



HOW TO

study abroad in

Canada

UPDATED for 2019



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Introduction

Canada consistently ranks within the top 10 of the United Nations' list of the "best places to live in the world" – and it's also arguably one of the best places to study. The country is home to over 36 million people, welcomes 16 million tourists each year, and was hosting around 356,574 international students as of December 2015. These students came from over 185 countries, and the top three source countries were China, India and France.

Attractions to study in Canada include its high-quality education, globally recognized qualifications, and the stable, safe and peaceful society. Add in all the summer festivals, winter snow sports, and the wide range of sightseeing, sports, culture and cuisine to squeeze in, and it's unsurprising to find Canada remains a popular choice for students across the globe.

Whether you're keen to experience life in multilingual Québec, or fancy mixing ski slopes and watersports over on the west coast, read on for our complete guide to studying abroad in Canada.



Higher education in Canada

Undergraduate degrees in Canada can take either three or four years to complete, depending on the university. Postgraduate degrees last between one and three years, depending on the type of degree. Different types of higher education providers in Canada include: community colleges; technical, applied arts or applied science schools (which grant certificates, diplomas, associate's degrees and bachelor's degrees); and universities (which carry out research and provide both undergraduate and postgraduate degrees).

One distinctive element of higher education in Canada is that each of the 10 provinces is responsible for its own education system, rather than the Canadian government as a whole. This means the system can vary, depending on which province you choose to study in. Québec in particular is markedly different to the rest of Canada, with different term times and length of study. For instance, students finish secondary school a year early and must take a mandatory preuniversity 'General and Vocational College' (CEGEP) course, essentially eliminating the freshman year of university. Check with your chosen institutions for specific details.

Canada's higher education system was ranked fifth in the world in the [QS Higher Education System Strength Rankings 2018](#), reflecting the strength of its flagship universities and overall system strength.

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According to the Canadian Bureau of International Education, 93 percent of international students are either very satisfied (38 percent) or satisfied (55 percent) with their experience in Canada, showing that the nearly half a million international students in Canada are largely enjoying their experience there.

There are 96 universities in Canada, of which 17 are private. As is common elsewhere, Canadian universities offer three levels of degree: bachelor's (usually lasting four years), master's (requiring an additional year or two) and the doctorate (usually an additional three years). Campuses in Canada offer the latest in technology and facilities, with some even boasting amenities such as Olympic-sized pools and ultramodern libraries.

Canada also has around 150 colleges – also known as community colleges,



technical colleges, regional colleges or CEGEPS (in Québec) – which offer short courses and diplomas. Some are focused on one particular subject area, while others provide more of a general education. In addition, the country has a long history of specialized career colleges, which seek to prepare students for specific vocations.

As is increasingly the case around the world, internships are often encouraged at Canadian universities, and may even be a required part of your course. In Canada internships are often referred to as "co-ops" (cooperative education) and can be highly competitive. Typically, students will spend alternate semesters between learning in the classroom and in the workplace applying that knowledge. You may need a work permit to take part in a co-op program, so check with your university before you apply.

Top universities in Canada

A total of 26 Canadian universities feature in the **QS World University Rankings® 2019**, including three within the global top 50. These are the **University of Toronto** (28th), **McGill University** (33rd) and the **University of British Columbia** (47th).



Admission requirements & applications

For some university programs, and for almost all international students, you will be required to provide an essay, a statement of intent or a personal statement of experience

When you've chosen a shortlist of universities to apply to, the next stage is to get in touch with each university's international office, which will guide you through the application procedure. You will need to apply directly to each institution, as there is no centralized application system.

The process for applying to universities in Canada is generally straightforward. Most Canadian higher education institutions require the completion of a high school diploma and, in some provinces, the completion of 40 hours of community service/volunteer work (this may not be expected of international students – check with the institution). International students may also be asked to provide proof of language proficiency, either in English or French.

