

Global Immigration alert

April 2026

Canada

Removal of co-op work permit requirement for certain post-secondary international students

Executive summary

As of 1 April 2026, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada has removed the requirement for certain eligible post-secondary international students to hold valid co-op work permits to pursue a co-op placement.

This change removes a duplicative administrative step only. It does not expand who may work in Canada, increase permitted work hours, or modify eligibility criteria for work-integrated learning for co-op placements. Secondary school students are not included and continue to require a co-op work permit to complete co-op placements that are part of their program.

Key developments

Based on current IRCC guidance, this change generally applies where all the following conditions are met:

- The student is enrolled at a designated learning institution in a post-secondary program that includes a mandatory work placement, such as a co-op, internship, or practicum, as a condition of program completion.
- The student holds a valid study permit, or has applied to extend before expiry, which includes a campus work authorization notation, subject to its specific terms and conditions.
- The student remains enrolled full-time in a qualifying program of at least six months leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate.

- The work placement represents 50 percent or less of the total program of study.
- A confirmation letter from the designated learning institution confirming that the work placement is mandatory is available.

Secondary school students are excluded from this change and must continue to apply for and hold a co-op work permit before commencing a work placement.

IRCC has characterized this update as administrative in nature. It does not modify existing limits or conditions tied to student status.

IRCC has also advised that certain pending co-op work permit applications submitted by post-secondary students may be administratively withdrawn; however, timing and handling may vary depending on the case and processing stage.

Impact on employers

From an employer perspective, Employers must continue to confirm that the student holds a valid study permit with appropriate and sufficient work authorization as noted above and that the placement is formally required and approved by the educational institution. As this is an administrative removal to simplify the process, the compliance obligations remain unchanged including the onus on the employer to verify immigration status and adhere to work conditions.

Key steps

Employers may wish to consider the following operational steps:

- Review current and upcoming student placements to confirm whether participants are post-secondary or secondary school students.
- Confirm that post-secondary students hold valid study permits with appropriate work authorization language, recognizing that not all study permits automatically authorize work, and obtain updated confirmation letters from the educational institution where required.
- Update internal onboarding materials and guidance to reflect that a separate co-op work permit is generally no longer required for eligible post-secondary students as of 1 April 2026.
- Continue to conduct reasonable due diligence to confirm that all student workers have proper work authorization in place at the start of a placement. This remains an employer responsibility and has not changed because of the new policy. Employers may wish to consult immigration counsel to validate work authorization and support consistent right-to-work verification processes.

EY will continue to monitor these developments. Should you have any questions, we encourage you to contact one of our immigration professionals.

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