

Off Grad-Track: Immigration Considerations for International Students

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Current as of: March 1, 2024

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Introduction & Disclaimer

If you will need to complete another (or more) terms in your program of study as a result of being unsuccessful in one or more courses, it is important to be aware of the immigration impacts associated with lengthening your program of study. These include but are not limited to: potential requirements for study permit extensions, impacts to work authorizations, and impacts to eligibility for the post-graduation work permit (PGWP).

Kindly note that the information in this guide does not, and is not intended to constitute legal advice, and instead all information, content and material is for general information purposes only.

This information has been reviewed by a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC). Be aware, however, that immigration policies can change without notice. Students are solely responsible for their own research and legal advice in order to ensure that they are in compliance with all Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) regulations in order to gain entry to and at all times during their time in Canada, including, but not limited to, any medical or study and work permit related requirements.

Important NBCC Contacts

| Title | Contact |
|---|--|
| Coordinating Instructor | This is a different individual in each program (ask one of your current instructors if you are unsure for your program) |
| International Student Success Coach | International Student Success Coaches are assigned by campus. Find your contact here: International Student Support (nbcc.ca) |
| Records Specialist, Registrar's Office | Records Specialists are located on each campus and you can visit them in person. However, each academic school also has a specific record specialist who may be assigned to answer your questions. |
| Immigration Advisor | Kathleen Cobb, RCIC - immigration@nbcc.ca |
| Counsellor | Counsellors are assigned by campus. Find your contact here: Counselling Services (nbcc.ca) |

Vocabulary

| Term | Definition |
|--------------------------|---|
| Final Term | This is the last term that you will be a student at NBCC (either in classes or in a work-integrated learning component), given your new anticipated graduation date. The Academic Terms are recognized as Summer - July to August, Fall - September to December, Winter - January to Mid- April, and Spring – Mid-April to June (Tuition and Other Student Fees (nbcc.ca)). |
| Full-Time Student | A student enrolled in 60% or more of the credit units applicable to the Program and offering for the related academic term (Tuition and Other Student Fees (nbcc.ca)) |
| IRCC | Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada |
| Off-Grad Track | If a student is no longer able to complete their program of study within the standard timeframe, they are considered to be “off grad track”. |
| Part-Time Student | A student enrolled in less than 60% of the credit units applicable to the Program and offering for the related academic term (Tuition and Other Student Fees (nbcc.ca)) |
| PGWP | Post-Graduation Work Permit |

Immigration Considerations Associated with being “Off-Grad Track”

Full-Time vs. Part-Time Status

It is important to understand how being off-grad track will impact your student status (full- time vs. part-time) in each of your remaining terms at NBCC. If you are not sure how it will impact your student status, you should meet with your **coordinating instructor** to better understand.

From an immigration perspective, international students need only be “[actively pursuing their studies](#)” to meet the requirements of their **study permit**. This can include part-time studies. However, to remain eligible for the post-graduation work permit (PGWP) students must be full-time in every term (with the exception of their final term). Further, part-time status restricts students from working while they are studying, too.

Work Authorizations as a Student

To be able to work part-time (20 hours/week off-campus) while studying, an international student must be a full-time student during that term (with the exception of their final term; see below). If a student wants to work full-time during scheduled breaks from class, they must be a full-time student in the term before **and** after the break.

Final Term Exception: If a student will have a part-time course load only in their final term of study, then they are still able to work during that term provided they have maintained full-time status in all other terms of their program. See: [Work off campus as an international student - Canada.ca](#) (section: If you're a part-time student at a DLI). It is a student's own responsibility to ensure that they are in their final term of study.

You can see those details on this Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) website: [Work off campus as an international student - Canada.ca](#);

Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) eligibility

To remain eligible for the post-graduation work permit (PGWP) after graduation, an international student must have been a full-time student during every term of their studies (with the exception of their final term).

Final Term Exception: If a student will have a part-time course load only in their final term of study, then they will remain eligible for the PGWP provided they have maintained full-time status in all other terms of their program. See: [Post-graduation work permit eligibility requirements - Canada.ca](#) (section: Part-time status for final academic session). It is a student's own responsibility to ensure that they are in their final term of study.

You can see that IRCC reference website here: [Work in Canada after you graduate: Who can apply - Canada.ca](#).

Family member's immigration documents

If you have family members who are inside Canada with you, review the information below to understand how their immigration status may be impacted by a change in your student status.

Spouse/Common-Law Partner

- Open Work Permit Holder: If you have a spouse/common-law partner here in Canada with you on an open work permit (OWP), your student status (part-time or full-time) would not impact their eligibility to continue working on their current work permit. **It would, though, impact their ability to renew this open work permit.**
- Visitor Visa/Record Holder: If you have a spouse/common-law partner here in Canada with you on a visitor visa or visitor record, your student status (part-time or full-time) would not impact their eligibility to remain in Canada or to extend their status.

