

Study in Alberta

Frequently Asked Questions

Note: In Alberta, there are many school jurisdictions. Each school jurisdiction operates the schools in its area. Answers to your questions will be different for each school jurisdiction. The answers here are correct for most school jurisdictions.

Choose where you want to study. Then contact the local school jurisdiction to make sure you have the correct information.

Accommodation: Where will I live?

- **Can I live with family friends or relatives?**

Yes. Some international students stay with family friends or relatives. The people you stay with must be adults with a legal status in Canada. They may have children. If you stay with family friends or relatives, you or your family will have to make the arrangements.

- **What about an Alberta family? (Homestay)**

Homestay families give you a private bedroom and three meals a day and so much more! They are a home away from home. They communicate regularly with your parents and teachers.

If you stay with a homestay family, the school jurisdiction will usually arrange the homestay family for you. Most school jurisdictions have a homestay coordinator who will find a good homestay family. Homestay families are carefully selected, and their houses are inspected. You will pay a fee of between \$200 to \$800 Canadian dollars to arrange the homestay. Then you will pay a fee of between \$400 to \$800 Canadian dollars each month you stay with the family.

- **Are international students placed in multi-ethnic homestay families?**

Many Canadian families come from all over the world. International students are often placed with families from different cultures. **English** will be the main language spoken in the home.

- **What happens if I am not happy in my homestay?**

Problems can happen because of difficulties in communication. You should ask questions and communicate problems with your homestay family. Each school jurisdiction has a person to help fix homestay problems.

- **Could I live in a dormitory?**

A few Alberta schools have dormitory facilities where you can live. A dormitory supervisor usually takes care of students in dormitories. Ask the **local school jurisdiction** if dormitory accommodation is available.

- **Do I need to have a custodian?**

Yes. While you study in Alberta, you need a legal custodian in Alberta. If your parents are not in Alberta, a friend, relative, homestay family, school-jurisdiction representative, or dormitory supervisor can be your temporary legal custodian. Ask your **local school jurisdiction** for more information.

- **Will I be able to travel by myself to different places in and outside Alberta?**

No. You can only travel by yourself if you have specific written permission from your parents. Your homestay family, custodian, and homestay coordinator also need to approve your travel. Ask your **local school jurisdiction** for more information.

Fees: How much does it cost to study in Alberta?

- **What tuition fees are required to study in Alberta?**

Tuition fees are the fees you pay for school. The amount will be different in each school jurisdiction.

- For one semester (five months), tuition fees are between \$4,000 to \$6,000 Canadian dollars.
- For a full school year (ten months), tuition fees are between \$8,000 to \$11,000 Canadian dollars.
- For summer programs, some programs are long and some programs are short. Tuition fees are different for each program.

For more information, contact the **local school jurisdiction**.

- **Do the tuition fees include everything?**

There may be extra fees for books, transportation, and activities. Contact the **local school jurisdiction** for more information.

- **If I change my mind, can fees be refunded (returned) to me?**

No, application fees are not usually refunded. Sometimes tuition fees can be refunded in the following situations:

- if you have not yet started school and if you tell the school jurisdiction in time
- if you cannot get a study permit (student visa)
- if you becomes a permanent resident (before September 30 of the current school year).

Ask the **local school jurisdiction** about their refund policy.

English as a Second Language

- **Do I have to know English before I can study in Alberta?**

No, but it always helps to know a little English. Most school jurisdictions provide help learning English to international students as part of their program. Please contact your **local school jurisdiction** for more information.

Alberta Schools: Where to study?

- **How can I decide where to study?**

In Alberta, schools are organized into **school jurisdictions**. School jurisdictions are sometimes called **school districts, school divisions, or school boards**. The school jurisdictions are responsible for accepting applications from international students. Read the [Study in Alberta catalogue](#) to learn about the programs offered by each school jurisdiction. Choose a school jurisdiction. Then apply to the school jurisdiction.

- **Will I be studying in a private school or a public school?**

The school jurisdictions listed in the [Study in Alberta catalogue](#) are all government-funded public schools. In fact, the majority of schools in Alberta are **public** or **Catholic**.

If you are interested in a private school, you need to contact each school for information. Please note that, in Alberta, only accredited private schools follow the same internationally recognized curriculum as public schools. If you want to study the same classes you would in a public school, you need to make sure the private school is accredited.