For some university programs, and for almost all international students, you will be required to provide an essay, a statement of intent or a personal statement of experience. Other documents required may include: letters of reference, examples of extracurricular involvement, evidence of community service, athletic participation, and details of awards and scholarships won.



Fees to apply to universities in Canada will vary depending on the university and your country of origin. For example, the University of British Columbia charges Canadian students and permanent residents CA\$69.25 and international students CA\$116.25 (~US\$87). You may be able to get this fee waived if you are an international student from a developing country. You should also remember that it is compulsory to purchase health insurance while studying in Canada. This will cost approximately CA\$600-800 (~US\$450-600) per year.

Language requirements

Both English and French are spoken in Canada, with the latter being the official language throughout the Québec province, and universities offer courses in both tongues. If you're not a native speaker, you may need to submit proof of proficiency in the language you intend to study in. Some universities offer courses to help students improve their proficiency in the language of instruction.

If not a native speaker, you may need to submit proof of proficiency in the language you intend to study in



Student visas

You do not need a Canadian study permit if your course or program lasts six months or less, which means it's relatively easy to spend a semester abroad there

In order to study in Canada, you will need to obtain a Canadian study permit, which serves as a Canadian student visa for the duration of your stay. Applying for a study permit costs CA\$150 (~US\$112). You do not need a Canadian study permit if your course or program lasts six months or less, which means it's relatively easy to spend a semester abroad there.

To apply for your study permit you'll first need a letter of acceptance from a recognized higher education provider. For Québec you also need a certificate of acceptance (known as a CAQ) from the government before you can apply for a study permit. Next you need to obtain a Canadian student visa application package, from the CIC website, your local visa office or the Canadian embassy or consulate in your home country.

You'll be given a personal checklist code to submit your application online. To do so, you must create a MyCIC account, where you'll fill in all your details, pay your fees and upload the required documents. This includes showing you have a ticket home and a valid passport. Some applicants may also need to attend an interview at their local visa office, and those from certain countries may need to provide biometrics, a medical exam or a police report.

As part of your application, you'll need to prove you have enough money to support yourself while studying in Canada. This is currently deemed to be CA\$10,000 (~US\$7,460) per year in addition to your tuition fees in every



province except Quebec, where you need CA\$11,000 (~US\$8,200).

On approval you'll be sent a letter of introduction, and a temporary residence visa if required. Bring these along with your passport, proof of your finances and your letter of acceptance to the border control agency in Canada, who will issue your Canadian study permit.



Tuition fees & living costs

Universities in Canada set their own fees, and the cost of study depends on the type of course and the subject

The cost of living and tuition fees in Canada are generally a little lower than in countries such as the US, Australia, New Zealand and the UK. As is common, the tuition fees are higher for international students than for domestic students. Universities in Canada set their own fees, and the cost of study depends on the type of course and the subject. Tuition fees for arts and humanities students tend to be at the lower end of the scale, with subjects such as engineering and medicine among the more expensive.

According to Statistics Canada, the average annual tuition fees for international undergraduate students in the 2018/19 academic year was CA\$27,159 (~US\$20,270) and CA\$16,497 (~US\$12,300) for graduate international students. As is the case worldwide, degrees such as veterinary medicine and executive MBA programs are generally the most expensive, with the latter averaging around CA\$49,798 (~US\$37,160) per year.

Living costs

Although you need to show evidence of having at least CA\$10,000 on top of tuition fees when applying for your study permit, your living expenses, including accommodation, are likely to be higher - around CA\$15,000 per year. Costs are generally more expensive in the biggest cities and will also depend on your lifestyle and spending habits. You'll need to budget for



accommodation, food, travel and health insurance (compulsory) – and of course social, sports and cultural activities. Don't forget warm winter clothing!

Accommodation will be your largest expenditure each year after tuition fees – typically you will be spending about CA\$3,000-8,400 (~US\$2,240-6,270) each year on rent, which is likely to be towards the affordable side if you live on campus in student accommodation. Some universities may include meal plans as part of their student accommodation.

