

International Student Guide:

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Welcome

Welcome to Kelowna and welcome to Focus College!

We know that moving to a new country can be very challenging. You will have lots of questions. We want to make it as easy for you as we can.

This International Student Guide should answer a lot of your questions. Please speak to us if you need more information or support.

We are here to help you.

Working

Social Insurance Number:

You need a Social Insurance Number (SIN) (or in some cases an Individual Tax Number (ITN)) if you want to work in Canada. Go to the [Service Canada Office](#) in Kelowna with one of these documents:

- a study permit that states you “may accept employment” or “may work” in Canada,
OR
- a study permit and a “confirmation to work off campus” letter issued by IRCC prior to February 6, 2015,
OR
- a work permit (e.g. co-op, post-graduation, or spouse/partner work permit)

You will receive your SIN the same day you apply.

[My study permit states that I can NOT work, or accept employment, but I am eligible to work according to immigration regulations.](#)

If you are eligible to work in Canada as a student but you do not have one of the documents listed above, you must apply to have your study permit changed. More information is available at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/study-extend.asp> . When you have your new permit, go to the [Service Canada Office](#) to apply for your SIN.

Working off Campus as a Student:

Full-time international students can work off-campus **without** a work permit:

- **up to 20 hours per week** during regular academic sessions, and
- full-time during scheduled breaks, such as the winter and summer holidays or spring break.

To qualify, you must:

- have a valid study permit,
- be a full-time student,
- be enrolled at a [designated learning institution](#) at the post-secondary level (*Focus College is a Designated Learning Institution*)
- be studying in an academic, vocational or professional training program that leads to a degree, diploma or certificate that is at least six months in duration.

You **must** stop working on the day you no longer meet the eligibility requirements listed **above** (e.g., if you’re no longer a full-time student during an academic session).

Life in Canada

Do International Students File Taxes?

Yes. All residents of Canada, including students, have to report all money you receive in Canada and from outside Canada.

Inviting Friends or Family to Canada

If you have legal status in Canada, you can invite family and friends to visit. The person you are inviting must make sure they have all visas (Temporary Resident Visa, or TRV) and other documents they need to travel.

Required Documents:

- Original Confirmation of Enrolment Letter
- Letter from employer (if working)
- Copy of your study permit
- Transcript

Documents that may be required:

- Proof of residence (phone bill, utilities bill, rental lease, etc)
- Proof of funds, if you are sponsoring their travel
- Marriage Certificate, if you are inviting your spouse
- Birth Certificate, if you are inviting your child

Visit <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/visit/index.asp> for more information.

Banking:

There are two types of accounts you can open: a **Savings account** and a **Chequing account**. You will need a **Chequing account**. The bank you choose to use will tell you what documents they need from you.

There are 5 major banks (called the Big 5) in Canada which most Canadians use (*and their nearest location to Focus College*):

1. Bank of Montreal (BMO): 1875 Dilworth Dr · (250) 861-1626
2. Bank of Nova Scotia (Scotiabank): 1835 Dilworth Dr #101 · (250) 717-2585
3. Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce (CIBC): 2107 Harvey Ave · (250) 470-1650
(Orchard Park Mall)
4. Royal Bank of Canada (RBC): 1840 Cooper Rd · (250) 860-3727 (Orchard Plaza)
5. Toronto-Dominion Bank (TD): 1950 Harvey Ave Ste 150 · (250) 762-4142

Child Care Services:

There are many different child care services within Kelowna and the surrounding area which offer a variety of services. Whether you need child care for babies, toddlers, or school age children there are organizations available to you.

A great website for finding quality child care in Kelowna is:

<http://www.kelownachildcare.com/trellis/families> under the referrals section you are able to search through local childcare providers through age of children, location of the providers, and additional services offered by providers.

Focus College Student IDs

Every Focus College student is issued a student ID shortly after beginning their studies. Student IDs should be carried by the student at all times while at Focus College. Your Focus College student ID can also be used for discounts within the community as well. Local businesses such as Big White, Kal-Tire, and Mosaic Books all offer discounts if a student ID is provided during purchase. You are also able to purchase an SPC Card (www.spccard.ca/purchase) with your student ID which gives you national discounts at stores such as Sport Chek or American Eagle.

If you do not have a Focus College student ID please speak to a staff member of Focus College who will be able to set you up with one. Student IDs can not be given to the student until the student contract has been signed.

Insurance:

What is MSP (Medical Services Plan)?

Medical Services Plan (MSP) is the health insurance plan for people who are living in British Columbia for 6 months or longer. You must apply for your MSP as soon as you arrive. [Apply for MSP](#) You will be covered after 3 months. You must have a valid health insurance coverage for the 3 months before MSP coverage starts. It costs \$75 per month for one adult and \$150 for families with two adults or more. Children under the age of 19 do not pay.

Why do I need MSP?

It covers most general doctor and hospital costs. It does not cover dental care, prescription drugs, eye care or travel. For more information visit the [MSP website](#).

