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WORK PERMITS | INTERNATIONAL GRADUATES

Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) for Canada: Complete Guide

The post-graduation work permit (PGWP) lets international students who graduate from an eligible Canadian school work in Canada for up to 3 years. It is an open work permit, so you do not need a job offer or a Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA). This guide covers who qualifies, what your course completion letter must show, how the 180-day eligibility period works, and how the rules change when you apply from inside or outside Canada.

PERMIT TYPE	MAX LENGTH	APPLY WITHIN	IRCC FEE
Open (C43)	**Up to 3 years**	**180 days**	**$255 CAD**

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Dates decide your rules: Your requirements depend on when you applied for your study permit and when you apply for your PGWP. Since November 1, 2024, most applicants must prove their English or French, and many college graduates must also have studied an eligible field. For 2026, IRCC has frozen the field-of-study list, so no fields will be added or removed this year.

1. What Is the Post-Graduation Work Permit?

The PGWP is an open work permit under Canada's International Mobility Program. It is issued under subparagraph R205(c)(ii) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulations, with exemption code C43. IRCC's officer instructions say its purpose is to help graduates of eligible designated learning institutions (DLIs) gain valuable Canadian work experience.

Because the permit is open, you can work for most employers anywhere in Canada. You can also change jobs without a new permit.

The PGWP is a one-time opportunity. You cannot get a second PGWP after another program, and you cannot renew it. The only extension IRCC allows is when your passport expired before the full PGWP length could be issued (IRCC Help Centre).

> **Note:** Graduating from a DLI does not by itself make you eligible. Not every school or program qualifies, so check the DLI list before you rely on a PGWP.

ITEM	DETAILS
Program	International Mobility Program (LMIA-exempt)
Code	C43, under R205(c)(ii)
Length	8 months to 3 years, based on your program
Where to apply	Online, from inside or outside Canada. Applications at the border stopped on June 21, 2024.
IRCC fees	$155 work permit fee + $100 open work permit holder fee = $255. Biometrics are $85 if required.

2. Who Can Qualify for a PGWP?

You must meet every condition on the day IRCC receives your application (IRCC eligibility page, officer instructions). Tick each one that applies to you.

- [ ] I completed a program at a PGWP-eligible DLI that lasted at least 8 months (900 hours in Quebec) and led to a degree, diploma or certificate
- [ ] I studied full-time in every academic session (part-time is allowed only in my final session)
- [ ] I completed at least 50% of my program in person, inside Canada
- [ ] My study permit was valid at some point during the 180 days after I received confirmation that I completed my program
- [ ] I am applying within 180 days of that confirmation
- [ ] I meet the language requirement for my program, or I am exempt

- [ ] I meet the field-of-study requirement for my program, or I am exempt
- [ ] I have never held a PGWP before

Who is not eligible

- Anyone who already received a PGWP
- Students who only took English or French as a second language, or general interest or self-improvement courses
- Graduates of non-credit programs (flight school is the exception)
- Students funded by Global Affairs Canada under a scholarship that requires them to return home
- Students who completed more than 50% of their program by distance learning
- Graduates of a non-Canadian institution located in Canada
- Graduates of a DLI or program that is not PGWP-eligible

Curriculum licensing (public–private partnership) programs: A program delivered by a private college on behalf of a public college is generally not eligible. There are only two exceptions. One covers programs within the same province started before May 15, 2024. The other covers programs between provinces started on or before January 31, 2023 (officer instructions).

Legal advisory: Since November 8, 2024, you must apply for a new study permit before you change schools. If an officer finds you broke your study permit conditions, you can be barred from getting a work permit for 6 months, under R200(3)(e)(i) (officer instructions).

3. Language and Field-of-Study Requirements

The requirements depend on the type of program you completed (IRCC eligibility page).

PROGRAM YOU COMPLETED	MINIMUM LANGUAGE LEVEL	FIELD-OF-STUDY RULE
Bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree	CLB 7 (English) or NCLC 7 (French) in all 4 skills	None
Other university program (no degree)	CLB 7 / NCLC 7	Applies if you applied for your study permit on or after Nov 1, 2024
College, polytechnic or other non-university program (no degree)	CLB 5 / NCLC 5	Applies if you applied for your study permit on or after Nov 1, 2024
Flight school	None	None, but you need a Canadian commercial pilot licence, or an instructor rating and a DLI instructor job offer

Since March 11, 2025, graduates of degree programs at non-university schools, such as a college bachelor's degree, must also meet CLB 7 / NCLC 7 (officer instructions).

