

# 3. As a Student

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There are a number of ways to study and work in Canada, and all of them allow you to apply for permanent residence and then citizenship, once you're 18.

They are

- A study permit, available to grade-school, secondary and university students. It allows limited “work-study permissions”, but doesn't count as “Canadian experience” on an immigration application.
- A post-graduation work permit, available after completing a university or college degree. This *does* count as Canadian experience, from age 18 onward.
- An international co-op or internship placing, available to university and college students, limited to a single employer.
- A young professional program, to get an employer-specific work permit to gain professional experience in their field.

### 3.1 Caveats

Canada took *far* too many foreign undergrads up to 2024, so the quota was abruptly lowered. We added a provincial attestation letter requirement and started checking that acceptance letters were actually legit. Some fake “colleges” have now been shut down. That increased competition for fewer spaces.

More recently, it flipped the other way. US professors have publicly fled to Canadian universities. At the same time, Canadian grad students in the US are either being expelled or defunded. See <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/graduate-student.html>

The announced changes includes

- no limit on the number of grad students admitted per year
- a two-week go/nogo decision if you're a doctoral student,
- no provincial sign-off needed for grad students,

- bringing your family is allowed,
- no cap on the number of grad students admitted, and
- as before, you can stay and work afterwards.

### It's *still* a big shock to change countries

Pari Mokradi writes "I was an international student chasing stability, but Canada made me question who I was" - CBC News <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/first-person-international-student-9.7076884>

Pari describes ending up in working at a call center after graduation, and experiencing isolation and financial hardship. She writes “What carried me through weren’t the milestones of earning a degree, landing a job or receiving my citizenship. It was the small acts of care: Alycia, who gave me a pillow; Karun, who told me to own my story; Gilles and the Writers’ Collective, who showed me I didn’t have to erase myself to belong”.

She became a citizen in 2025.

## 3.2 Study Permits

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit.html>

These are available for people attending all primary and secondary schools in Canada, plus a long list of post-secondary institutions.

The various pages in the IRCC’s instruction on how to get a study permit will have road-maps, like the one on the right, to help you keep organized and not miss a required step.

The student will need to get a [letter of acceptance](#) from the school, and, for undergrads, a [letter from the province](#), a passport and proof that have funding to live on or to buy a return ticket, depending on where you’re coming from.

For anyone under 18 coming here by themselves, they’ll also need a signed [custodianship declaration](#).

### Sections

- [Who can apply](#)
- [Get the right documents](#)
  - Provincial attestation letter or territorial attestation letter
  - [Proof of financial support](#)
- [How to apply](#)
- [After you apply](#)
- [Prepare for your arrival](#)
- [While you study](#)
- [Study permit conditions](#)

They can apply from inside Canada, that's a common process.

Students are allowed to work. There is no restriction on on-campus work, and a limit of 24 hours a week, during the school year, off-campus.

For work you will need to apply for a Social Insurance Number (SIN). That's the equivalent of a US Social Security Number. We describe this in Chapter 10, *Afterwards*.

Oddly, work done under a study permit doesn't count toward "Canadian experience" in a regular immigration application. Work done under a post-graduation work permit *does* count.

## Resources

- New Measures Prioritize Graduate and Doctoral Student Recruitment <https://www.fragomen.com/insights/canada-new-measures-prioritize-graduate-and-doctoral-student-recruitment.htm>
- Graduate study permits: cap exemption <https://beingcanada.com/graduate-study-permits-cap-exemption-and-2-week-phd-processing/>
- Canada Streamlines Path for Graduate Students <https://theimmigrater.com/canada-streamlines-path-for-graduate-students-faster-processing-and-pal-exemptions-highlighted/>
- From Tuition to Rent. The Complete Financial Checklist for International Students. <https://moving2canada.com/study/financial-checklist-for-international-students/>

## 3.3 Post-Graduation Work Permits (PGWP)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation.html>

After graduating from a Canadian university, college or flight school, you can apply for a post-graduation work permit within 180 days of graduation. Once you've applied, you can work until you get a decision on this permit.

If you've been in a program that lasted more than 2 years, the permit will be for three years. For shorter ones, the work period is the length of your study period, unless the course was less than 8 months: those short courses don't qualify.

This work counts as "Canadian experience" in a regular application.

## 3.4 International Experience Canada (IEC) programs

These are described in more detail in Chapter 5, *International Experience Canada*

One relevant to students is an **International Co-op or Internship**

This is for people enrolled in a co-op program that allows them to do some of their work terms in Canada

**This is a live document.** These links will change. Always refer to the government pages for current rules. And please file an issue at <https://codeberg.org/tokugawa-behr/Fleeing-to-Canada/issues> so I'll know what needs updating.

## **In Short**

Becoming a student in Canada used to be trivial. Then it became hard for students from Africa and Asia (yes, that's racist). Then it became a bit easier if you were a grad student. Now, when we've noticed that the US was expelling foreign grad students, it became easier yet.

It's not trivial, but it's still an excellent way to get to live in Canada.