Living off campus is generally pricier, and you'll need to factor in the extra costs of bills and travel to and from your university. However, if you share off-campus housing with other students, this can make it more affordable.

If you would like a cheaper option, you may consider living off-campus, but remember to take into account any extra costs of traveling to and from your university. Sharing off-campus housing with other students can also make accommodation more affordable.

StudyInCanada.com estimates the following average living costs per month:

- Rent in a one room apartment in a city center: CA\$765-1,650 (~US\$570-1,230)
- Rent in a one room apartment outside a city center: CA\$640-1,250 (~US\$480-930)
- Groceries for one person: CA\$200-300 (~US\$150-220)
- High speed internet connection: CA\$40-85 (~US\$30-63)

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- Public transport pass: CA\$78-125 (~US\$58-93)

If you're under 18 (or 19 in the provinces of British Columbia, Nova Scotia and the Northwest Territories), you must live with a host family in a homestay, which may be arranged by your university. At approximately CA\$400-800 (~US\$300-600) per month, this could be a fairly affordable option, particularly as your host family is likely to provide you with meals at no extra cost.



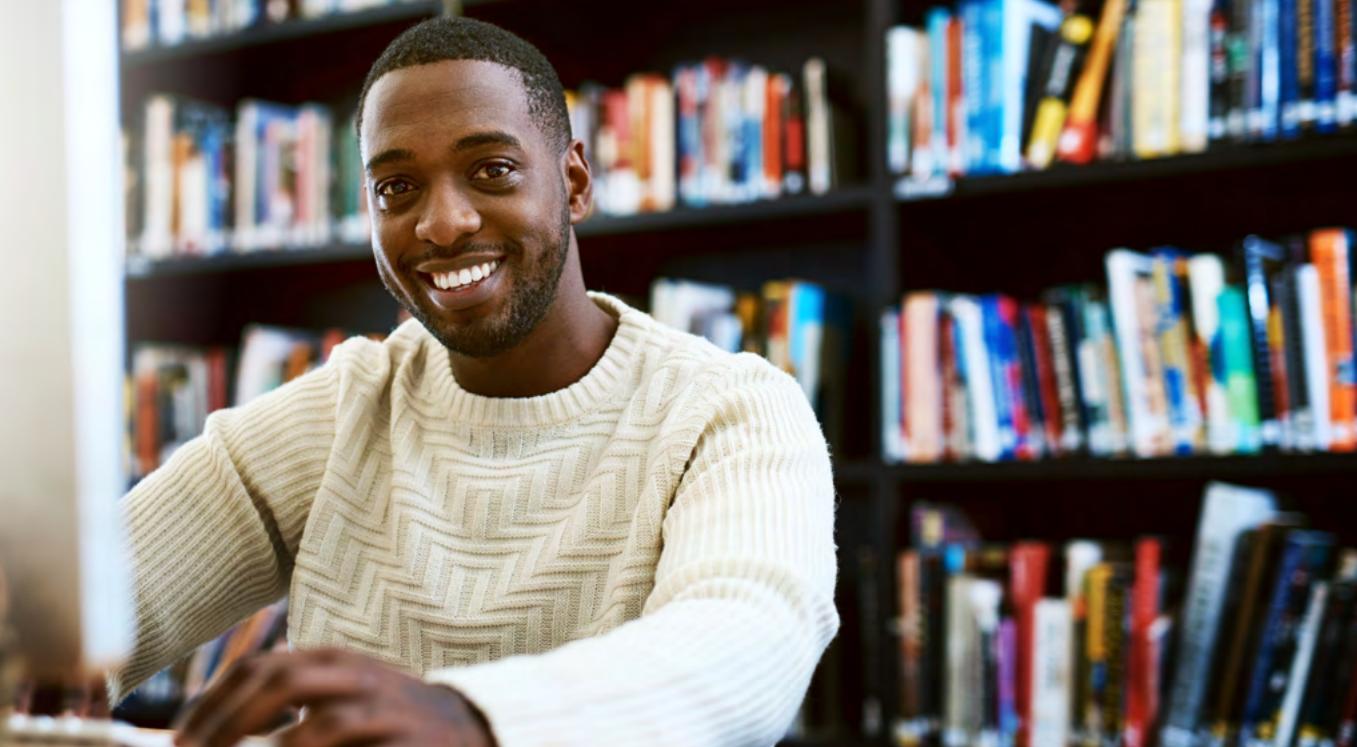
Funding opportunities

Exceptional international students may be able to obtain funding via the range of government and non-government scholarships available, such as the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship Program, or the 'International Tuition Award' offered by many Canadian universities. The latter aims to assist international graduate students registered full-time in research-oriented master's and doctoral programs. International students are automatically considered for this award as long as they meet certain criteria.

In order to apply for funding, it's advisable to check individually with each university for available scholarships, grants, assistantships, fellowships and bursary opportunities. You may also find it useful to consult the information about financial assistance provided by the Canadian Information Centre for International Credentials website or the Canadian government's dedicated website for international scholarships, www.scholarships-bourses.gc.ca.

In all cases, it's important to apply as early as possible, as scholarship funding is limited and highly competitive. International applicants are also advised to research study abroad scholarship opportunities offered by organizations in their home country.

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Student jobs in Canada

