



CANADIAN SOUTHWESTERN COLLEGE

International Student Handbook

Welcome to Canadian Southwestern College!

This handbook is designed to help you navigate your journey as an international student in Vancouver, BC and Canada, ensuring you have access to essential resources and support systems.

Updated Feb, 26th, 2025

Pre-Arrival Information

Weather in Vancouver: Moderate climate with around 150 days of rain. Summer can reach highs of 30°C, and Winter can reach lows to 0°C.

Canadian Cultural Norms & Etiquette

- **Official Languages:** English and French.
- **Politeness and Respect:**
 - Saying "Please" and "Thank you" often is encouraged.
 - Holding doors open for others is common.
 - Personal space is valued—standing too close to someone may feel intrusive.
- **Greetings and Communication:**
 - A handshake is a common greeting in professional settings, while a nod or a smile is acceptable in casual situations.
 - Eye contact is important during conversations, as it shows confidence and attentiveness.
 - Canadians tend to be indirect in giving criticism and use polite language.
- **Environmental Consciousness:**
 - Recycling and waste sorting are important in Canada. Many public places have separate bins for garbage, recycling, and compost.
 - Canadians are conscious about conserving water and electricity—turning off lights and taking short showers is encouraged.

Canadian Classroom Etiquette

- **Respecting Diversity:** Canada values inclusivity and equality, fostering a respectful and accepting society for people of all backgrounds.
- **Classroom Participation:** Professors encourage open discussions and critical thinking. Students are expected to engage actively in class.
- **Punctuality & Professionalism:** Being on time for classes, meetings, and social gatherings is essential. Arriving late is seen as disrespectful to others' time.

Resources

[Adapting to Cultural Differences in Canada as an International Student](#)
[Daily Life in British Columbia](#)

Navigating the Airport

- **Arriving at Vancouver International Airport (YVR):**
 - Follow signs for customs and immigration upon landing.
 - Ensure you have all required documentation, including your study permit, passport, and proof of enrollment at Canadian Southwestern College.
 - Keep copies of important documents in both digital and physical formats.
 - **Customs and Immigration Procedures:**
 - The Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) will review your documents. Officers may ask questions about your studies, accommodation, and financial support.
 - Answer truthfully and have all paperwork ready to present. Be prepared to provide proof of enrollment and financial support.
 - **Transportation Options:**
 - **Public Transit:** Canada Line SkyTrain connects YVR Airport to heart of Richmond, BC in under 30 minutes. You can purchase a Compass Card at the airport for easy travel. More information visit: [TransLink](#)
 - **Taxi & Ridesharing:** Licensed taxis are available at the airport. Ride-share services like Uber and Lyft operate in Vancouver. Pre-download the app and register before you arrive to ensure seamless services.
 - **Emergency Assistance & Customer Support:**
 - **YVR Customer Care Counters** provide 24/7 assistance through the airport.
 - **Customer Care Staff & Green Coat Volunteers** are available to help at any time.
 - **Contact YVR Customer Care:** 604-207-7077, TTY/(TDD) 604-207-7070
 - **For emergencies, dial 9-1-1**
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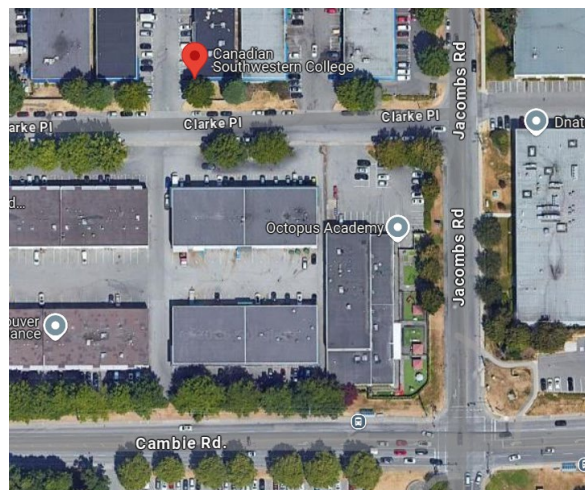
Post Arrival

