

DISCLAIMER!

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CANADA – STUDY PERMIT (STUDENT VISA) GUIDE

*(In Canada, a **study permit** is the official document allowing international students to study; a temporary resident visa or eTA is also required for entry, depending on nationality. Below, “study visa” refers to the overall permission including the study permit.)*

Eligibility Requirements

- **Acceptance at a DLI:** You must have a letter of acceptance from a **Designated Learning Institution (DLI)** in Canada (an approved university or college). For graduate programs, ensure your university is a DLI with a post-graduate program.
- **Proof of Sufficient Funds:** You need to **prove you have enough money** to pay for your **tuition, living expenses, and return transportation** for yourself and any accompanying family. As of 2025, a single student must generally show at least **CAD \$21,000** (approx.) for one year’s living costs (outside Quebec) in addition to first year tuition fees if not paid already to the university. If family members accompany, additional funds are required (e.g. ~\$6,000 for a spouse, \$3,000 per child). Funds can be shown via bank statements, student loans, scholarship letters, GICs, etc..
- **No Criminal Record:** You must obey the law and have **no serious criminal record**. You may be required to provide a police clearance certificate to show you are admissible.
- **Good Health:** You must be in good health. A **medical examination** is required for students from certain countries or those studying in health fields. If required, you’ll need to pass a medical exam by an approved panel physician.
- **Intent to Leave After Studies:** You must convince the immigration officer that you will **leave Canada when your permit expires** (unless you get a new permit or status). This is usually shown through a personal statement and ties to your home country (job prospects, family, property, etc.).
- **Other:** You must not be a risk to Canada’s security and must meet any additional requirements (such as biometrics and visa requirements for entry). If you have previously violated immigration laws or have certain medical issues, you could be inadmissible.

Required Documents Checklist

- **Letter of Acceptance:** The formal **acceptance letter (LOA)** from your Canadian university, printed on the institution’s letterhead. It should detail the program, start date, and length of study. You will include this in your application. *(If you will study in Quebec, you also need a*

CAQ (Quebec Acceptance Certificate) from the Quebec government before applying for the study permit.)

- **Valid Passport:** A passport that is valid for the duration of your intended stay. Include a **copy of the ID page** of your passport in the application. If you renew your passport while your application is pending, update IRCC. (U.S. citizens: you can alternatively use certain documents like a valid U.S. passport or ID for travel, but a passport is strongly recommended).
- **Passport Photos:** Two recent **passport-size photos** of yourself (and any accompanying family members), meeting Canada's specifications (clear, white background, neutral expression, name and date of birth labeled on back). Digital photos must meet the pixel size and file size requirements if applying online.
- **Proof of Financial Support:** Documentation showing you have sufficient funds for tuition + living expenses + return travel. Examples of accepted proofs include:
 - Bank statements for the past 4 months showing consistent balances.
 - Bank drafts or a **letter from your bank** stating your account balance and average monthly balance.
 - Proof of payment of tuition and accommodation fees (receipts from the university, if you paid in advance).
 - A letter and financial documents from a sponsor (parent or other) along with an affidavit of support, if someone else is funding you.
 - **Scholarship or Funding Letter:** if you have a scholarship, teaching assistantship, or other funding from your school or a third-party, include an official letter stating the amount and duration of funding.
- **Educational Loan letter:** if you have a student loan, include the loan approval letter from the bank.
- **Immigration Forms:** Complete the required forms through the online system (or paper if applicable). The main form is **IMM 1294 (Study Permit Application)** if on paper, or the online questionnaire that generates your personal document checklist. Also, fill the **family information form** and **student questionnaire** if prompted. These are done in the online application portal.
- **Personal Explanation Letter:** (Optional but recommended) A **Letter of Explanation** where you write about your study plans, the reason for choosing Canada and that program, and your intention to return home. While not mandatory, this can help the visa officer understand your situation (and can cover if you want to get a visa even for a program under 6 months, or why you're changing fields, etc.). IRCC provides an option to upload such a letter.
- **Police Certificate:** If IRCC instructs you (typically in the document checklist or later), provide a police clearance certificate from each country you have lived in for 6+ months since age 18.