If you'd like to get a part-time job to help support yourself while studying in Canada, you may qualify to work on or off-campus for up to 20 hours during university semesters and full-time during breaks such as the winter or summer holidays, without the need for a work permit. To qualify, you must:

- Have a valid study permit;
- Be a full-time student;
- Be enrolled at a designated learning institution at post-secondary level or, in Québec, a vocational program at secondary level;
- Be studying in an academic, vocational or professional training program that leads to a degree, diploma or certificate that is at least six months in duration.

You will also need a Social Insurance Number (SIN) from Service Canada to work in Canada or to receive benefits and services from government programs.



Student cities

MONTRÉAL

The largest city in the French-speaking province of Québec, Montréal is also the second-largest city in Canada. There are four universities in Montréal, as well as seven other degree-awarding institutions and 12 General and Vocational Colleges (CEGEPs), giving the city the highest concentration of post-secondary students of all major cities in North America.

Widely cited as the cultural capital of Canada, Montréal boasts a unique combination of European sophistication and American pizzazz, which gives it a buzz few other places can match. As a student, you'll certainly never be at a loss for things to do, with plenty of theater, music, dance and visual arts to explore, including the annual Just for Laughs comedy festival, the world's largest of its kind. And don't miss the Montréal Fireworks Festival, frequently hailed as the best and largest fireworks festival in the world.

Montréal is home to Canada's second-highest-ranking university, **McGill University** (33rd in the QS World University Rankings® 2019). Universities in Montréal also include the **Université de Montréal** (joint 149th) and **Concordia University** (joint 464th), among others. While McGill and Concordia operate primarily in English, many universities in Montréal are Francophone, as are the city's residents. So even if you're an English

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speaker at an Anglophone university, be prepared to make an effort with your French!

TORONTO

The provincial capital of Ontario and the largest city in Canada, Toronto is known for being one of the world's most multicultural cities, with around half of its 2.7 million-strong population hailing from outside of the city. Accordingly, it is an exciting and diverse place to live, with its residents' heterogeneity reflected in the city's culture and cuisine. Home to the Toronto Stock Exchange and the country's five largest banks, Toronto is Canada's leading financial center – while also being known as a world leading hub for the entertainment, media and creative industries.

