

# Studying in Canada

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A guide for international students & families — how Canadian higher education works, the study permit (with recent 2024–25 changes), applying, English and French, costs, and post-study work.

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## WORLD-CLASS — AND CHANGING FAST

Canada is a top destination for international students, known for **strong universities, English and French options, and welcoming communities**. But its rules changed significantly in 2024–25 (a study-permit cap, the new Provincial Attestation Letter, tightened work-permit rules), so getting current information matters more than ever. This guide walks it in **ten steps**.

**General guidance, not legal or immigration advice.** Canada's study-permit rules changed substantially in 2024–25 and continue to evolve. The details here are recent examples and **must be confirmed with IRCC ([canada.ca](https://canada.ca)), EduCanada, and your school** before you rely on them.

# Understand Why Students Choose Canada

## WHAT TO KNOW

Canada draws students with **respected universities and colleges, comparatively moderate costs, English and French study options, multicultural cities, and (historically) strong post-study work and immigration pathways** — though those pathways have tightened recently.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Respected

universities & colleges

### Bilingual option

English or French

### Post-study paths

strong, but changing

## HOW TO HELP

Weigh Canada's **quality, safety, and (evolving) post-study options** against costs and the recent rule changes — and base your plans on current official information.

## WATCH OUT

Canada's appeal has long included **work and immigration pathways** after study — but these changed in 2024–25, so verify what applies now.

# Understand the System

## WHAT TO KNOW

Education is **provincial**, so it varies by province. Institutions include **universities** (degrees) and **colleges / institutes** (diplomas, certificates, and applied programs). Only schools on the official **Designated Learning Institution (DLI)** list can host international students.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Provincial

varies by province

### Universities & colleges

degrees vs. applied

### DLI

must be on the list

## HOW TO HELP

Choose a program at a **Designated Learning Institution (DLI)** — its DLI number is required for your study permit — and understand whether a university or college program fits your goals.

## WATCH OUT

Your school **must** be on the DLI list, and post-study work eligibility now depends on the program and institution — check both carefully.

# Understand the Study Permit

## WHAT TO KNOW

Most international students need a **study permit** from Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC). Recent rules: most post-secondary applicants now need a **Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL)**, and Canada has capped the number of study permits it processes.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Study permit

from IRCC

### PAL

provincial attestation letter

### A cap

on permits processed

## HOW TO HELP

Get your **acceptance (from a DLI)** and a **PAL** where required, then apply for the study permit through IRCC — following the current official steps exactly.

## WATCH OUT

The **PAL** and the **permit cap** are recent (2024–25) — rules are shifting, so rely only on IRCC's current guidance, not older articles.

# Choose & Apply to Institutions

## WHAT TO KNOW

Apply directly to Canadian institutions (each has its own process and deadlines). Choose by **program, DLI status, cost, location and climate, and post-study work eligibility**. Leading universities include Toronto, McGill, and UBC, among many strong options.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Apply directly

each school's process

### Check DLI

+ program eligibility

### Fit

program, cost, location

## HOW TO HELP

Research programs at **DLIs**, confirm each one's admission requirements and deadlines, and build a shortlist based on genuine fit and eligibility.

## GOOD TO KNOW

Canadian winters and regional differences are real — weigh location and climate alongside academics.

# Meet Admissions Requirements

## WHAT TO KNOW

Requirements vary by institution and program but typically include **academic transcripts (sometimes credential-assessed), language-test scores, a statement/essay, and recommendations**. Some programs are competitive and have early deadlines.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Transcripts

+ credential assessment

### Language scores

English or French

### Essays & recs

for many programs

## HOW TO HELP

Prepare **transcripts, language scores, and application materials** early, and check each program's specific requirements and deadlines — they differ widely.

## GOOD TO KNOW

Some Canadian programs assess foreign credentials — ask each school whether an evaluation (e.g., WES) is needed.

