

# COVID-19: A Guide for International Students in Canada Arriving from Abroad



## NOTE:

Below is a document to put in place a consolidated set of guidelines to support the return of international students and outline the roles and responsibilities of Designated Learning Institutions, Provinces and Territories, and the Government of Canada.

This document is aligned with advice published by the Public Health Agency of Canada and complementary to that advice, with each Department / Agency responsible for its own advice, with cross-references to the other. PHAC advice pertains to public health measures, whereas Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada advice focuses on the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in the international education sector with respect to managing public health risks associated with COVID-19.

## Section 1: Introduction

The following document provides information on the COVID-19 pandemic, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of Designated Learning Institutions (DLIs), Provinces and Territories (PTs), and the Government of Canada with respect to the safe arrival and stay of international students in Canada.

The information and guidance provided here are meant to supplement protocols and plans in place or being established at the PT and/or institutional levels (see Part 4 – roles and responsibilities). A general principle is provided to promote racial equality, diversity, inclusion and respect (see Part 5 - Fundamental Values for Race, Cultural Diversity and Inclusion).

This guidance should be read alongside the Public Health Agency of Canada's (PHAC's) institution readiness requirements, which support PTs in confirming that DLIs have appropriate measures in place to ensure international students can meet the obligations under the Quarantine Act and are ready to safely welcome international students. These guidance documents entitled: [Guidance for Post-secondary institutions during the coronavirus \(COVID-19\) pandemic](#) and [Guidance for Schools Kindergarten to Grade 12, outline the recommended public health measures applicable to all students in a Kindergarten to Grade 12 \(K-12\)](#) and post-secondary setting in Canada, as well as relevant guidance from provincial/territorial health authorities.



## **Section 2:** What is COVID-19 (coronavirus)

COVID-19 is a viral infectious disease that can vary in severity, with some individuals having very mild, or no symptoms, others may develop a respiratory illness, such as pneumonia, and some may develop severe and life threatening multi-system disease. COVID-19 has been declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), meaning it is circulating globally, and there is little to no population immunity to the disease. Most people who are infected with COVID-19 will have a mild illness and will recover on their own. Some people who have more severe cases of COVID-19 will require care from a health care provider or hospitalization. COVID-19 may be diagnosed by a health care provider based on signs and symptoms, and/or confirmed through laboratory tests.

For more information about COVID-19 and its signs and symptoms, consult the Government of Canada's website at [www.canada.ca/coronavirus](http://www.canada.ca/coronavirus).

## **Section 3:** What you need to know before leaving your country

Any international student and accompanying immediate family members with symptoms that could be associated with COVID-19 will not be allowed to board their flight to Canada. If symptoms possibly associated with COVID-19 are present upon arrival in Canada, a health assessment will be performed by a PHAC quarantine or screening officer and the individual(s) may not be allowed to enter Canada, or if necessary, the individual(s) may be transported to a hospital for a medical examination.

Currently, international students may enter Canada for the purposes of pursuing primary or secondary school curriculum or a program of post-secondary study that has been confirmed by a province or territory as ready to safely host international students subject to conditions set out in the *Quarantine Act*, and *Emergency Orders: Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Mandatory Isolation)* and *Minimizing the Risk of Exposure to COVID-19 in Canada Order (Prohibition of Entry into Canada from the United States)*. The list of provincial or territorial approved institutions will be published on the [IRCC website](#) and international students are encouraged to verify that their institutions are on that list prior to travelling to Canada<sup>1</sup>.

International students are required to hold a study permit or study permit approval, noting that a study permit alone is not a travel authorization and the international student must attend a DLI that a province or territory has determined as having appropriate measures in place to ensure students can meet the obligation under the *Quarantine Act* with respect to mandatory isolation or quarantine. IRCC will communicate with international students once travel authorization has been granted and remind them that this authorization may be cancelled if the circumstances in their destined DLI or PT changes (e.g. an outbreak). Among other requirements to be granted entry to Canada, an international student will be required to demonstrate to a border services officer that they are entering Canada for non-discretionary purposes and that they are studying at a [listed DLI](#). If these requirements are not demonstrated by an international student upon arrival, they may be refused entry.

**NOTE:** this amendment replaces the previous exemption where the Government of Canada introduced exemptions from the travel ban for international students who currently hold a valid Canadian study permit or have been approved for a study permit when the travel restrictions took effect on March 18, 2020

Accompanying immediate family members may also be allowed to enter Canada to accompany international students. This could include a student's spouse or dependent child(ren), or in the case of a minor who is coming to study in Canada, a parent or legal guardian who will provide care during the quarantine period and/or remainder of stay in Canada. They must show that their reasons for travel are non-discretionary/non-optional, for instance, helping the student get established in Canada.

