

Earn While You Learn in Canada!

Canada recently began allowing international students to obtain work permits for off-campus employment. Will it impact global competition for students?

WORKING PART-TIME IS OFTEN A PART OF COLLEGE LIFE today for domestic students in many countries. The case is different for international students—they usually know that once they leave home to study, chances are, they won't have as much access to employment beyond their campus in their host countries. Each nation has its own rules regarding employment for international students. While on-campus employment is often available, there are usually restrictions on employment for international students who want to work off campus.

Times are changing—at least in Canada.

This past April, Monte Solberg, Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration announced that foreign students studying in Canada could apply for off-campus work permits. What makes the work permit program different than off-campus employment options in many other nations, including the United States, is that work permits can be obtained freely without requiring proof of a need for additional funds to pay for education costs due to severe economic hardship or other reason.

"Foreign students make a significant contribution to Canada," said Solberg. "They enrich campus and community life with new ideas and new cultures, and they are an important pool of potential future skilled workers that Canadian businesses need to remain competitive."

Approximately 100,000 foreign students in Canada, who contribute \$4 billion (Canadian) a year to Canada's economy, were eligible as of April to participate in the program. Participating students will be able to work off-campus for up to 20 hours per week during the school year and full-time during academic breaks.

The off-campus work permit program, according to Minister Solberg, aims to "make Canada a designation of choice by making it easier for foreign students to work in Canada during and after their studies." Solberg continues to say that "off-campus work agreements will make it easier for students to gain work experience in the Canadian labor market and earn extra income while studying."

The new work permit program in Canada will provide international students with employment experience and additional spending money, which treats them similarly to their domestic counterparts. Before students can apply for a work permit, they must have already completed six months of full-time study in Canada.

Prior to the announcement that the off-campus work permit program was available effective April 2005 across Canada, the program was a two-year

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pilot initiative in three provinces—New Brunswick, Quebec, and Manitoba.

Alana Yuill, acting director of the international relations division with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, says that the organization “has been actively lobbying for the past four or five years to influence CIC and other federal agencies to help make Canada a more attractive destination for international students.”

“We are extremely pleased that the off-campus work permit program has begun throughout Canada,” say Yuill. “It will put Canada on a level playing field with other nations and will allow international students to study and work at the same time.”



hiring according to Doug Weir, director of international student services at the University of Alberta.

In Alberta, the program met a fast start. “We had international students apply for the off-campus work permit as soon as it was available in the spring and we already have international students working off campus [as of July 2006]. International students have been anticipating the start of this program for some time and they have ‘seized the opportunity’ to take advantage it,” says Weir. “Not only can international students gain a broader variety of work experience during their studies by working off campus, but they can also gain a better cultural fluency of work culture in Canada so when they graduate it will help them find long-term employment [international students can work up to two years after they graduate from a Canadian institution]. It’s a win-win situation from both international students and employers.”

Recruiting Impact Is Not Yet Certain

Because the announcement of the new work permit program is so recent, Canadian institutions have yet to see an impact on applications for admission from foreign students.

“I’m not particularly optimistic that will have a major impact on recruitment,” says Craig Klafter, associate vice president of International at The University of British Columbia.

“There are so many factors that go into a student’s decision to attend a particular institution—cost of education, perceived quality of the institution, attitudes toward the government there and the utility of the degree in terms of future career plans. There may be a small positive effect international student recruitment in Canada but not a

Filling Needs

“The response from international students on our campus has been overwhelming,” says Judith Phillips, acting director of SFU International at Simon Fraser University about the new program. “We anticipate an even higher number of international students seeking work permits in the fall.”

“Education is a competitive global marketplace,” notes Phillips. “The off-campus work program certainly is a ‘selling feature’ for Canadian institutions. In the past, students have been able to work on-campus but now we have an edge with other countries like the UK and Australia, which have had off-campus programs in place. Each country has to ask ‘what gives us competitive edge?’ This program is one. The discussion about this has been going on for years, with political guidance, so the program has been a long time coming.”

