



International Student Handbook for Better Living in Alberta

Immigration Requirements

As a temporary resident of Canada, it is important that you are aware of Canada's immigration regulations and conditions of your stay. As a student, it is your responsibility to ensure your study and other immigration documents has been approved before attempting to enter Canada. For list or requirements that you should secure before coming to Canada, [click here](#).

Work Permit and SIN Number

It is important to remember that when you come to Canada as an international student, your first priority is your studies. This means that if you decide to seek part-time employment while you study, you need to ensure that your academic success comes first! Additionally, you should be prepared to financially support yourself even if you are not able to secure part-time employment.

But if you intend to and is able to work during your studies, here are the steps you must follow to obtain a work a permit and apply for a SIN (Social Insurance Number):

- If you are studying full-time and have a valid study permit that states you "**may accept employment**" or "**may work**" in Canada, present your study permit to a [Service Canada office](#) to apply for a SIN.
- If you are eligible to work on- or off-campus, but your study permit **DOES NOT state that you "may accept employment" or "may work" in Canada**, you must first [apply for an amendment to your study permit](#).
- After your amendment is approved, present your amended study permit to a [Service Canada office](#) to apply for a SIN.
- If you have a valid study permit, but it states, "**This permit does not permit the holder to engage in off-campus employment in Canada**," but you are now eligible to work off-campus without a work permit you must [apply to change the conditions of your study permit](#) and pay the applicable fee.
- After your study permit is changed, present your new study permit to the [Service Canada office](#) to apply for a SIN.
- **If you hold a valid work permit** (e.g., a co-op or post-graduation work permit), you may present it at a [Service Canada office](#) to apply for a SIN.

Health Insurance

Medical Insurance Requirement

Campbell College requires a copy of your medical insurance before you arrive in Canada. The college will require a copy of valid health insurance. In case you do opt for a temporary one (which is required by the college) you may buy a policy by contacting [Campbell College](#).

Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan

If you intend to be in Edmonton for longer than 12 months, you may register for the [Alberta Health Care Insurance Plan \(AHCIP\)](#). There is no cost for this plan. The plan covers visits to the doctor and lab costs, as well as hospital costs, if you are ever admitted to a hospital. To be eligible for Alberta Health Care, you should provide a copy of your Study Permit that shows you are allowed to study for 12 months or more. You must register within three months of your arrival into Alberta. Your spouse or common-law partner may also be covered as long as their immigration documents show that they are authorized to be in Canada for at least 12 months.

Walk-in Clinics

If you need non-urgent care, you can visit clinics across the city. Some clinics are by appointment and others offer walk-in services. For a current list of clinics within the city, contact Campbell College.

Major Hospitals in Edmonton

For a list of major hospitals in Edmonton, Alberta, [click here](#).

Accommodation

The student is ultimately responsible for establishing accommodations for housing during his or her stay in Alberta, and there are many things to consider when looking for a place to live. When deciding which location is best for you, you should consider how you will get around. Do you want to live within walking distance to campus? Will you be taking transit to get around? How close is the nearest bus stop? How close is it to places like grocery stores, convenience stores, restaurants, and banks?

Temporary Accommodation

Once you arrive in Canada, you might require short-term accommodations while making permanent housing arrangements. Should you need such arrangement, [this list](#) might help you decide.

Finding Accommodation

Most students search online for accommodations to rent. Here are some commonly used websites:

- <https://www.kijiji.ca/h-edmonton/1700203>
- <https://www.nestpick.com/student-accommodation/edmonton/>
- <https://www.mainst.biz/student-housing/apartments/edmonton?>

Another option is to establish a homestay accommodation. If you are interested in this alternative, you can explore the [homestay option in Alberta](#). We could assist you by marketing your request to our vast Alumni base. The large majority of our graduates were originally newcomers to Canada, and some may be very interested in providing this service. You will be asked about your potential plans for accommodations during your interview, and we will take action upon request; however, fees and all arrangement will be your responsibility.

Finding Furnishings

If you need to furnish all or part of your residence, you may want to consider purchasing your furniture second hand. This is usually a much cheaper option than buying new furniture—sometimes you can even find items being given away for free. [Kijiji](#) is a good place to find affordable, pre-owned furniture, or you can check [Freecycle](#) and [Facebook](#) for local online market pages.

You can also try visiting second hand stores in Lethbridge, such as [Value Village](#).

If you are looking to buy new furniture, you can visit one of the several [furniture retailers in Edmonton](#).

Protecting Yourself as a Renter

Review [Service Alberta's RTA Handbook and Quick Reference Guide](#). You should understand your rights and responsibilities as a tenant in Alberta.

You may wish to consider buying tenant insurance to cover your personal belongings and furniture in case of theft or damage. You can purchase tenant's insurance through an insurance provider.

Transportation

Public Transit

Edmonton is a widely spread-out city which is divided by a river, and the winter months can be very cold, so walking to certain locations is not always practical. Unless you plan on purchasing and driving a car during your stay, you will most likely be using the public transit. ETS is Edmonton's public transit system and it has a number of train and bus routes to get you where you need to go. You can visit the [Edmonton Transit System](#) website to plan your trip or [look up bus routes and times in your area](#). All students of Portage College enrolled through Campbell College are eligible for a [Post-Secondary Student Pass](#) discount. (Please click on the link for the requirements and locations for purchasing the ticket.) The UPass will provide you with unlimited access to local transit.