Toronto's collection of museums and galleries is impressive, ranging from the large Royal Ontario Museum and the Art Gallery of Ontario to the much smaller Gardiner Museum of ceramic art, Gallery of Inuit Art or the Bata Shoe Museum. The Toronto International Film Festival is one of the world's biggest, and the city's live music scene is celebrated by locals and visitors alike. There is also a vibrant club scene and more than enough cafés and restaurants to keep foodies and coffee-lovers satisfied. Universities in Toronto include some of Canada's highest ranked. The **University of Toronto** is Canada's highest entrant in the QS World University Rankings 2019, at 28th in the world. It's joined by **York University** (ranked joint 481st), **Ryerson University** (801-1000) and a selection of other higher education providers, including the Royal Conservatory of Music.



VANCOUVER

A relatively young city on Canada's west coast, Vancouver is the perfect destination for those who want to combine city living with easy access to the great outdoors. And by great, we really mean great – the landscape surrounding Vancouver is truly spectacular, ranging from lush green forests and stunning lakes, to the rugged magnificence of the Canadian Rockies (especially popular with skiers and snowboarders).

There's plenty on offer for city slickers too in this cosmopolitan and vibrant town. Canada's third-largest metropolis, Vancouver consistently features in lists of the world's most livable cities – and has become one of Canada's best known and most-visited cities. Cultural offerings include three prominent theater companies, the Vancouver International Film Festival, and a vibrant and diverse music scene. And for those who are not keen on cold weather, Vancouver might suit you, as it's one of the country's warmest cities during winter.

Prominent universities in Vancouver include the [University of British Columbia](#), (ranked 47th in the latest QS World University Rankings) and [Simon Fraser University](#) (joint 264th). Neighboring Vancouver Island, meanwhile, hosts the [University of Victoria](#) (joint 359th) and Vancouver Island University.

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QUÉBEC CITY

If you like picturesque and historic cities, you can't really do much better than Quebec City. Founded in the early 17th century, Quebec is the capital of the province with which it shares its name, and of French-speaking Canada as a whole. Its Old Town, with pretty cobbled streets surrounding



If you like picturesque and historic cities, you can't really do much better than Quebec City

the striking Château Frontenac and the only preserved city ramparts in North America, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and Quebec as a whole is full of historic and architectural interest. In fact, there are 37 National Historic Sites of Canada in Quebec City and its enclaves.

But of course Québec is not just a giant museum – it's very much a living and changing city. There's no shortage of things to do here, in terms of both nightlife and culture, and the city is especially known for its colorful Winter Carnival, lively gay scene, and intimate live music venues.

Notable universities in Québec City include [Université Laval](#) (ranked joint 402nd in the QS World University Rankings 2019) and the [Université du Québec](#) (541-550). The city is also home to the oldest educational institution for women in North America, the Ursuline Convent of Québec City. Teaching at universities in Quebec City is primarily in French.

OTTAWA

The capital of Canada, Ottawa came 46th in the most recent QS Best Student Cities index. A diverse and dynamic city, Ottawa is also largely multilingual, with many residents fluent in both English and French. Ottawa is home to the Rideau Canal, the oldest continuously operated canal system in North America, which is also a world heritage site. There are countless other cultural and historical spots of interest to explore, including the most visited museum in Canada, the Canadian Museum of History. The city is also home to the impressive neo-gothic parliament building 'Centre Block'.

The two top universities in Ottawa are both ranked within the top 700 in the world, with the [University of Ottawa](#) at joint 289th in the QS World



University Rankings® 2019. As well as ranking highly in the 'desirability' category of the QS Best Student Cities index, Ottawa receives a high score for 'student mix', with a high percentage of international students, reflecting the vibrant and multi-cultural study environment on offer.

EDMONTON

Capital city of the province of Alberta, Edmonton is known for its year-round selection of festivals, earning it the nickname 'The Festival City'. It is equally well known as the home of the West Edmonton Mall, formerly the biggest shopping mall in the world and currently North America's biggest shopping mall, and for being one of the most northerly major cities in the world.

