

Canada has just announced three major measures to help individuals who wish to pursue Canadian education and work opportunities. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) has introduced the following three new measures on Post-Graduation Work Permit (PGWP) eligibility for international students pursuing their Canadian educational programs online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The new measures are:

- Students can now study online while overseas up until April 30, 2021 with no time deducted from the length of their PGWP, so long as they complete 50 per cent of their studies in Canada.
- Students who have signed up for a program that is 8-12 months in duration with a start date from May to September 2020 will be able to complete their entire program abroad and still be eligible for a PGWP.
- Students who enrolled in a program with a start date between May and September 2020 and study online up to April 30, 2021 and who graduate from more than one eligible program may be able to combine the length of their programs of study when they apply for a PGWP, as long as 50 per cent of the studies are completed in Canada.

After a student completes an eligible program at a Canadian designated learning institution (e.g., a university or college), they can obtain a PGWP for a maximum duration of three years. The ultimate duration of the PGWP depends on the length of time the individual studied at a Canadian DLI.

The PGWP enables these former international students to then work for any Canadian employer. Former students hoping to become Canadian permanent residents seek to harness the work experience they gain to enhance their Canadian immigration chances.

Obtaining Canadian work experience can make individuals eligible for certain immigration pathways such as Express Entry's Canadian Experience Class program. It can also provide them with additional points under Express Entry's Comprehensive Ranking System.

Prior to the pandemic, distance learning could not count towards PGWP eligibility. This changed shortly after the COVID-19 pandemic when IRCC made a series of announcements to enable online learning to count towards PGWP eligibility. The last major announcement came in May when IRCC stated online learning obtained up until December 31, 2020 could be counted when eventually applying for a PGWP.

In order to be eligible for these measures, students need to have submitted a study permit application before starting a program of study in the spring/summer/fall 2020 semester or for the January 2021 semester. Students must be eventually approved for a study permit.

Canada's COVID-19 related restrictions will be eased based on progress made in Canada and abroad in containing the coronavirus' spread. IRCC will continue to monitor the Canadian and international situation as it explores additional changes to make.

For further information on this topic, please contact Nouvelle Legal by telephone (+2349097809000), or e-mail yketiku@nouvellelegal.com)

Nouvelle Legal website can be accessed at www.nouvellelegal.com.com