What to Expect on Your First Day

- **Key Locations:** Familiarizing yourself with important locations will help you navigate your first day smoothly:
 - **On-Campus Training:** [10011 Blundell Road, Richmond, BC, V6Y 2K9](#)



- **Administration Office:** [110-12855 Clarke Place, Richmond, BC, V6V 2H9](#)



- **Introduction to Student Services:** Attend orientation sessions to learn an overview of academic support, career advising, and student wellness services available to you.
 - **Orientation:** International students receive a comprehensive orientation session before starting their studies, available on Zoom or in person. Check the provided school schedule for upcoming orientation dates.
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Student Life in BC

Cost of Living

- Estimated Monthly Expenses:
 - **Rent/Housing:** CAD \$1,200 – 2,500 per month (Varies by location and type of housing)
 - **Groceries:** CAD \$300 – 600 (Depends on shopping habits and dietary preferences)
 - **Public Transportation:** Monthly Passes: Starting at CAD \$107.30 covering buses, SkyTrain, and SeaBus
 - **Health Insurance:** CAD \$75 per month (BC Medical Services Plan (BC MSP) required after three months in BC)
 - **Miscellaneous:** CAD \$100- \$300 per month depending on personal spending habits
- **Budgeting Tips:** Use online budget calculators such as [Numbeo](#) to estimate your expenses. Consider using student discounts to save money.

Resources

- [StudyinBC](#)
 - [BC Council for International Education](#)
 - [Global Affairs – International Education](#)
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Housing

- **On-Campus Housing is unavailable**
- **Off-Campus Housing:** Platforms like [Zillow](#), [Sparrow](#), and [Rentals.ca](#) can help you look for rental in the Greater Vancouver area. Options such as apartments, townhouses, or renting a single room within a larger house.
- **Security Deposits:**
 - A landlord may request a security deposit (damage deposit) at the start of a tenancy agreement.
 - This deposit is typically paid in cash, by cheque, or via e-transfer when signing the lease.
 - The deposit cannot exceed half of the first month's rent.
- **Avoiding Scams:**
 - A landlord should not request rent or a security deposit before you sign a lease.
 - Both you and the landlord must sign the lease together.
 - You should always receive a copy of your lease.
 - If a rental listing seems too good to be true, it likely is—proceed with caution.

Tenancy Rights

- **Legal Protections for Renters:** The [Residential Tenancy Branch](#) provides dispute resolution services for tenants and landlords, ensuring fair treatment under BC's tenancy laws.
- **Lease Agreements:** Before signing a lease, carefully read and understand the terms, including rent, deposit requirements, and responsibilities for maintenance and utilities. Seek legal advice if needed.
- **Eviction Rules:** Landlords must provide proper notice for eviction and follow legal procedures. Tenants can dispute unfair evictions and receive legal guidance through the [Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre](#).

Resources

- [Housing and tenancy](#)
 - [Rental scams](#)
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Transportation

- **TransLink:** TransLink is responsible for the Skytrain, bus, and Seabus commuting options in Metro Vancouver. Canadian Southwestern College does not offer U-Pass. More information on schedule and routes at: [TransLink](#)
 - **Compass Card:** A reloadable card for public transit across Metro Vancouver, offering discounted fares for students available for purchase online or at certain retailers. Without a Compass Card, you will need to pay for each ride with credit or cash. Purchase online: [Compass Card](#)
 - **Biking:** Vancouver has extensive cycling paths with designated bike lanes. Check routes on [BikeMaps](#) and consider bike rentals for convenience.
 - **Taxi & Ridesharing:** Taxis are generally called with a local taxi company for pick up. Uber and Lyft are available in Vancouver and can be booked via their mobile apps.
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BC Healthcare Services