For certain regions in Canada, the work permit program comes at an ideal time. The province of Alberta has been facing labor shortages and employers have been unable to meet their hiring needs through domestic

Employment Rules for Foreign Students

Editors' Note: The rules described below are intended to provide an overview to compare policies in a sampling of several Anglophone countries. Advisers should contact authorities in each country for more information and to frequently ensure its accuracy as policies are subject to change. For international students studying in the United States, this article generally refers to rules applying to F-1 students (not J-1 or M-1 students).

AUSTRALIA

International students studying in Australia can apply for a student working permit as soon as they have obtained a student visa and area enrolled in an Australian education institution.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS.

Students can work a maximum of 20 hours per week during the term and unlimited hours when courses are not in session.

Notes: Work that is a formal registered part of students' academic programs is not included in the limit of 20 hours per week. If students are doing voluntary or unpaid work they must apply for permission to work. It is included in the limit of 20 hours per week.

DEPENDENT FAMILY MEMBERS GRANTED PERMISSION TO WORK.

Dependents can work a maximum of 20 hours per week throughout the year.

Exceptions: Family members of the following students can work unlimited hours once the student starts their main course: students enrolled master's degree or doctoral degree programs, or students sponsored by AusAID or Defence.

CANADA

The Off-Campus Work Permit Program allows foreign students at publicly funded postsecondary educational institutions to work off campus while completing their studies.

Publicly funded postsecondary educational institutions are:

- public post secondary institutions that have signed an off-campus work agreement with their provincial or territorial government; or
- private postsecondary institutions that operate under the same rules and regulations as public institutions, receive at least 50 percent of their financing for their overall operations

from government grants, and have signed an off campus work agreement with their provincial or territorial government (currently, only private college-level educational institutions in Quebec qualify).

Off-campus work is available for students studying at such institutions in provinces or territories that have signed agreements with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC). Participating institutions are eligible institutions that have signed an agreement for the Off-Campus Work Permit Program with their provincial or territorial government.

Students must apply for a work permit to work off campus. The work permit authorizes students to work up to 20 hours per week during regular academic sessions, and full time during scheduled breaks (e.g., winter or summer holidays and spring break).

To be eligible for an off-campus work permit, students must:

- ◆ have a valid study permit;
- ◆ be studying at a participating institution (see list above);
- ◆ have been a full-time student for at least six of the twelve months preceding your application for a work permit;
- ◆ be in satisfactory academic standing;
- ◆ sign a form authorizing the institution, the province and CIC to share your personal information (in order to confirm that you are continuing to study full time and that you are in satisfactory academic standing);
- ◆ complete a work permit application (available on the CIC Web site); and
- ◆ include with your work permit application an official receipt to show you have paid the application processing fee of \$150.

Some students are not eligible to apply for an off-campus work permit. More information is available at <http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/study/guide-faq.html>.

SPOUSES AND DEPENDENTS. Spouses of qualifying foreign students may also apply for a work permit.

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

International students must register with the Garda National Immigration Bureau to work off campus. Also, they must be attending a full-time course of at least one year's duration leading to a qualification recognized by the Minister for Education and Science.

Those permitted access to employment may enter casual employment only (defined as up to 20 hours part-time work per week or full-time during normal vacation periods).

For more information, see <http://www.educationireland.ie/httpdocs/html/about/work.html>.

NEW ZEALAND

International students need a 'Variation of Conditions' to their Student Visa/Permit, to work in New Zealand. Students may apply to the New Zealand Immigration Service to work:

- ◆ to meet course requirements if they are enrolled in a course that requires them to have practical work experience;
- ◆ if they are undertaking a full-time course of study in a recognized degree or diploma which takes at least two academic years to complete;
- ◆ when they have completed your study.

Where eligible to work (if the student permit states), students may:

- ◆ work 15 hours per week for undergraduate students
- ◆ work up to 40 hours per week during the Christmas and New Year holiday period.
- ◆ students enrolled in a postgraduate study course, may also be able to work for 15 hours per week.

