore the following helpful resources for more information on education, employment, licensing, and financial assistance to pursue a career in the field of architecture.

Educational Resources

- The **NCARB Education Guidelines** include information about satisfying the education requirement for licensure, including information specific to internationally trained architects.
- The **National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB)** offers a degree program search tool.
- **Studyarchitecture.com** is a resource hub for all information related to architecture education. It includes a search tool to find architecture programs by degree, location, cost, and area of concentration.
- Most U.S. jurisdictions require that licensed architects earn continuing education hours in order to maintain their license. The NCARB offers **self-study courses** to meet this requirement.
- **37 states** also require licensed landscape architects to earn Professional Development Hours (PDH) in order to meet state licensure requirements. The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) offers online learning courses to meet this requirement.
- ASLA also offers a **degree program search tool**, **scholarship resources**, and a **guide to pursuing a career in landscape architecture**.
- The **Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA)** has a wide variety of educational resources, including a tool to search for architecture programs by degree and location, and a listing of special programs such as online and summer programs.
- The **American Institute of Architecture Students (AIAS)** offers conferences, competitions with cash prizes, information on other architecture competitions and scholarships, and a free online academic journal.

Career/Employment Resources

- The **American Institute of Architects (AIA)**'s **career section** has a job board as well as resources for continuing education and networking.
- **Archinect.com** is an online community of architects, and includes an employment center as well as a forum for discussions on all subjects related to working in the field of architecture.
- Although **The Architect's Guide** requires payment to access most of its employment resources, it also includes a "blog" section with free articles to support your architecture job search.

- Two employment agencies that specialize in recruiting workers for the field of architecture are **Aerotek** and **Opus Career Management**. **Coroflot** specializes in design jobs such as 3D modeling.
- **Arkitectum.com** offers a job board as well as a discussion forum.
- The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) has a **job search tool**.

Licensing Resources

- Licensing requirements vary by jurisdiction. Check the NCARB's **licensing requirements tool** to find out what the requirements are in your state.
- The first step towards licensure is finding out whether your foreign architecture education meets the NCARB Education Standard. **Education Evaluation Services for Architects (EESA)** is a service administered by the National Architectural Accrediting Board (NAAB), which performs this evaluation.
- The **ARE 5.0 Handbook** from the NCARB is a comprehensive guide to help you prepare to take the Architect Registration Examination (ARE).
- The American Society of Landscape Architects offers a **guide** to help you prepare for taking the Landscape Architect Registration Examination (LARE).
- NCARB participates in two mutual recognition agreements for reciprocal licensure: the **Tri-National Mutual Recognition Agreement for International Practice between Canada, Mexico, and the United States**, and **another arrangement with the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) and the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB)**. If you are an experienced architect registered with a participating architectural board in your home country, contact them for more information.

Financial Resources

- The Office of the U.S. Department of Education provides **resources for eligible non-U.S. citizens**.

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Our Expertise. Your Success.

 **globaltalentbridge.org**

 **gtb@wes.org**

WES Global Talent Bridge is a program dedicated to helping skilled immigrants fully utilize their talents and education in the United States. Global Talent Bridge joins with institutional partners and community organizations to help skilled immigrants leverage their training, achieve their professional goals, and contribute their talents to their full potential.

Global Talent Bridge provides technical assistance, staff training and specialized resources to community organizations, adult education programs, government agencies and academic institutions so they can better support, advise and integrate highly-qualified immigrants. It also conducts research and policy advocacy efforts to advance opportunities for skilled immigrants at the local, state and national level.

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Several thin, curved green lines sweep across the bottom of the page, creating a modern, abstract design.