- **Medical Insurance:** International students must enroll in BC's Medical Services Plan (MSP) after 3 months. Private insurance is recommended during the waiting period. More details at [MSP Info](#).
- **Hospitals:** To know the current wait times for each hospital in Metro Vancouver, visit <http://www.edwaittimes.ca/>
 - Richmond General Hospital (Emergency Services, 24/7 care)- Nearest Campus Location
 - Address: 7000 Westminster Hwy, Richmond, BC V6X 1A
- **Health Clinics:**
 - Walk-in clinics: Find one near you using [Medimap](#)
 - Richmond City Centre Urgent and Primary Care Centre
 - Address: 4671 Number 3 Rd Unit #110, Richmond, BC V6X 2C3

- **Accessing Health Advice:** Call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse, dietician, or pharmacist for health-related information. Translation available in 130 languages.
 - **Mental Health and Wellness Support:**
 - Free 24/7 mental health support for post-secondary students through [Here2Talk](#) available in multiple languages and accessible from anywhere.
 - [Simply Counselling](#) offers personalized one-on-one sessions that focus on student individual needs and well-being.
 - **Emergency Services: Call 9-1-1 for immediate medical emergencies, fire, or police assistance.**
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Banking Information

As an international student in Canada, setting up a Canadian bank account is a crucial step to managing your finances and providing proof of income for renting a place.

Here's how to get started:

- **Step 1 -Gather Your Documents:** Requires two pieces of ID, such as a passport, study permit, or letter of acceptance from the institution.
 - **Step 2 - Select a Bank:** Considerations include:
 - Student bank account options (usually with no monthly fees).
 - Monthly maintenance fees and transaction charges.
 - Availability of bank branches, ATM accessibility, and online banking services.
 - **Step 3 – Choose Your Account Type:**
 - Chequing Account: Used for everyday spending, bill payments, and automatic rent/utilities payments.
 - Savings Account: Best for keeping your money safe while earning interest.
 - **Step 4 – Get Your Bank Card:**
 - Once your account is open, you'll receive a debit card. You'll be required to create a PIN (Personal Identification Number) to make transactions and access your money. Ensure your PIN is kept private and do not share with anyone.
 - Major Canadian banks include [RBC](#), [TD](#), [Scotiabank](#), [BMO](#), and [CIBC](#).
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Immigration Support Services

Our team is here to assist students with a range of immigration-related queries throughout their academic experience. We offer support in the following areas:

- **Study Permit Extension & Restoration**

- Support for restoring your status if your permit has expired
- **On & Off-Campus Work Eligibility**
 - Guidance on the number of hours international students are allowed to work.
- **Application for Student's Dependent**
 - Clarification on the eligibility of dependents for work and study.
- **Initial Study Permit Application for Future Students**
 - Assistance for prospective students applying for their first study permit.
 - Information on required documents and processing timelines.

For further assistance, please contact our office at info@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca

Resources

- [Study Permit](#)
 - [Provincial Attestation Letters](#)
 - [Post-Graduation Work Permit](#)
 - [Designated Learning Institution Student Transfer](#)
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Student Support and Services

- **Academic Advising:** Receive personalized one-on-one counseling to help plan your coursework, select the right programs, and explore career pathways. Academic advisors also offer guidance on study strategies, time management, and available writing and language support services to help you succeed.
- **Career Services:** Take advantage of career development opportunities, including job postings, resume and cover letter workshops, interview preparation, and networking events. Career advisors can also provide guidance on job search strategies, internship placements, and work permits for international students.
- **Mental Health Support:** While the college does not provide free counseling, external services such as [Here2Talk](#) and community mental health clinics are available for support.
- **Disability and Accessibility Support:** CSC is committed to an inclusive learning environment for students with disabilities, offering academic accommodations, assistive technologies, and campus accessibility assistance. Contact info@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca as early as possible to discuss available accommodations and arrange support if required.

Resources

- [Post-secondary disability services: WorkBC](#)
 - [Inclusion BC](#)
 - [Disability Alliance BC](#)
 - [Assistive Technology British Columbia](#)
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Academic Expectations

Attendance and Program Progress: Attendance is mandatory for courses; absences may require documentation. If you must miss class, notify your instructor as soon as possible and provide appropriate documentation.