In accordance with the requirements set out in the Emergency Order under the Quarantine Act, all travellers entering Canada are required to undergo the necessary health checks, **must** wear a non-medical mask or face covering during travel, including to their place of quarantine, and they **must quarantine** (if asymptomatic) or isolate (if symptomatic) for 14 days upon arrival in Canada, in accordance with the requirements set out in the Emergency Order. Upon arrival, international students **must** be able to demonstrate that they have a plan in place to support their initial 14-day mandatory quarantine or isolation period in Canada as well as submit the required contact and address information.

International students should remember that it is a requirement to enter Canada with a **plan** for quarantining for at least 14 days in advance of their first day of their program of study or primary or secondary school curriculum in order to be in compliance with the existing Emergency Order under the Quarantine Act, requiring mandatory 14-day quarantine upon arrival. It is the student's responsibility to respect the following guidelines and that there are appropriate arrangements in place during their quarantine, which includes:

- ensuring they have individual accommodations, monitoring for symptoms,

- avoiding public and shared spaces, arranging to have access to basic necessities (e.g., food and medicines),
- physical distancing from others, and
- avoiding contact with people who are at higher risk for severe illness (i.e., older adults, individuals who have underlying medical conditions or are immunocompromised).

As such, hostels and residences with shared living accommodations are not acceptable for quarantine or isolation. International students living with a homestay provider, host family or a custodian will need to self-isolate from other members in the accommodation or home, which would involve having a separate bedroom and washroom (if possible), physical distancing from all household members, and frequently disinfecting high-touch surfaces.

Minors are not exempt from mandatory quarantine requirements. The parents or guardians of a minor travelling alone to Canada must also ensure that the appropriate arrangements have been made before departing from their home country and that the minor will be able to care for and support themselves during the 14-day mandatory quarantine period while living with a homestay provider, custodian, host family, hotel or in other accommodations.

Before arrival, the parent or guardian must understand Canada's protocols to safely quarantine (self-isolate) or isolate for the required period. This means that their child must quarantine in a place that meets public health requirements, and that their child is well-equipped with the necessities (food, medication, medical access) to quarantine while in Canada in the care of a custodian and/or homestay provider, or another family member.

International students should confirm their eligibility for health-care coverage in Canada and, if not covered, they should make arrangements to purchase comprehensive private health insurance that includes COVID-19 coverage, before departure.

All students are responsible for following the requirements of federal quarantine, and other COVID-19 [guidelines and advice](#) as issued by the Government of Canada, the province or territory, the municipality where the student will reside, or issued by the institution where the student will study.

Failure to comply with this Order is an offense under the Quarantine Act. Any international student and/or family member who are found to be in violation of the mandatory 14-day quarantine period may be penalized under Canadian law. Maximum penalties include a fine of up to \$750,000 and/or imprisonment up to six months. Further, a person who causes a risk of imminent death or serious bodily harm to another person while willfully or recklessly contravening the Quarantine Act or the regulations could be liable for a fine of up to \$1,000,000 or to imprisonment of up to three years, or to both. Spot checks will be conducted by the Government of Canada to verify compliance. We note that in addition to the offences under the Quarantine Act, international students and their family members may face consequences under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, including prohibition of entry to Canada, loss of status and possible removal from Canada. These rules apply to international students who are minors as well. PT public health authorities and local officials also have the ability to enforce their own quarantine requirements.

Upon arrival, border services officers will assess the circumstances surrounding the student's travel. Students are strongly encouraged to make use of the ArriveCan App ([iOS](#), [Android](#) or [web format](#)), which makes it easier to provide

mandatory information upon entering Canada, reduces processing times and points of contact at the border, and provides the Government of Canada with voluntary updates on the student's quarantine compliance and the development of any symptoms during the 14-day quarantine.

During their stay in Canada, all international students and accompanying immediate family members must continue to comply with the federal, provincial and territorial laws and regulations, as well as the guidelines established by local authorities and their respective institutions.

## Section 4: Roles and Responsibilities

### Designated Learning Institutions

Learning institutions are designated to host international students under the authority of the province or territory in which they operate. A DLI may host international students and issue letters of acceptance (LOAs) to applicants destined to a Canadian primary or secondary school or a post-secondary education program. Upon receipt of an LOA from a DLI in Canada, a student abroad is eligible to apply for a study permit from IRCC.