- **What is the difference between a “public” school and a “Catholic” school?**

Catholic schools and public schools in Alberta are government-funded. They offer the world-recognized Alberta curriculum (set of classes). They teach academic, physical, emotional, and social skills.

The main difference is that Catholic schools teach courses in religion and Catholic beliefs. The religion classes you take are applied towards the Alberta High School Diploma or Certificate of High School Achievement. Catholic schools welcome students from all faiths (religions) and backgrounds.

- **Can I arrive any time during the school year?**

The school year in Alberta is usually from September to June. In high school, the school year is made up of two semesters: from September to January, and from February to June. Please contact your **local school jurisdiction** for information on when you need to arrive.

- **When do students have vacations?**

Alberta students have the following vacations:

- two weeks of winter vacation (mid-December to beginning of January)
- one week of spring vacation (in March or April)
- two months of summer vacation (July and August)
- many long weekends during the school year.

Contact your **local school jurisdiction** for exact vacation dates.

- **Do schools organize trips, camps, or special activities for international students?**

- Schools often organize day trips related to your classes.
- Activities outside of school are sometimes organized by the school, school jurisdiction, or homestay programs.
- Activities, such as sports, music, or arts programs, are available at school or in community organizations.

Each **local school jurisdiction** offers different activities for their international students. Make sure to search the school jurisdiction’s website or contact the school jurisdiction for more information.

You may need to pay additional fees for these kinds of activities.

Application Process

- **How do I apply?**

1. **Do some research.**

To have the best experience possible, find the program that is the best for your needs and your goals. You will need to choose the program that has the right location, length, classes, admission requirements, living arrangements, and cost for you. Explore the [Study in Alberta website](#) to find the information you need.

2. **Find a school you would like to attend.**

Once you decide where you want to study in Alberta, contact the **local school jurisdiction**. The local school jurisdiction will help find the right school and program for you. The local school jurisdiction will give you the application forms and will help you through the application process.

3. **Apply to the school jurisdiction.**

The application process is different in each school jurisdiction. Usually, you will submit the following:

- application fee
- a letter of reference (recommendation) from your current principal
- your most recent report card (record of grades)
- a copy of your academic record (transcripts) for the last two years
- custodianship documents.

The application deadline is different for each **local school jurisdiction**. Ask your school jurisdiction for more information.

4. **Pay your tuition fees.**

If the school jurisdiction accepts your application, the school jurisdiction will tell you to pay your tuition fees. After the school jurisdiction receives your payment, the school jurisdiction will send you a letter of acceptance. Different school jurisdictions may have a different way to process applications. Contact your **local school jurisdiction** for its exact procedure.

5. **Apply for your study permit.**

You are now ready to apply for your study permit. You need to include your letter of acceptance as part of your study permit application. The Government of Canada issues study permits.

Please visit the [Citizenship and Immigration Canada](#) website for the most up-to-date information on Study Permit and Visa requirements for international students.

- How long does it take to obtain a Study Permit (student visa)?
Depending on your country of origin, getting a Study Permit can take a few weeks or three or four months.
- What if I do not get my Study Permit in time?
Tell your **local school jurisdiction**. Ask your local school jurisdiction what you should do.

6. **Arrival in Alberta.**

Make all the necessary arrangements for your arrival in Alberta.

School Programming

- **Which classes do I need to take?**

As an international student, you will have three types of classes:

- **Required classes**

To graduate (earn an Alberta High School Diploma), all students must study the following subjects: English or French language arts, mathematics, sciences, social studies, physical education, and Career and Life Management (CALM).

Schools with religious affiliation (for example, Catholic schools) may also require students to study religion.

- **Optional classes**

Each school offers different optional classes. You will choose which optional classes to take. Optional classes may include different languages, fine arts, music, health, home economics, personal and social skills training, vocational (job-related) training, and computer and technology studies.

- **English as a Second Language classes**

Students who need help learning English usually take English as a Second Language (ESL) classes. ESL classes help students learn English and the cultural values, customs, and social expectations in Alberta. ESL programs are different in each school and school jurisdiction.