Don't let this northern location put you off too much; Edmonton's weather is relatively (emphasis on relatively) mild, even compared to some other more southerly Canadian cities. Its location, towards the west of Canada, also means there is no shortage of natural beauty nearby, and the city itself has plenty of attractions – including Ford Edmonton Park, Canada's largest living history museum, the buzzing downtown Arts District, and the fashionable Old Strathcona area, where many of Edmonton's theaters and live-performance venues are located. All this can be found among a mix of modern and historic architecture, including restored historical buildings, and a good range of restaurants, pubs and clubs.

Among universities in Edmonton, the most notable is the **University of Alberta**, ranked fourth in Canada and 109th in the QS World University

Capital city of the province of Alberta, Edmonton is known for its year-round selection of festivals, earning it the nickname 'The Festival City'



Rankings 2019. Other options include the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, NorQuest College, MacEwan University, the King's University College and Concordia University College of Alberta.



Life in Canada

The second-largest country in the world by total area, Canada is famous for its picture-postcard natural beauty, as well as its modern, liberal, open and easygoing multi-cultural society. Canadian people are known for being extremely friendly and polite, so you should have no trouble fitting in after arriving! So what can you expect from student life in Canada?

Climate

Canada is known for its cool climate, with four very distinct seasons. Temperatures can soar to 35°C (95°F) and higher in summer, while winter lows of -25°C (-13°F) are not unheard of either. The wind chill can make it feel much colder than the stated temperature, so make sure you have plenty of bulky clothing to keep you warm in the depths of winter!

Culture

Canada's culture has prominent French, British, American and aboriginal influences, and the country has a large immigrant population, making it an extremely diverse society. You should expect a great cultural experience when studying in Canada, with a vast choice of outdoor activities including hiking, ice-skating, watersports, snowboarding and of course ice hockey (the official winter sport). If you're not a sports fan, you could instead enjoy Canada's thriving music, comedy, theater and film scenes, with famous musicals touring the large cities.

If you're from a country with a very different culture and you experience a bit of culture shock, don't worry! Canadian universities are very international, so you won't be the only one going through this experience. Join

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student societies on campus to connect with other international students, as well as locals who can help you explore Canadian life.

Safety

Considered one of the more desirable places in the world to live, Canada has a low crime rate, so you simply need to exercise common sense to stay safe during your stay. Hopefully you won't need to use it, but the number for the emergency services is the same as in the neighboring US: 911.



Working in Canada after graduation

Your Canadian study permit will expire 90 days after graduation, so if you'd like to stay and seek work in Canada after graduating, you'll need to apply for a work permit under the **Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP)** within this time. This allows you to gain post-graduation work experience that can help you qualify for permanent residence through Express Entry. You can apply for this if you studied continuously full-time for at least eight months.

If you've studied in Canada for more than eight months but less than two years, your work permit will be valid for the same length of time as your studies. If you studied for two years or more, your work permit will be valid for three years.

The other eligibility requirements of the PGWPP are:

- You must be 18 or over.
- You must have a valid study permit before applying.
- You must have completed and passed your study program and have a written confirmation, such as a transcript, that proves you're eligible to be awarded your degree, diploma or certificate.

If you've studied in Canada for more than eight months but less than two years, your work permit will be valid for the same length of time as your studies



Your passport must be valid for longer than the duration of the work permit you are applying for

- You graduated from a public or private post-secondary institution.

To apply for the post-graduation work permit, you should first read the guide and documents checklist. You can apply online or via mail, answering all the questions carefully and truthfully and paying the application fees. Your passport must be valid for longer than the duration of the work permit you are applying for.

The PGWPP costs CA\$255 (~US\$150) to apply for, and online applications are processed within 68 days, while paper applications will take 104 days.

Speak to your International Student Development office for further advice on applying for this visa. Sectors experiencing high demand for graduates range from accountancy to healthcare, and of course software developers, engineering and UX designers.



MORE QUESTIONS?

Got more questions about studying abroad in Canada? Ask them in our [international student forum](#).