Driving in Alberta

As a full-time international student, you can drive in Canada with a license from your home country for up to a year. It is a good idea to obtain an International Driver's Permit in your home country before coming to Canada.

While driving, you should always have with you:

- Your valid driver's license
- Your student ID card or other proof of student status at Portage College.
- An International Driver's Permit (obtained from your home country) if your license is in a language other than English

If you do not have an International Driver's Permit, you should carry a certified translation of your driver's license. When you need to, you can apply for an Alberta Driver's License. You may need to take a written test and/or road test, depending on the country that issued your driver's license. You will need to surrender your previous driver's license, as it is illegal to hold more than one license. If you plan to drive in Alberta, make sure you know the rules of the road. Laws and driving etiquette may be different from where you have driven before. For instance, did you know that in Alberta, it's legal to turn right after coming to a complete stop at a red light, as long as it's safe? Did you know that pedestrians always have the right of way?

Find out more here: [Driver's Guide to Operating, Safety and Licensing](#).

Renting a Car

You might want to rent a car if you are planning a short trip or need one for a specific occasion. There are a number of [car rental options in Edmonton](#) to choose from. If you are considering renting a car, keep the following in mind:

- You will need your valid driver's license. Your International Driver's Permit is only valid if presented with the original license.
- You need to be at least 21 years old to rent a car. If you are 21 or older but younger than 25, you may have to pay a "young renter fee" surcharge. Additionally, if you are under 25 you may not be eligible to rent certain vehicles. Each car rental company will have their own individual policy, so do your research in advance.
- You will typically need a credit card to pay for your rental car.
- You may be liable for any damage done to the car while you are driving it. Consider the company's insurance options carefully before you buy, to be sure that you will be covered in case of an unexpected collision.

Owning a Car

A car is a pricey investment, so make sure to research thoroughly before deciding to purchase a vehicle. The costs of owning a car include not only the initial price of the vehicle, but vehicle registration, auto insurance, gas, and maintenance. All vehicles in Alberta must have valid insurance and a vehicle registration certificate; you cannot legally operate your vehicle without both. When driving, be sure to keep your proof of insurance and registration certificate with you (in addition to your driver's license) and in a location that is safe and easily accessible. For more information on vehicle registration, go [here](#). For more information on personal auto insurance, go [here](#).

Buying a used vehicle is usually much cheaper than buying a new vehicle, but make sure to educate yourself about the potential risks of [buying a used car](#), especially if you are buying from an individual and not a dealership.

Taxis

We do not recommend that you rely on taxis for your everyday transportation, as they are not as affordable or convenient in Lethbridge as they may be in some other places. There are taxi services available, but they can be costly and you will need to order them in advance. Taxis are appropriate for occasional use when other, more practical options such as walking, taking the bus, or riding a bike are not possible. Many taxi services offer a student discount, so make sure to show your Portage College student ID card.

Bicycles

Bicycles are not suitable for year-round use and may not be a practical option for travelling long distances, but in the spring and summer months they are a good way of cutting down on walking time. They can even be used [in conjunction with public transit](#). Bikes can be purchased new from stores such as [Costco](#), [Canadian Tire](#), and [Walmart](#), or from many sport retailers. If you are looking for a cheaper option, you can try looking online for a used bike on websites such as [Kijiji](#).

You should keep in mind that if you are riding a bike on a road, your bike is considered a "vehicle" and you must follow the rules of the road like drivers of other vehicles; this includes riding on the right side of the road, stopping at stop signs and red lights, observing speed limits, and signaling. If you are under the age of eighteen you are required by law to wear a helmet, however helmets are strongly recommended for all ages.

If you decide to purchase a bicycle, always secure it in an appropriate place with a bike lock before leaving it unattended. Your bike is more likely to be stolen if you leave it unsecured.

Other Methods

- Walking: See [this guide](#) from the City of Edmonton on pedestrian safety.
- [Uber](#): To access this local ride-sharing application, you will need to download the phone app and link a payment method to your account.

Supplies

Buying Your Groceries

In Canada, many people buy the majority of their groceries at a supermarket. Supermarkets carry groceries, household items, and over-the-counter medications. Depending on the location of the accommodation you choose, you'll find many supermarkets including [Superstore](#), [No Frills](#), [Safeway](#), [Save-On-Foods](#), [Walmart](#) and [Sobeys](#). Some supermarkets will have lower prices than others, so you will want to balance cost with convenience and location.

Shopping Malls

Although the usual grocery stores are increasingly carrying a wider variety of products from around the world, you may want to visit a mall or a shopping centre if you're looking for something special or some entertainment. Click [here](#) to see the list of malls and shopping centres in Edmonton.

Social Services Support

In the event you need contacting social support groups, below are a few names of agencies that could help you with social support services like mental health, housing/shelter et al:

1. [Bissell Center](#), Edmonton
2. [The Salvation Army](#), Edmonton
3. [The Family Centre](#), Edmonton
4. [Boyle Street Community Services](#), Edmonton