

Applying for Your Student Visa: Canada

What is a visa?

A visa is official authorization allowing you to enter a country and travel, work, live, or study there for a specific period of time. Generally, a visa is an elaborate stamp that is sealed onto one of the pages of your passport. Visas are issued to American citizens by a foreign country's Embassy or Consulate located in the United States. Every country has its own regulations governing the issuance of visas.

Do I need a visa to go to Canada?

Students who are citizens of the United States do not need a residence visa to study in Canada, however most students wishing to study in Canada for six months or longer will need a study permit. The consulate recommends applying for a study permit even if you plan to stay for 6 months or shorter in case you decide to extend your stay. If you do not apply for a study permit, and later wish to extend your stay past 6 months, you will need to return to the US to apply for an extension. Having a study permit also allows you to work part-time on your campus.

What do I need to apply for a study permit?

You need the following documents to apply for a study permit.

- **A copy of a valid passport**, or if you are a citizen of the US, proof of status and citizenship such as a national identity card or an alien registration card.
 - ◆ Please see page 1 in the Study Abroad Handbook for how to apply for a passport.
 - ◆ Apply early for your passport! It may take 6-8 weeks to process your application.
- **Completed application for a study permit to Canada**. To find a downloadable version of the study permit application, visit the following website:
 - ◆ <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/information/applications/student.asp>
- **Two passport size photos**; in color with a white background. Your name and date of birth should be written on the back of each photo.
- **A letter of acceptance from the Canadian university**. The school in Canada must complete and send you a letter of acceptance, and you must include this original letter with your study permit application.
 - ◆ Include your **acceptance letter from UM** and your **acceptance letter from your host institution**; if the acceptance letter from your host institution has not arrived within two months prior to your departure, please notify UM's Office of International Programs.
- **Proof that you have sufficient funds** to cover your stay in Canada (a minimum of \$833 CAN per month in all provinces besides Quebec, and \$917 CAN per month in Quebec). This includes any of the following: proof of a Canadian bank account in your name if money has been transferred to Canada, your bank statements for the past four months; a bank draft in convertible currency, proof of payment of tuition and accommodation fees, a letter from the person or institution providing you with money; and proof of funding from any scholarships, etc.
- **A letter of explanation** stating your intentions while in Canada (ex. I would like a study permit because I wish to study at the University of Alberta...).
- **A processing fee of US\$125 in the form of a money order only**; the fee is nonrefundable, and may change due to exchange rate fluctuations.
- You may need to have a **medical examination**; the consulate officer will send you instructions if you need a medical examination.
- You may need to provide a **police certificate** showing that you have no criminal record. The consulate officer will contact you if this is required.
- ▶ **Attention**: This list may not be all-inclusive! Verify this information with the consulate, as the application process can change or may even vary by consulate.

- You will also find answers to many of your visa-related questions at:
<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-how-documents.asp>

How do I obtain a study permit?

A. In person

- Take the above documents to the Canadian consulate that has jurisdiction over your state of residence. (The Canadian consulate also processes visa applications by mail, see below).
- Call the consulate before you visit to verify hours of operation and location.
- Avoid waiting until the last minute to apply for your visa, as omitting one document or failing to complete a form completely may delay the processing of your visa for weeks.

B. Via mail

If you chose to apply for your visa via mail rather than in person, you should:

- Send all documents, including your passport, via FedEx, US Overnight Mail, or other express mail service that provides a tracking number for your parcel, to the consulate. **Keep a photocopy of all documents for yourself.**
- Submit \$125 application fee in the form of a money order to the Consulate General of Canada (no cash unless you apply in person!) --consulates will not accept personal checks.
- Enclose a *postage paid* FedEx/US Overnight Mail envelope *addressed to yourself*.
- Apply early: according the Consulate's website, the process usually takes a few weeks and cannot be started until all paperwork is submitted.
- Be sure all documents are in order. Missing documents may cause delays in the processing of your application.
- Do not leave the country until you have received your study permit.

General tips for applying for a visa:

Foreign embassies and consulates in the US receive hundreds of inquires every day so contacting them may be a trying experience. Have patience. Some consulates only receive visitors or calls during certain hours of the day or on certain days of the week; visit their website to learn their hours or call back at different times of the day. You may find that you are placed on hold or that your call is never forwarded to the appropriate person. Don't be discouraged: be persistent, but polite. Remember that US consulates in foreign countries operate in a similar fashion!

Canadian Consulates

Send your application to the Consulate General that covers your state of residence. The offices are located in Buffalo, Detroit, Los Angeles, New York, Seattle, and Washington DC. Montana residents will apply to the Consulate in Seattle.

Seattle:

Office Location: Canadian Consulate General, Seattle
Immigration Section
1501 4th Ave.
Suite 600
Seattle, WA
98101-4328

Mailing Address:

Canadian Consulate General, Seattle
Immigration Section
1501 4th Ave.
Suite 600

Seattle, WA
98101-4328

Phone: (206)443-1777

Fax: (206)443-9662

Internet site: www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/seattle

Los Angeles:

Office Location:

Consulate General of Canada
Immigration Section
550 South Hope Street, 9th Floor
Los Angeles

Mailing Address:

Consulate General of Canada
Immigration Section
550 South Hope Street, 9th Floor
Los Angeles, California
90071, USA

Telephone: (213)346-2700

Fax: (213)620-8827

Internet site: www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/los_angeles