- **Do I get to choose my classes or are they chosen for me?**

The school will help you choose the best classes for you. When you arrive at the school, school staff will meet with you to arrange your class schedule. To determine which classes are best for you, the school will look at your interests, previous school records, age, and English-language ability.

- **What about the classes I already took in my home country?**

The school will examine your transcripts and determine if the classes from your home country can be credited in Alberta.

- **Will I take the same classes as Canadian students?**

Yes. Most of your classes (except for ESL) will be with Canadian students. In all of your classes, teachers understand that you may be learning English.

- **How can I receive an Alberta High School Diploma?**

To get an Alberta High School Diploma, you must get 100 credits, including the following:

- English Language Arts (30 level)
- Social Studies (30 level)
- Mathematics (20 level)
- Science (20 level) **or** Chemistry 20 **or** Biology 20 **or** Physics 20
- Physical Education 10
- Career and Life Management (CALM)
- Two Grade 12 courses (10 credits) in addition to English Language Arts and Social Studies
- 10 credits at any level from Career and Technology Studies (CTS) **or** Fine Arts **or** Second Languages.

Is this information about an Alberta High School Diploma confusing? The staff at your school will help you.

- **How long does it take to get an Alberta High School Diploma?**

Getting an Alberta High School Diploma depends on many things; for example, your level of English when you arrive in Alberta and the classes you already studied in your home country. If you require English-language help it will take you longer to get the Alberta High School Diploma than for a Canadian-born student. Many international students take at least four years to get an Alberta High School Diploma. If you are serious about receiving an Alberta diploma, contact your school as soon as possible and make a plan right away.

- **Will an Alberta High School Diploma help me get into a good university?**

The Alberta High School Diploma is a symbol of a high quality education. If you have an Alberta diploma, and maintain a good academic standing, you can apply to most universities and colleges in Canada and the United States.

Who is studying in Alberta?

- **Where do international students in Alberta come from?**

Alberta schools attract students from all over the world. Approximately 1100 foreign students from over 40 different countries attend schools in Alberta each year. These students are international students or exchange students.

- **What is the difference between international students and exchange students?**

International students usually come to Alberta to live with members of their extended family or with a homestay family for the duration of their studies. They usually stay for a long period of time (from a few months to a few years); some even graduate with an Alberta High School Diploma.

Exchange students live and study in Alberta for a short period of time. They are part of an exchange program recognized by Alberta Education. Exchange students are partnered with Alberta students. They exchange knowledge about each other's culture and/or language. Please visit our [Student Language Development Exchange](#) web page for more information.

Health Care

- **Do all international students need health-care insurance?**

Yes, all students need health-care insurance. Alberta Health Care is available to international students who have a valid study permit and who are in Alberta for at least one year.

Alberta Health Care only covers basic health expenses; it does not cover dental treatment or prescription medication.

In some school jurisdictions, international students need to have private health-care coverage. Please contact your **local school jurisdiction** to find out about its specific health-care coverage requirements and policies.

More questions? More answers!

- **Can I work while I'm studying in Alberta?**

No. By law, international students studying in Alberta's Kindergarten to Grade 12 school system are not permitted to have any type of employment.

- **What is the age of majority in Alberta?**

In Alberta, the age of majority is 18 years old. At 18 years old, you are considered to be an adult.

- **How old do I have to be to study in Alberta?**

In Alberta, most high school students are between 14 and 18 years old. Students must be less than 20 years old as of September 1 to study in an Alberta high school.

Some school jurisdictions accept younger students in elementary and junior high school, but there are strict rules. Please contact your **local school jurisdiction** for more information.

- **If I already graduated from high school in my home country, can I apply to study in an Alberta high school?**

Sometimes school jurisdictions will accept a student who graduated from high school in his or her home country, and who is still less than 20 years old. **Local school jurisdictions** make that decision.

- **I am from Brazil, Colombia, or Mexico. Do Alberta school jurisdictions offer help with the legalization process (co-validation)?**

Yes. Brazilian, Colombian, and Mexican students who need their school marks to be legalized can ask their **local school jurisdiction** to help them with the process. Some school jurisdictions give you precise information so you can do it yourself. Other school jurisdictions charge a fee to take care of this for you. Contact your **local school jurisdiction** to ask about legalization early so the process is not delayed!