Other insurance

There are other medical insurances available, for example PharmaCare ([Fair Pharmacare](#)) for prescription drugs and Pacific Blue Cross Dental Insurance for dental care.

What if I am studying in Canada for less than 6 months?

If you are studying in Canada for less than 6 months you will not qualify for MSP. You must, however, make sure you have health insurance coverage for your entire stay in Canada. One possible plan is the Guard Me Insurance <https://www.guard.me/>

Service Card

The BC Services Card is designed to make it easier for B.C. residents to access provincial government services with just one card:

- Access Medical Services Plan (MSP) benefits
- Access services that need a photo ID

Each B.C. resident enrolled with the Medical Services Plan (MSP) is eligible for a BC Services Card with a unique lifetime identifier for health care called a personal health number. This number remains the same, regardless of any changes to personal status. You should carry your card at all times, to have it available to be presented whenever you need health care services.

If you have temporary immigration status, call Health Insurance BC. Otherwise if you are over the age of 19 and under the age of 75, visit an ICBC driver's license office with two pieces of ID to obtain a photo BC Services Card.

Seeing a Doctor

In Canada, it is common to have a family doctor or general practitioner (also called GP) who will take you on as his/her regular patient. If you require the services of a specialist (e.g., an eye doctor), your family doctor may refer you to another doctor (recommend someone and make an appointment on your behalf).

If you do not have a family doctor, you can also go to a walk-in clinic. Walk-in clinics don't require an appointment, are usually open longer hours, and are a good option if you are feeling unwell but don't require emergency care.

If it is an emergency, go to the emergency room at the nearest hospital.

When you visit a Canadian doctor:

- Tell them about any other health issues you have or medication you are taking.
- Ask your doctor questions. If you are not happy, you can also see another doctor for a second opinion.
- Your health records are confidential. No one else can see them without your permission.

Medication

In Canada, general, or “mild” medication is available “over the counter” at the pharmacy. If you require stronger or more specialized medication (for example antibiotics), your doctor will write you a prescription which you will have to take to a pharmacy. If the doctor prescribes medication, be sure to take it exactly as directed. If you feel the medicine is not helping or is making you sicker, go back to the doctor.

Alternative medicine (Chinese medicine, Ayurveda, homeopathy) is not covered by the MSP, but other health plans do help cover costs. There are many alternative medicine practitioners in Kelowna.

Kelowna Health and Safety Information:

Organization:	Hours:	Phone:
Ambulance	24 Hours	911
Fire	24 Hours	911
RCMP (Police)	24 Hours	911
Kelowna Crisis/Suicide Hotline	24 Hours	250-763-9191
Kelowna Mental Health	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	250-868-7788
Mental Health (After Hours)	After Working Hours	250-212-8533
Women’s Emergency Shelter	24 Hours	250-763-1040
Victim Link	24 Hours	1-800-563-0808
Specialized Victims Assistance Program	8:30 am – 4:30 pm	250-860-8300
Nurses Help Line	24 Hours	811

Transportation:

Getting a BC driver's licence

If you have a valid driver's licence from another country or Canadian province and are registered as a student attending one of the specified educational institutions in BC, your licence will allow you to drive in BC for as long as you are a full-time student. You may need to get a special international driver's licence from your home country before you come to Canada.

If you come from [certain countries](#) (Austria, Australia, France, Germany, Ireland, Japan, Netherlands, New Zealand, South Korea, Switzerland, Taiwan, United Kingdom, and the United States), you do not need to take a driver's test in BC.

You will need to bring your current driver's licence and international driver's licence, two pieces of ID, a driving record and the licence fee to the Kelowna driver licensing office (1720 Springfield Road, Kelowna – Tel. 250 860 4069). If your driver's licence and ID are in a language other than English or French, you must also carry an ICBC certified translation of it. See their website for a list of certified translators.

You must switch to a BC driver's licence within **90 days** of moving here. When you receive your BC driver's licence, you will have to give up your old licence. You are only allowed to have 1 licence here.

Road Rules

Speed Limit

The speed limit on all Kelowna roads is 50 kilometres per hour (km/h), unless you see a sign for a different speed. The speed limit on lanes behind houses and buildings is 20 km/h. Park and school areas usually have a speed limit of 30 km/h. Kelowna police give out tickets with heavy fines for people who exceed speed limits.

Street Parking

Never block a fire hydrant, bus stop, crosswalk, road, alley, or driveway when you park. Parking meters are usually in effect from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm, seven days a week. Always check the meter for parking restrictions to avoid getting a ticket.

Pedestrians

People who are walking have the right of way and you need to watch out for them at all times.

Emergency Vehicles

When a police car, fire truck, or ambulance has its lights or siren on, you must get out of the way as quickly and safely as you can. Signal and move your car into the right-hand lane or to the roadside and stop until the emergency vehicle has passed you.