- **In-Residence Attendance:**
 - Adult learners must attend all sessions; absences are not permitted.
 - Any absence requires:
 - A meeting with the instructor to discuss missed content.
 - Make-up sessions available at \$50 CAD per hour (optional).
 - Practicum duration may be extended if interrupted, pending discussion with the Program Director.
 - **Distance Attendance:**
 - Students receive unique login credentials, which must remain confidential.
 - Canvas (Learning Management System) tracks login time and participation.
 - Attendance is considered 100% if all assignments are submitted within the required timeframe.
 - **Academic Integrity:** Plagiarism and cheating are serious offenses and other forms of academic misconduct are taken seriously. Violations can result in penalties, including course failure or suspension. Full policy: <https://canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca/csc-policies/>
 - **Course Registration:** Register early to secure your enrollment. Course changes or withdrawals require written notice to admissions@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca.
 - **Tuition Refund Policy:** Refunds are available under various conditions. For details, refer to full policy: <https://canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca/csc-policies/>
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Working in Canada

Understand your employment rights and conditions and filing taxes.

- **Work Eligibility:** International students can work up to 20 hours per week during semesters and full-time during academic breaks. Check your study permit for conditions. [While You are Studying in British Columbia – Work while you study](#)
- **Social Insurance Number (SIN):**
 - Required for anyone with legal authorization to work in Canada.
 - Employers need a SIN to legally pay employees.
 - Apply through Service Canada.

- Must be provided to an employer within three days of starting work.
- **International students:** Having a SIN does not automatically allow you to work—ensure you meet work eligibility requirements.
- **Income Tax:**
 - International students may need to file a Canadian income tax return.
 - Visit the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) official website about [Taxes for International Students Studying in Canada](#) for more details.
- **Tax Forms:**
 - Students can claim educational costs when filing taxes.
 - T2202 form is issued to students by email in early February each year.
- **Minimum Wage in BC:** CAD 16.75 per hour (as of 2025). Refer to [BC Employment Standards](#) for up-to-date information.
- **Job Search:** Use [Indeed](#) and [WorkBC](#) to find employment opportunities.
- **Workplace Safety:** Know your rights and employer responsibilities at [WorkSafeBC](#).

Resources

- [Working in Canada as an International Student](#)
- [BC Provincial Nominee Program](#)
- [High Opportunity Occupations](#)
- [WorkBC Workplace Rights](#)
- [WorkBC Career Services for Post Secondary Students and Alumni](#)
- [Post-Graduation Work Permit](#)
- [Finding Work in BC](#)

Community Engagement

Connecting with Campus & Community

- **Student Associations:** Get involved by joining the student council at Canadian Southwestern College (CSC) to connect with peers and enhance your student experience.
- **Religious Groups:** Explore Richmond’s diverse places of worship, including Buddhist temples, Christian churches, Sikh gurdwaras, Hindu temples, and Islamic mosques, each offering unique cultural and spiritual experiences.

Local Richmond Activities

- **Richmond Events Calendar:** Stay updated on the latest happenings in Richmond, including festivals, performances, and community events. visitrichmondbc.com

- **Richmond Nature Park:** Explore 200 acres of raised peat bog habitat with 5 kilometers of walking trails, a Nature House with interactive displays, and various educational programs. <https://richmond.ca/parks-recreation/parks/aboutrnp.htm>
 - **Restaurants in Richmond:** Explore over 400 Asian restaurants and a world-renowned Asian Night Market. <https://www.visitrichmondbc.com/itineraries/cultural-culinary-adventures/>
 - **Richmond Olympic Oval** is a world-class sports and fitness facility. Originally built for the 2010 Winter Olympics, it now serves as a multi-sport complex for athletes and the community <https://richmondoval.ca/>
 - **Arts and Culture in Richmond:** Home to the Richmond Art Gallery, Richmond Museum, and Richmond Arts Centre, offering exhibitions, programs, and performances that showcase the city's rich cultural heritage. <https://richmond.ca/culture/howartworks/cultural-centre.htm>
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Indigenous Peoples of British Columbia

- **History & Reconciliation:** Learn about Indigenous history and the impact of residential schools at the [Indian Residential School History and Dialogue Centre](#).
- **Local Indigenous Communities:** Explore Indigenous arts, traditions, and stories at cultural centers like the [Bill Reid Gallery](#).