Approved language tests

IRCC accepts CELPIP-General, IELTS General Training and PTE Core for English, and TEF Canada and TCF Canada for French. Your results must be less than 2 years old when you apply, must cover reading, writing, listening and speaking, and the test should be taken in person (IRCC document page).

TEST	CLB 7 (DEGREE AND UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS)	CLB 5 (COLLEGE AND OTHER PROGRAMS)
IELTS General Training	6.0 in each skill	Reading 4.0, Writing 5.0, Listening 5.0, Speaking 5.0
CELPIP-General	7 in each skill	5 in each skill
PTE Core	Reading 60, Writing 69, Listening 60, Speaking 68	Reading 42, Writing 51, Listening 39, Speaking 51

Scores come from IRCC's language conversion tables. French test equivalents are also listed there.

Language exemptions: you do not need test results if you applied for your PGWP before November 1, 2024, graduated from flight school, or are extending your PGWP because of your passport or changing its conditions.

Field-of-study requirement

If the rule applies to you, your program must match an eligible 6-digit Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) code. These fields are linked to jobs in long-term shortage. IRCC groups them into 6 areas: agriculture and agri-food, education, healthcare and social services, STEM, trades and transport (IRCC field-of-study page).

- Your CIP code must be on the list when you applied for your study permit or when you apply for your PGWP.
- You are exempt if you have a bachelor's, master's or doctoral degree, applied for your study permit before November 1, 2024, or graduated from flight school.
- A study permit extension keeps the pre-November 2024 exemption. A new study permit application made on or after November 1, 2024, does not.
- If you earned a university bachelor's degree through a college-to-university pathway, the degree rules apply to you.

4. Your Course Completion Letter

Your completion letter usually starts your 180-day clock. It is also the main proof that you finished an eligible program. You do not need to wait for your diploma or graduation ceremony to apply (IRCC Help Centre).

What IRCC accepts as proof of completion

- An official letter from your DLI confirming you met the requirements to complete your program
- An official transcript, or a copy of your transcript from your school's website
- Your degree, diploma or certificate from a credit-earning program

You must also prove you studied full-time in a program of 8 months or longer. This is usually your official transcript or a copy from your school's website (IRCC document page).

> **One document can be enough:** IRCC's officer instructions say the letter can be used on its own if it gives everything the officer needs. For example, it might confirm you attended full-time (except in your final term) and completed the program. Then a transcript would not be required. If the evidence is weak, the officer can ask for more documents.

What a strong completion letter should show

IRCC does not publish a template. This checklist is our recommendation, based on what officers must verify. Ask your registrar to include:

- [ ] Your full name, date of birth and student ID
- [ ] The school's name and DLI number
- [ ] The exact program name and credential (degree, diploma or certificate)
- [ ] Program start date and completion date
- [ ] The normal length of the program in months or hours (this sets your PGWP length)
- [ ] Confirmation you studied full-time in every session (or part-time only in your final session)
- [ ] The date you met program requirements, or the date final marks were issued
- [ ] That the program was delivered in person in Canada
- [ ] The 6-digit CIP code, if the field-of-study rule applies to you
- [ ] Official letterhead, signature and registrar contact details

Practical tips

- Request your letter as soon as final marks are posted. Keep the email or portal record that shows the date you received it.
- If the CIP code is missing, IRCC encourages you to add the eligible code and explain how your program matches it.
- If your school authorized a leave from studies, include its written proof.
- Quebec DVS/AVS graduates need an official letter with the program length in hours and the program code.

5. The 180-Day Eligibility Period

You have 180 days to apply. IRCC's officer instructions say the clock starts on the **earliest** of these dates:

1. The day your final marks were issued
2. The day you received formal written notice that you completed the program, such as the completion letter
3. The day your credential (diploma, certificate or degree) was issued

Your study permit must also have been valid at some point during those 180 days (IRCC eligibility page).

> **Watch your study permit:** It does not last for the full 180 days. It expires on the date printed on it, or 90 days after you complete your studies, whichever comes first (IRCC Help Centre).

Example timeline

DATE	WHAT HAPPENS
March 15, 2026	Final marks are posted. The 180-day clock starts, even if your letter arrives later.
March 20, 2026	You receive your completion letter.
About June 13, 2026	Your study permit expires, about 90 days after completion, if its printed date is later.
September 11, 2026	Day 180. Your PGWP application must be received by this date.