# Meet Language Requirements

## WHAT TO KNOW

You'll need to prove proficiency in your **language of study** — English (commonly **IELTS or TOEFL**) or French (e.g., **TEF/TCF**). Minimum scores vary by program, and stronger scores can also help immigration pathways.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### English

IELTS / TOEFL

### French

TEF / TCF

### Scores vary

by program

## HOW TO HELP

Take an **accepted language test** for your language of study and aim for each program's required score — and note that language ability can matter for later work/immigration too.

## GOOD TO KNOW

If studying in French (e.g., in Quebec), you'll prove French proficiency — plan for the right test.

# Plan for Costs & Funding

## WHAT TO KNOW

Costs include **tuition (higher for international students)**, **living expenses**, and **mandatory health coverage**. Canada is often more affordable than the U.S. or UK, but still significant. Scholarships exist (government, university, and external) but are competitive.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Tuition

higher for internationals

### Living + health

budget both

### Scholarships

competitive

## HOW TO HELP

Budget the **full cost** (tuition, living, insurance), and pursue **scholarships** (institutional and government) — while noting Canada's comparative affordability.

## GOOD TO KNOW

Some provinces require or provide specific **health coverage** for international students — confirm what applies where you'll study.

# Meet the Financial & Work Rules

## WHAT TO KNOW

For the permit, you must **prove funds** for tuition and living (Canada raised the cost-of-living requirement in 2024). While studying, most students can **work off-campus up to 24 hours per week** during sessions (and full-time in scheduled breaks).

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Prove funds

tuition + living

### Cost-of-living

requirement raised

### Work

up to 24 hrs/week off-campus

## HOW TO HELP

Prepare **financial documents** that meet the current IRCC threshold, and understand the **off-campus work limit** (recently set at 24 hours/week during study).

## WATCH OUT

Working over the permitted hours **violates your permit** — stay within the current limit, and confirm it, since it has changed.

# Prepare for the Move

## WHAT TO KNOW

Prepare for **cold winters**, a **new academic culture** (participation, independent work), and **practical setup** (housing, banking, health card). Your school's **international student office** is your key support for arrival and adjustment.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Winters

genuinely cold

### Academic culture

participation-heavy

### Int'l office

your support

## HOW TO HELP

Plan for **housing**, **health coverage**, and **the climate**, and lean on your school's international office for orientation, permit questions, and settling in.

## GOOD TO KNOW

Canadian winters surprise many new arrivals — budget and pack for serious cold, especially outside the coasts.

# Thrive & Work After Study

## WHAT TO KNOW

Beyond studying, build community and use campus resources. After graduating, the **Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP)** can allow Canadian work experience — but eligibility now depends on your program and institution, so confirm it *before* you enroll.

## BY THE NUMBERS

### Community

find your people

### PGWP

post-study work

### Check eligibility

program-dependent now

## HOW TO HELP

If post-study work matters to you, **confirm PGWP eligibility for your specific program and school before enrolling** — the rules tightened in 2024–25.

## WATCH OUT

Not every program or DLI now qualifies for a full PGWP — verify eligibility up front, as it's a common and costly surprise.

# Studying in Canada: The Essentials

A snapshot — rules changed a lot in 2024–25, so confirm everything with IRCC, EduCanada, and your school.

## The system

Provincial systems; universities (degrees) and colleges/institutes (applied programs). Your school must be a Designated Learning Institution (DLI).

## The permit

A study permit from IRCC; most post-secondary applicants now need a Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL), and Canada caps permits processed.

## Admissions & language

Transcripts (sometimes credential-assessed), a statement, recommendations, and English (IELTS/TOEFL) or French (TEF/TCF) scores; requirements vary by program.

## Money & work

Budget tuition (higher for internationals) + living + health cover; prove funds (raised in 2024); most students may work up to 24 hrs/week off-campus during study.

## After study

The Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) can allow Canadian work experience, but eligibility now depends on your program and institution — confirm before enrolling.

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