Distracted Driving

It is illegal to use your cell phone or any other electronic device when driving.

Drinking & Driving

Operating a motor vehicle with a blood alcohol content exceeding 0.08, or under impairment of drugs (whether in motion or not) is a criminal offense in Canada and is taken extremely seriously. There are stiff penalties given to those who operate a motor vehicle while impaired, which can include fines, immediate roadside prohibition, or even jailtime. If you take drugs or alcohol, under NO circumstances should you drive.

BC Transit – Kelowna Bus

One-way fare - \$2.50

Day Pass: \$6.50

Monthly Pass: \$70

Monthly Pass with Student ID: \$55

Bus Transfer: The transit transfer policy allows passengers to transfer in any direction for 90 minutes from the time they receive their transfer. Be sure to request your transfer as you pay your fare. If you have to take more than two buses to complete your trip, you can use the same transfer. When you board your connecting bus, show your transfer to the driver with the transfer facing up, and the time showing.

App for Kelowna Busses: Transit (Available for Android and Apple)



Taxis

Kelowna Cabs: 250-762-2222

Kelowna Cabs App (Available for Android and Apple)



Book a Taxi through the App to your location and track in real time

Accommodation:

Focus College is happy to help students find accommodation, but students must notify us at least 1 month before their arrival.

If students would like the college to arrange accommodation for them, please transfer a deposit of 2 months rent and a \$ 300 accommodation arrangement fee. The accommodation arrangement fee is not refundable. Please contact the college for more information.

A single room in Kelowna costs on average between \$600-\$800 a month.

Housing in Kelowna can be difficult to find, but there are a number of sites which advertise student and other accommodation:

<https://classifieds.castanet.net/cat/rentals>

www.rentalsinkelowna.com

Kelowna Culture:

Cultural Centers:

Kelowna Sikh Temple: *1111 Rutland Road North, Kelowna, BC, Canada, V1X 4T7*

Kelowna Buddhist Temple: *1089 Borden Avenue V1Y 6A7*

Kelowna Islamic Centre (Masjid-As-Salam): *1120 Hwy-33 Kelowna, British Columbia*

Dolyna Ukrainian Cultural Society: *1935 Barlee Road, Kelowna BC*

French Cultural Centre: *702 Bernard Ave, Kelowna, BC V1Y*

Ki-Low-Na Friendship Society: *442 Leon Ave, Kelowna, BC V1Y 6J3*

Global Citizen Kelowna: www.facebook.com/globalcitizenkelowna for events promoting Multiculturalism in the Okanagan!

Kelowna Cultural District:

The Cultural District was the old Okanagan Fruit Packing industry centre. These days it has lots to offer: the Kelowna Community Theatre, Kelowna Art Gallery, Alternator Centre for Contemporary Art, the Rotary Centre for the Arts, Okanagan Heritage Museum, Okanagan Military Museum, Laurel Packinghouse, Okanagan Wine and Orchard Museums, the main Okanagan Regional Library, the Kasugai Gardens, and many parks and walking trails.

There are also over 50 pieces of public art in the city. The Dolphins (Rhapsody) and the Sails (Spirit of the Sail), both by Robert Dow Reid, are the best known.

Academic Support:

Focus College prides itself on having educators who are willing to work with students beyond the hours of class time, but if you need more than what the school can offer, there is additional help available.

Project Literacy Kelowna (*1635 Bertram St, Kelowna, BC V1Y 2G5 (250) 762-2163*) offers free one-on-one tutoring in English and Math literacy.

English Corner (*Okanagan Regional Library, 1380 Ellis Street*) Wednesday 6.30-8.00 pm – beginners to intermediate conversation.

Or speak to your instructor for more information and ideas.

Library

The Okanagan Regional Library is free to register with. There is no limit to its usage. In addition to books the library also offers access to computers, study spaces, and events. There are three ORL branches in Kelowna, one in the Mission, one in Rutland, and the largest ORL branch downtown on Ellis street.

Focus College is in the process of expanding its own library to include more research tools for a student's education, as well as fictional books and magazines to read for pleasure.

Employment Resources:

There are four main employment resources:

Work BC (<https://www.workbckelowna.ca/home/>) is a great resource which offers free employment services across the board.

Nexus BC in Vernon <http://www.nexusbc.ca/> which provides services for job seekers, immigrants, employers, entrepreneurs, volunteers, seniors, and community initiatives. Its "Career Path for Skilled Immigrants Program" helps new immigrants find jobs to match their skills, qualifications and experience.

Accelerate Okanagan www.accelerateokanagan.com is located in downtown Kelowna. It focuses on the tech industry in the Okanagan. If you are a student interested in working in the local tech sector, the events offered are a great way to meet potential employers and coworkers.

Kelowna Community Resources (KCR) - <https://kcr.ca> helps new arrivals and longer term residents and is very involved in the community. It offers immigration services which include: employment services, life skills and education workshops, mentorship, support, as well as employment and translation services (which can include ESL certification).