What to do if your study permit is ending

YOUR SITUATION	WHAT IT MEANS
Study permit still valid when you apply	Apply from inside Canada. You may be able to work full-time while you wait.
Study permit will expire before you apply	Apply for a visitor record to stay longer, or leave Canada and apply from outside (eligibility page).
Study permit expired less than 90 days ago	Apply online for the PGWP and restore your status as a student in the same application. Pay the restoration fee and attach the receipt. You cannot work until your PGWP is approved (how to apply).
More than 90 days since expiry	You must leave Canada (how to apply). You can still apply from outside Canada if you are within your 180 days.

6. Applying From Inside Canada

You can apply from inside Canada under section R199 if your study permit is still valid when you submit your application (officer instructions). Most people must apply online. Inside-Canada applicants use guide 5580.

Working while IRCC processes your application

IRCC's after-you-apply page says you can work full-time until a decision is made if you:

- had a valid study permit when you submitted your application
- completed your study program
- were eligible to work off campus without a work permit and did not work more hours than allowed

To show an employer you can work, give them copies of your completion letter or transcript and your study permit. Include the acknowledgement of receipt for your PGWP application, which must be dated before your study permit expired. If you received a WP-EXT for PGWP (IMM 0127 E) letter, include that too (IRCC Help Centre). If IRCC refuses your application, you must stop working the day you are notified.

> **Note:** If you applied to extend your study permit and are waiting under maintained status, you cannot use R199 yet. You must wait for your new study permit (officer instructions).

Travel while you wait

- You may leave and return if your visitor visa or eTA is still valid. Your study permit is not a travel document (IRCC Help Centre).
- If your study permit was valid when you applied, you can re-enter as a visitor and keep working full-time while you wait.
- If you apply inside Canada and need a visa, IRCC will not issue a new visitor visa with your PGWP, so apply separately. An eTA is issued automatically if you need one.

7. Applying From Outside Canada

If you can no longer apply from inside Canada, you can apply online for processing outside Canada under section R197. You must still be eligible and apply within 180 days of completing your studies (officer instructions).

- You can leave Canada after finishing your program and apply from your home country (eligibility page).
- You can also submit an outside-Canada application while still physically in Canada as a visitor. You must keep your visitor status, and **you cannot work** while you wait.
- If approved, you receive a letter of introduction. You then leave and re-enter Canada, and the permit is issued at the port of entry.
- IRCC issues a new visitor visa or eTA when it approves an outside-Canada PGWP (after-you-apply page).
- If you needed a medical exam, its results are valid for 12 months and must still be valid on the day you enter Canada.

> **Border rules:** Since June 21, 2024, you cannot apply for a PGWP at the border. Since December 24, 2024, letter-of-introduction holders generally cannot get their permit when re-entering from the US or St. Pierre and Miquelon, unless they meet an exemption (officer instructions).

Inside vs outside Canada at a glance

	INSIDE CANADA (R199)	OUTSIDE CANADA (R197)
Who uses it	Graduates whose study permit is still valid	Graduates abroad, or in Canada without a valid study permit
Work while waiting	Yes, full-time, if the conditions are met	No
Visa or eTA	eTA issued if needed. A new visitor visa is not issued.	New visitor visa or eTA issued
Getting the permit	Issued without leaving Canada	Letter of introduction, then the permit is issued at a port of entry

Graduates who studied online abroad: pandemic-era rules for distance learning depend on your “lock-in date”. This is the earlier of your program start date and your study permit application receipt date. With a lock-in date between September 1, 2022, and August 31, 2024, online study from outside Canada before August 31, 2024, can count if it was less than 50% of your program. With a lock-in date on or after September 1, 2024, you must complete at least 50% of your program in class in Canada (eligibility page).

8. How Long Will Your PGWP Be?

A PGWP runs from 8 months to 3 years. Its length depends on your program, and it can never go past your passport's expiry date (About the PGWP).

YOUR PROGRAM	PGWP LENGTH
8 months to under 2 years	Up to the length of the program (a 9-month program gives up to 9 months)
2 years or more	3 years
Master's degree of at least 8 months (since February 15, 2024)	3 years, even if the program was under 2 years
Quebec DVS/AVS	900 to 1,799 hours: matches the program. 1,800 hours or more: 3 years
Two eligible programs, each at least 8 months, the second finished within 2 years of the first	The lengths can be combined, up to 3 years

- Scheduled winter and summer breaks count toward the length.
- If you finish an accelerated program early, the PGWP is based on the normal length of the program.
- Online study from outside Canada after August 31, 2024, is not counted. For programs with an overseas component, only the time studied in Canada counts.
- If your passport limits the permit, renew the passport and apply on paper to extend it. IRCC notes this on your PGWP.