Under the current COVID-19 circumstances, as long as the institution is published on [IRCC's list](#) of PT approved DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad, the institution is providing the student with assurance that it can welcome them into their program of study or primary or secondary school curriculum because they have the appropriate measures in place to ensure students can meet obligations under the Quarantine Act. Students can apply for a study permit with an LOA from an institution not currently on the list of DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad and commence online studies at the DLI, provided that this option is available to them. For these students, travel to Canada to study in person will be delayed until the DLI has the appropriate

measures in place to be on IRCC's list of PT approved DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad.

In the context of COVID-19, DLIs are expected to have specific plans in place to manage their operations that align with PT business resumption plans related to managing the risks associated with COVID-19 and guidance issued by the Government of Canada and the local public health authority. DLIs are expected to abide by the public health protocols, orders, and guidance that are in effect, and are subject to PT oversight of their institutional plans. Any changes within the institutions should be communicated to the province or territory to ensure that the institution can remain on or should be removed from IRCC's list of PT approved DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad.

DLIs are expected to have plans in place to provide necessary information and support to international students destined to their institution in order to help them understand and manage current health restrictions and guidance. This guidance should be available to, and applicable for, international students and accompanying immediate family members, whether living on-campus or off-campus, including living with homestay or custodian.

DLIs are expected to recognize that a student who is new to Canada, or the specific community where they will be living and studying, may not be familiar with the resources available to them. International students should be provided with support resources and orientation information that not only helps them familiarize themselves with their new community, but also provides information on how to comply with current public health requirements, including expectations while in the 14-day mandatory quarantine period upon their arrival. Any information is expected to be provided to international students prior to their departure from their home countries, and upon arrival, as appropriate. Resources or information provided should include:

- [Information](#) related to legal requirements of the 14-day **mandatory quarantine** period after arrival in Canada, as well as respecting jurisdictional COVID-19 protocols;
- Assistance in developing **quarantine plans** in advance of their arrival to Canada, including providing options for transportation to their place of quarantine; confirming agreements and assisting students with hotels, homestay, custodian or other accommodations; and communicating that only individuals who lived together in the same household (e.g., family members) in the country of origin will be permitted to quarantine together in the chosen accommodation in Canada;
- Provision of transportation or information regarding transportation requirements from the airport, or initial point of arrival in the local community, to their place of quarantine (e.g., hotel, residence, or other commercial housing, homestay provider, dormitory or custodian);
- Assistance acquiring the necessities required for the 14-day mandatory quarantine period (e.g., food and/or meals, medications, personal hygiene items, and locating a doctor for medical services), or identify an individual or organization who can perform this function so that new and returning students, as well as those living on-campus or off-campus or those living with a homestay provider or custodian are able to safely observe the 14-day mandatory quarantine period;
- Assistance acquiring provincial health care coverage, or identifying providers that will offer comprehensive health insurance that will cover outpatient and inpatient treatments and include consultations, medical tests and hospital stays during COVID-19; and
- Provision of information on physical and mental health supports, and other supports available to international students.

- Education and resources to ensure they understand Canada's guidance on public health measures and that they follow these recommendations during and after their 14-day quarantine period. Students should receive information about:
  - Monitoring for symptoms before, during, and after their arrival in Canada
  - Staying home/avoiding travel if ill
  - Physical distancing
  - Frequent hand hygiene
  - Respiratory etiquette
  - Environmental cleaning
  - Non-medical masks/face coverings
  - Avoiding contact with populations at high-risk for severe COVID-19 disease and outcomes (e.g. older adults, individuals who are immunocompromised and/or with underlying medical conditions).

Aligned with the business resumption plans and public health requirements in their jurisdictions, DLIs are expected to have identified plans in place for the safe operation of their institutions, and the continued monitoring of potential COVID-19 outbreaks. This would include measures such as:

- Implementing protocols during the 14-day mandatory quarantine period to monitor the health and well-being of international students (e.g., periodic check-ins) and reporting potential violations to the relevant public health authorities;
- Ensuring plans are in place should a student become symptomatic or is suspected of having been in contact with someone with COVID-19, including notifying the jurisdictional and local health authorities and education ministries, custodian, homestay

provider or host family responsible for the care and support of a minor, and safely transporting the symptomatic/exposed international student if requiring hospitalization;

- Ensuring plans are in place should a student in quarantine require medical care for an issue not related to COVID-19 (e.g., a physical injury or emotional distress);
- After the 14-day mandatory quarantine period, ongoing monitoring of the health and safety of students, outreach to international students to ensure they are familiar with Canadian public health expectations and practices, as well as protocols for infection prevention or control and management in the event of an outbreak, or if a student requires medical attention; and,
- Developing contingency plans, in collaboration with local and provincial/territorial authorities to safely house international students in the event of an outbreak, or if it is determined that an institution's plans are not sufficient to meet federal, provincial, territorial or local public health requirements.