Dependent Child

- **Study Permit Holder:** If you have a dependent child in Canada on a study permit, your student status (part-time or full-time) would not impact their eligibility to continue studying or to extend their study permit.
- **Visitor Visa/Record Holder:** If you have a dependent child in Canada on a visitor visa or visitor record, your student status (part-time or full-time) would not impact their eligibility to remain in Canada or to extend their status.

Leave from Studies

If being off-grad track will result in a leave from your studies for one (1) or more terms, it is important that you review the following information.

Timeline to remain in Canada before rejoining your studies: You must rejoin or begin a new program of study within 150 days of the date you are no longer a student in your current program . If this is not possible, then you would need to change your status in Canada (ie. to a visitor) or leave Canada and return to begin your studies closer to the start of your next term (see: [Study Permits: Assessing study permit conditions - Canada.ca](#)).

Work authorizations: You are not able to work until you have rejoined your program of study or started a new program of study in Canada, and you meet all other eligibility criteria for work authorizations (see: [Work off campus as an international student - Canada.ca](#)).

Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) Eligibility: If you take a leave from studies that is not approved by the designated learning institution (DLI; such as a medical leave), you may not meet the eligibility criteria for the post-graduation work permit (PGWP; see: [Post-graduation work permit eligibility requirements - Canada.ca](#)).

Study Permit Extensions

A student may be required to submit a study permit extension if their current study permit will be expiring before their new anticipated graduation date.

NBCC's Immigration Advisor is here to support students with their study permit extension applications. There is a webinar every term on this topic. All immigration related information and webinars are posted in the **International Student Information** section of the weekly *The Connection* newsletter email communication and on the Brightspace Event Calendar. That email is sent directly to the email address that is on file every Friday. You can also reference copies of those emails at [What Can I Expect \(nbcc.ca\)](#) in the **Past Issues of The Connection** section.

Important Documents for Study Permit Extensions (not exhaustive):

- **Confirmation of Enrolment Letter:** You can request this document at [Document Request \(nbcc.ca\)](https://nbcc.ca). It's important that you discuss with your coordinating instructor to understand when your new anticipated graduation date will be updated in the NBCC system. A confirmation of enrolment letter will only reflect the new anticipated graduation date once the necessary paperwork has been completed by the academic department and the Registrar's Office.
- **Letter of Explanation:** We recommend that students who are off-grad track write a letter of explanation to outline this change in their study plans to clearly explain the reason for the study permit extension to the immigration officer reviewing the application. Upload this in Client Information on the IRCC account.

Resources for Study Permit Extensions:

- www.nbcc.ca/immigration - under Resources > While at NBCC
- [Extend your study permit or restore your status: About the process - Canada.ca](https://www.nbcc.ca/immigration/extend-your-study-permit-or-restore-your-status-about-the-process-canada.ca)

Important Questions to Clarify

| Question | Additional Information | Key Contact |
|---|---|---|
| <i>Will I be a part-time student at any time during the remainder of my program of study?</i> | This should be clarified with your coordinating instructor. They will help to create a new roadmap to graduation for you. Part-time student status has immigration impacts as outlined in this document | Coordinating Instructor |
| <i>When will my study permit expire?</i> | Check the expiry date listed on your study permit. | |
| <i>Will I need to apply for a study permit extension?</i> | If your study permit will expire before your new anticipated graduation date, then you will need to apply for a study permit extension. NBCC's Immigration Advisor can guide you through that process. | Immigration Advisor |
| <i>Will I still be eligible for a PGWP?</i> | Review the information provided in this document. If you are uncertain or concerned about your eligibility, reach out to NBCC's Immigration Advisor. | Immigration Advisor |
| <i>How will this impact my tuition and fees for this term?</i> | Your tuition and fees will be different if you are a part-time student or a full-time student. See: Tuition and Other Student Fees (nbcc.ca) | International Student Success Coach and/or Records Specialist |
| <i>What are the important refund deadlines and other</i> | Review the NBCC Academic Calendar to be aware of all important dates. Ask your | International Student Success Coach |

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| <i>academic dates I should be aware of?</i> | International Student Success Coach if you are uncertain. | |
| <i>When will my new anticipated graduation date be updated on my student file?</i> | It's important that you discuss with your coordinating instructor to understand when your new anticipated graduation date will be updated in the NBCC system. A confirmation of enrolment letter will only reflect the new anticipated graduation date once the necessary paperwork has been completed by the academic department and the Registrar's Office. | Coordinating Instructor and/or Records Specialist |