Legal advisory: These are maximums. The officer sets the final length using the program length confirmed in your completion letter or transcript.

9. Documents and Fees

Use this checklist to prepare your application (IRCC document page).

- [ ] Proof of completion: completion letter, transcript or credential
- [ ] Official transcript showing full-time enrolment
- [ ] Language test results less than 2 years old (if required)
- [ ] Proof of an eligible CIP code (if required), uploaded under "Client information"
- [ ] Valid passport, with validity covering your full PGWP period
- [ ] Copy of your current or most recent study permit
- [ ] Proof of authorized leave from your school (if applicable)
- [ ] Upfront medical exam results (optional, needed to avoid job restrictions)

- [ ] Restoration fee receipt (if your study permit has expired)

Upload tip: The online document checklist shows language results as "optional". You must still include them if your program requires them. Proof of field of study is not on the checklist, so upload it under "Client information" (how to apply).

FEE (CAD)	AMOUNT
Work permit processing fee	$155
Open work permit holder fee	$100
Total PGWP fee	**$255**
Biometrics (if required)	$85
Restore your status (if your study permit expired)	$246.25

Fees come from the IRCC fee list. Check it again before you pay. Pay both the work permit fee and the open work permit holder fee, or your application may be delayed. Processing times change weekly, so check IRCC processing times.

Family members: once your PGWP is approved, your spouse or common-law partner may be eligible for an open work permit (after-you-apply page).

10. Why PGWP Applications Get Refused

REFUSAL REASON	WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE	HOW TO PREPARE
No language proof	Results missing, older than 2 years, from an unapproved test, or below the minimum in one skill	Take an approved test early and upload the results
Field of study not eligible	A college program whose CIP code is not on the list for your dates	Confirm the CIP code with your school before you apply
Applied too late	Received more than 180 days after final marks or completion notice	Count from the earliest date, not the date you received your diploma
Ineligible school or program	Non-eligible DLI, curriculum licensing program or non-credit course	Check the DLI list and program status
Too much online study	More than 50% of the program completed by distance learning	Keep proof of in-person attendance in Canada
Full-time status not shown	Part-time sessions before the final session, or an unauthorized leave	Submit transcripts and proof of authorized leave
Study permit non-compliance	Changed schools without a new permit, or worked more hours than allowed	Fix gaps before you apply and get advice

IRCC's officer instructions give two sample refusals: a college diploma outside the eligible fields, and an application without approved language results. Both are refused under R200(1)(c)(ii).

11. How Neximm Can Help

Your PGWP is a one-time chance. A late application, a missing language result or a completion letter without the right details can cost you up to 3 years of Canadian work experience.

Neximm Immigration is an RCIC-led consultancy based in Dehradun, India. A licensed Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant advises on and represents your file. We check every date and document before you apply.

- **Eligibility check:** your DLI, program, CIP code, language level and key dates
- **Completion letter review:** making sure it shows everything the officer needs
- **180-day plan:** a deadline map that covers your study permit expiry, visitor record and restoration options
- **Inside or outside Canada:** choosing the route that keeps your right to work
- **Application preparation:** forms, uploads, fees and follow-up with IRCC
- **Next steps:** open work permits for your spouse and planning for permanent residence

Book your PGWP assessment today

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Official IRCC sources

IRCC – About the PGWP: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/about.html

IRCC – Who can apply: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/eligibility.html

IRCC – Get the right documents: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/get-documents.html

IRCC – How to apply: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/apply.html

IRCC – After you apply: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/after-you-apply.html

IRCC program delivery instructions – PGWP [R205(c) – C43]: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/operational-bulletins-manuals/temporary-residents/study-permits/post-graduation-work-permit-program.html

IRCC – Field of study requirement: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/eligibility/field-of-study.html

IRCC – Language results: https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/work/after-graduation/eligibility/language-results.html

IRCC Help Centre – Applying before you get your diploma: https://ircc.canada.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=755

IRCC Help Centre – Proving you can work while you wait: https://ircc.canada.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1507

IRCC Help Centre – Travel while waiting for a PGWP: https://ircc.canada.ca/english/helpcentre/answer.asp?qnum=1309

IRCC fee list: https://ircc.canada.ca/english/information/fees/fees.asp

This guide offers general information and is not legal advice. It is based on IRCC web pages and program delivery instructions reviewed in October 2026. IRCC rules can change at any time. Contact Neximm Immigration for advice on your own situation.