Not all students are asked for this upfront, but it may be required especially if you've lived in multiple countries. It's good to have one ready from your home country.

- **Medical Exam:** If you need a medical exam (IRCC will indicate based on your country or if your field of study requires it, such as health care, teaching young kids, etc.), you will get a form to take to an **IRCC panel physician**. The doctor will give you an **eMedical** confirmation or an IMM 1017 form as proof. If you completed a medical exam upfront, include the **Upfront Medical Report** printout or eMedical reference.
- **Biometrics:** *Not a document to upload, but a requirement.* Most applicants need to give **fingerprints and photo** (biometrics). When you apply, you pay the biometrics fee and IRCC will send you a **Biometrics Instruction Letter**. With that letter, you visit a local Visa Application Centre (VAC) or Application Support Center to provide biometrics. Keep the receipt from the VAC as proof. (If you gave biometrics in the last 10 years for a Canadian visa, those may still be valid for a new application).
- **Other Documents:** Depending on your case, additional documents might be required:
 - **Curriculum Vitae (CV)** or résumé for graduate students (sometimes requested to see your academic and work history).
 - **GMAT/GRE or IELTS/TOEFL results** if these were required by your program (not typically required for the visa, but including English test results can strengthen your profile).
 - **Marriage or birth certificates** if your spouse/children are applying with you (to prove relationship).
 - **Passport copy of parent** (for minors) or a **Custodianship Declaration** if you are under 18 (not likely for Master's/PhD applicants, but note if under age of majority in the province, a custodian form is needed).
 - Any **scholarship or sponsor letters** not already covered under proof of funds.

Application Process (Step-by-Step)

1. **Gather Acceptance and Documents:** Obtain your university's **acceptance letter** and **Provincial Attestation Letter (PAL)** if applicable to your study program and prepare all required documents. Use IRCC's official document checklist tool to verify requirements for your country. Ensure you have scans of all documents (in PDF/JPG format) and translations if not in English or French.
2. **Create IRCC Account and Application:** Apply for the study permit online via the **IRCC website** (GCKey or Sign-In Partner) by creating an **IRCC secure account** (also known as *MyCIC* account). Complete the online questionnaire to get your personal document checklist. Then fill out the electronic forms (or upload IMM forms if required) in the account.
3. **Fill Application Forms:** The main form (within the online portal) will ask for your personal details, education background, intended study in Canada, and questions about your security and background. Fill in all sections accurately. You will also upload digital copies of your

documents from the checklist (acceptance letter, financial documents, passport, etc.).
Avoid processing delays by sending a complete application with all required evidence.

4. **Pay Fees:** Before submitting, the system will prompt you to pay the fees: **CAD \$150** study permit processing fee and **CAD \$85** biometrics fee (per person). Pay these online with a credit card. If you have family applying together, the biometrics fee is max \$170 for a family. You might also need to pay for any third-party requirements (e.g. medical exam or police certificate) separately to those providers. Once paid, you'll get a receipt – save it. (The application fee is **non-refundable**, even if the permit is refused.)
5. **Submit Application and Biometrics:** After payment, submit your application. You will then receive a **Biometrics Instruction Letter** (if applicable) in your account within 24 hours. Schedule an appointment and **give your biometrics** at the nearest Visa Application Centre or authorised location as instructed. You have 30 days from the letter's date to complete biometrics. (Note: U.S. visa-exempt applicants and certain others still need to give biometrics if not done in last 10 years.)
6. **Medical Exam:** If you haven't done an upfront medical exam and one is required, IRCC will send a medical exam request or you would have indicated you will do it. Book your exam with a **panel physician**, undergo the required tests, and the doctor will send results directly to IRCC. Keep any eMedical receipt as proof. Doing the **medical exam early** (upfront) can **avoid delays** in processing.
7. **Application Processing:** IRCC will review your application once biometrics (and medical, if needed) are received. Processing times vary by visa office and time of year. On average, study permit processing can range from **4 to 12 weeks** for outside Canada applications, but check IRCC's online **Processing Times tool** for your country. For example, as of mid-2025, some countries' processing times were about **9–11 weeks**. Your IRCC account will be updated if further information is needed or when a decision is made. *Tip:* Ensure your email and account are checked regularly in case IRCC sends messages (sometimes they request additional documents or an interview, though an interview for a study permit is rare).
8. **Decision & Passport Request:** You will receive a decision notification in your account. If approved, IRCC will issue a **Port of Entry (POE) Letter of Introduction** (this is not the permit itself but a letter you show when arriving in Canada) and will ask you to send in your **passport** if you need a visa counterfoil (stamp). (Visa-required nationals get a visa sticker in their passport; visa-exempt nationals get an electronic Travel Authorization, eTA, linked to the passport). The passport request letter will have instructions to send your passport to the visa office. Send it quickly via the instructed method; they will stamp the visa and return your passport typically within a few weeks.
9. **Travel to Canada:** With your passport (and visa or eTA) and the POE introduction letter, you can travel to Canada. At the border, present these documents to the officer. You should also carry your **acceptance letter** and proof of finances in hand luggage. The border officer will issue your actual **Study Permit** (a paper document) on the spot at the port of entry. Verify that the permit's details (name, school, expiry date, work eligibilities, etc.) are correct before leaving the desk. Congratulations, you can now begin your studies in Canada!