SPOUSE AND DEPENDENTS. Neither spouses nor any dependents are entitled to work.

UNITED KINGDOM

It is possible for some international students to work while studying in the UK. The opportunities available include part time or vacation work, as well as course-related work placements.

Nationals of European Economic Area (EEA) countries or Swiss Nationals are free to work in the UK. All other students, who are not EEA nationals or Swiss nationals, need to follow the rules explained below.

Students with the appropriate passport stamp/visa sticker can work under the following conditions:

- ◆ Students cannot be self-employed, set up or run their own business, provide services as a professional sports person or entertainer, or pursue a career by taking a full-time position while studying
- ◆ Money that students hope to make while doing part-time or vacation work cannot form part of their entry clearance/visa application. Students must show that they can meet the cost of studying and living in the UK without relying on employment apart from money gained from a guaranteed sandwich year placement, or earned through employment at the institution at which they will be studying.
- ◆ During term time students will only be allowed to work for a maximum of 20 hours a week
- ◆ The work students undertake is a work placement (including 'sandwich' years in employment) that forms a compulsory part of your course
- ◆ In some situations, students may also be able to undertake an internship with a company lasting for up to three months.

SPOUSES AND DEPENDENTS. Dependents spouses or children of an international student are currently allowed to work only if granted leave of 12 months or more. The UK proposes to link a dependent's entitlement to work to the student's leave. If the international student is granted leave of 12 months or more then a dependent will be

permitted to work, irrespective of the length of their own grant or leave. When a student arrives in the UK before a dependent, the dependent should produce for the Immigration Officer a photocopy of the student's passport showing the leave granted.

For more information, visit www.dfes.gov.uk/international-students/wituk.shtml and <http://www.educationuk.org/>.

UNITED STATES

Off-campus employment is authorized only in cases of severe economic hardship occurring subsequent to a student's enrollment in an academic program or in emergent circumstances as defined by the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). F-1 students must have been enrolled for at least one academic year and be in good academic standing before they can be authorized to work off-campus.

Off-campus work authorization requires case-by-case approval from DHS. Approval is not based on the student's choice of employer.

Once authorization is granted, F-1 students may work 20 hours a week or less while school is in session. They may work full-time during those periods when school is not in session or during the student's annual break.

Approval for off-campus employment is good for one year. If the F-1 student needs to continue working off-campus, he or she must reapply.

Other options for F-1 students to work off campus include practical training authorization (curricular practical training or optional practical training), which must be related to the course of study. F-1 students may also be eligible to apply for authorization from DHS to work for an international organization.

Dependents of F-1 students (holding F-2 status) cannot work. Dependents of J-1 exchange visitor students (holding J-2 status) can apply to USCIS for a work authorization card.

For more information, see <http://www.ice.gov/sevis/faq.htm>.

dramatic impact on students' decision of whether to attend a Canadian institution versus an institution in any other country."

Whether or not applications increase as a result of the work permit program remains to be seen with the next recruiting season.

In the meantime, The University of British Columbia has already seen increased interest from partner universities around the world for more student exchanges since the announcement of the new work permit program. "Exchange students seem to view the work permit for off-campus work as an extra temporary benefit while they study here," says Klafter.

International students must demonstrate their financial ability to pay for the cost of their education if they choose to pursue higher education outside of their home country. While earning money on campus can be calculated into the funds available to pay for higher education in some countries, so far, off-campus work isn't a factor in the ability to pay.

"I'm not aware of any government that allows students to count potential earnings from off-campus employment toward the cost of attending an institution," says Klafter.

Easier access to off-campus work could be seen as an added benefit of studying in Canada but it won't necessarily change the tide of where international students study overnight, if at all.

Still other countries that attract international students are paying attention, including the United States.

"Canada has been drawing more international students in recent years and with the new work permit program, it will probably attract even more," says Vivian Cipolla, director of international admissions at New York University. "In regard to its potential impact to competing for foreign students overall, that is something we just don't know at this point. We'll have to wait and see what happens. It's certainly something interesting to watch." **IE**

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