Resources:

[Indigenous Peoples in B.C.](#)

Complaints, Harassment, and Dispute Resolution

Grievance and Appeals

- **Grievance Process:** Complaints should first be addressed directly with the involved individual. If unresolved, the Program Director must approve any course-related changes. If the issue persists, it may be reviewed by the Canadian Southwestern College's Arbitration Committee, which will attempt to mediate or impose a binding decision.
- **Appeal Process:** If the grievance remains unresolved, it can be escalated to the PTIB Arbitration Committee, whose decision is final and binding.

Bullying, Harassment, and Discrimination

Canadian Southwestern College (CSC) is committed to providing a safe and inclusive environment, free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination. Any such behavior is strictly prohibited, and retaliation against individuals who report incidents will not be tolerated.

- **Zero Tolerance:** CSC prohibits bullying, harassment, and discrimination; retaliation is not allowed.
- **Reporting Process:** Concerns should first be addressed directly if safe. Formal complaints must

be submitted in writing to the Director of Student Affairs.

- **Investigation:** CSC will investigate within 10 business days while maintaining confidentiality.
- **Resolution & Consequences:** If misconduct is confirmed, appropriate action (mediation, discipline, or dismissal) will be taken.
- **Appeals** – Complaints can be escalated to the CSC Arbitration Committee info@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca, PTIB (www.privatetraininginstitutions.gov.bc.ca), or the BC Ombudsperson (www.bcombudsperson.ca).
- All reports and investigations are confidential, and CSC reviews this policy annually to ensure compliance with BC PTIB regulations. Full policy: [Bullying Harassment Discrimination Policy](#)
- For more details, contact:
Director of Student Affairs, James Teng
604-279-5713 or info@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca

Resources:

[Anti-racism](#)

Critical Incident & Crisis Management

Your safety and well-being are our top priorities. In case of a critical incident or crisis, CSC has a structured response plan to ensure timely intervention and support. For full policy and detailed response plans: [Critical Incident & Crisis Management Policy](#)

Below is a brief overview.

- **Emergency Contacts:** Campus Security (24/7) and Emergency Services (911) are available for immediate assistance.
- **Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT):** A dedicated team, including campus security, medical staff, counselling services, and international student support officers.
- **Types of Incidents Covered:**
 - Medical emergencies
 - Accidents and injuries
 - Violence or threats
 - Drug and alcohol-related incidents
 - Natural disasters
 - Missing students

- **Response Steps:**
 - Report incidents to Campus Security or Student Support Office.
 - Immediate assessment and intervention by the CIRT.
 - Coordination with external emergency services if needed.
 - Multilingual support for international students.
 - Post-incident counselling and follow-up support.
- **Training and Awareness:** CSC conducts annual crisis response training, and emergency information is available during orientation, through emails, and on the school website.

Resources:

- [Trauma-informed Care](#)
 - [Ecomm911](#)
 - [Crisis Centre BC](#)
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Emergency Contact Information

- **Campus Security: Joanna Ren 604-767-4168 & James Teng 778-999-9229**
 - **9-1-1 for Police, Fire, Ambulance**
 - **International Student Support Office:**
 - Phone: 604-279-5713
 - Email: info@canadiansouthwesterncollege.ca,
 - **Mental Health Helpline: [Here2Talk](#) Available 24/7**
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Assessing Orientation Experiences

- CSC regularly reviews and update orientation content based on student feedback to improve effectiveness.
 - Students may share comments and suggestions through CSC's [Anonymous Feedback Form](#).
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We are committed to ensuring your success at Canadian Southwestern College. **Welcome to your new adventure in British Columbia!**