Visa Fees and Processing Times

- **Application Fee:** CAD \$150 for the study permit application (this covers one person). This fee is paid online to IRCC when you apply. If you later need to extend your study permit, the same fee applies again.
- **Biometrics Fee:** CAD \$85 for one person, or CAD \$170 maximum for a family applying together. This is paid to IRCC at application submission as well. There may also be a small fee charged by the Visa Application Centre when you actually give biometrics, depending on location.
- **Third-Party Costs:** Not paid to IRCC, but you should budget for them if applicable – e.g. medical exam fees (varies by country, often ~USD \$200), police certificate fees, translation charges, etc.
- **Processing Time: Varies by country and season.** Many applications are processed in 2 to 3 months, but it can be faster or slower. For example, in early 2025, applications from some countries like Pakistan took around **9 weeks**, while others (Philippines) took about **11 weeks**. IRCC's processing time webpage lets you check current estimates by country. It's recommended to apply as soon as you have your documents (you can apply as early as 3–4 months before your program starts. Always factor in time for biometrics and possible delays. Starting in 2023–2025, IRCC faced backlogs, so applying early is key.

Tips for a Successful Visa Interview (if applicable)

Canada generally does NOT require an interview for study permit applicants. Most decisions are made on your application documents alone. You will **not have a routine visa interview** like the U.S. does. In rare cases, an immigration officer might request an in-person or phone interview if they have particular concerns, but this is uncommon. Instead, focus on making your **application strong on paper**:

- **Complete Documentation:** Submit all required documents and additional ones that bolster your case (e.g. a well-written Statement of Purpose/Letter of Explanation). A clear, organized application can preempt any need for an interview.
- **Ties to Home Country:** In your Letter of Explanation, emphasize ties that will bring you back home (career opportunities, family, property, etc.), since you must show you'll leave Canada after studies. This helps satisfy the officer about your intent.
- **Financial Clarity:** Make sure your proof of funds is clear and sufficient. If an officer is not convinced you have enough money or can access it, that's a common reason for refusals. Explain any large deposits or funding sources.
- **Academic/Career Plan:** Clearly explain why you chose your program and how it fits your career path. If your chosen field of study is a change from past studies or work, justify the change. A compelling explanation can convince the officer you are a genuine student.

- **During Biometrics:** Even though it's not an interview, when you go to give biometrics, dress and behave professionally as VAC staff sometimes note impressions. Provide any additional documents confidently if asked.
- **If Interview Occurs:** On the off chance you are called for an interview at the embassy or by phone, remain calm and answer truthfully. Likely topics: your study plan, knowledge of your program/university, financial capability, and plans after graduation. Keep your answers consistent with what you wrote in your application. Have copies of your application handy for reference. Demonstrating honesty and confidence will leave a good impression.

*(Most students will not have any interview at all. Concentrate on submitting a **complete and truthful application** – that is usually sufficient for Canada.)*