### Provinces and Territories

Recognizing the jurisdiction that PTs have over education and their responsibilities with respect to public health, each jurisdiction is expected to have collaborated with its DLIs and local public health authorities to ensure that each institution has developed appropriate business resumption plans and strategies to ensure the health and safety of Canadians and its residents. The Government of Canada does not have jurisdiction over DLIs, and therefore it is incumbent on the PTs to work closely with local public health authorities and institutions to ensure the health and safety of international students and Canadians. The public health readiness

requirements provided by PHAC will support PTs in confirming that the DLIs in their jurisdictions are ready to safely welcome international students.

PTs also have the responsibility to monitor compliance and enforce their own public health orders with respect to international students and DLIs.

It will be important for PTs, working with the DLIs and local public health authorities in their jurisdictions, to recognize the unique needs of international students, particularly those who are entering Canada or living abroad for the first time. This includes ensuring that plans are in place to support the arrival of students, notably to ensure that they have the necessary orientation and supports to live safely in their new communities, both during their initial arrival when they are observing the mandatory 14-day quarantine period as well as the remainder of their stay in Canada.

Recognizing PT roles in health, all jurisdictions will be responsible to ensure that protocols are in place around infection prevention, reporting and mitigation in the event that any future outbreak of the virus occurs and informing PHAC and IRCC to remove these institutions from IRCC's published list of DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad as they are no longer deemed equipped by the province or territory to accept international students.

PTs are to confirm readiness of DLIs to operate in the context of COVID-19 and specifically to host international students, including by identifying a list of institutions within the jurisdiction that can be considered to have been approved for this purpose in accordance with public health requirements and business resumption plans.

### Government of Canada

The Government of Canada is responsible for the issuance of study permits (IRCC) to international students who have a valid letter of acceptance from a DLI and meet all eligibility and admissibility requirements, and for their admission to Canada.

IRCC will inform the international student through push notifications of their ability to travel based on whether a designated learning institution has been confirmed by the province or territory as ready to host international students. International students (foreign nationals) who hold written notification from IRCC confirming the approval of their study permit application to be issued a study permit, and a letter of acceptance issued by a DLI approved by the province or territory as being ready to welcome the safe arrival of international students at the post-secondary or primary or secondary level, will be permitted to travel to Canada by air carriers (Transport Canada authority). Upon arrival at the Canadian port of entry (typically an airport for non-US travellers), these international students may be permitted entry to Canada and be issued their study permit following an examination by Canada Border Services Agency as long as they satisfy the Border Services Officer that they have met entry requirements.

The Government of Canada is also responsible for the imposition of the mandatory 14-day quarantine/quarantine period established under *Emergency Orders* made pursuant to the *Quarantine Act* (see Section 2), as well as compliance monitoring and enforcement. A border services officer or PHAC quarantine or screening officer will assess every traveller entering Canada and ensure that they have a suitable plan for quarantine, and will follow up with individual travellers as required.

International students permitted to enter Canada are considered temporary residents under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Regulation*. The Government of Canada is responsible for the enforcement of the mandatory immigration conditions that all temporary residents and persons temporarily authorized to enter must comply with under any order or regulation made pursuant to the *Quarantine Act*. As such, the Canada Border Services Agency, is responsible for seeking removal orders for international students who fail to comply with the above mandatory conditions.

The Government of Canada will coordinate information sharing internally within federal Departments and be responsible for managing and updating IRCC's list of DLIs re-opening to students arriving from abroad with institutions that are ready to receive international students and those that should be removed. The Government of Canada will also ensure that information sharing with PTs continues, through fora such as the Federal-Provincial Consultative Committee on Education-Related International Activities, regarding the International Student Program and to support the arrival of international students to Canada.

As part of information-sharing, the Government of Canada will solicit from PTs periodic reports on the performance of DLIs with the public health and student safety requirements set out in this guidance document. This will allow for adjustments to guidance and policies as necessary and ensure international students are updated about their status in returning for studies at a confirmed DLI on a PT-approved list.

### **Section 5: Fundamental Values for Race, Cultural Diversity and Inclusion**

PTs, and the DLIs within their jurisdiction are expected to recognize their roles with respect to advancing racial equality, respect, cultural diversity and inclusion on post-secondary campuses and primary and secondary schools that will host international students who are minors.

This should include building into business resumption plans, strategies that protect the international student population from discrimination and harassment. PTs and DLIs should perform ongoing monitoring to ensure that local communities and campuses are safe and welcome places for international students, free of any biases or racism that may be associated with COVID-19.