

CPABC Complete Orientation Guide for International Learners

Congratulations on your decision to pursue a dynamic and fulfilling career in business and accounting! Below is the information on how international students can apply to the CPA Professional Education Program.

About CPABC

The Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) is the training, governing, and regulatory body for over 40,000 CPA members and 6,000 CPA candidates. CPABC's primary mission is to protect the public, which includes:

- Enforcing the highest professional and ethical standards.
- Promoting and increasing the competence of members through professional development and assessing the continuing competency of members.
- Enforcing practice standards and rules of professional conduct of candidates and members.
- Providing a complaint process that is fair and efficient, and investigating and adjudicating complaints.

Under the [CPA Act](#), only members of CPABC have the requisite level of training, education, and proficiency to practice as professional accountants in the province.

Becoming a CPA

CPAs are in high demand by employers and provide invaluable advice to multinational corporations, small businesses, not-for-profits, government agencies, and individuals. They are respected for their leadership in public accounting, strategic insights in corporate boardrooms, and guidance in government and public sector accounting. Over the next decade, British Columbia is expected to experience a strong demand for professional accountants, with many of these positions likely to be filled by accountants trained internationally.

To become a CPA, individuals must meet three fundamental requirements: **Education**, **Examination**, and **Experience**. Education involves acquiring essential knowledge in core areas such as ethics, accounting, audit and assurance, and taxation, along with other subjects like strategy, governance, and finance. Examination relates to testing the knowledge acquired across various subjects. Experience relates to gaining relevant

practical work experience or the experiential component of the program. Individuals who meet these requirements and are a person of good standing will earn the CPA designation. These requirements also follow the [IFAC standards](#) for the accounting profession.

CPABC and the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) work together to deliver the CPA program. CPAWSB, which is overseen by the four Western provincial CPA regulatory bodies, including CPABC, delivers academic components, while CPABC regulates CPA members and candidates who reside in BC.

Orientation Guide

The following orientation guide will provide you with the information you will need to know as an international learner wishing to pursue the Chartered Professional Accountant designation in British Columbia. For your convenience, the guide has been segmented based on where you, as a learner, are in your journey towards becoming a CPA.

1. Before you Apply to the CPA Professional Education Program
 - 1) How do I become a CPA in British Columbia?
Information on Becoming a CPA in British Columbia can be found at <https://www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/>.
 - 2) Who administers the CPA Professional Education Program on behalf of CPABC?
CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) has been contracted to administer the Professional Education Program (PEP) – www.cpawsb.ca
 - 3) General Information about the CPA program
CPA Professional Education Program (CPA PEP) Overview: [https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/cpa-professional-education-program-\(cpa-pep\)-overview/](https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/cpa-professional-education-program-(cpa-pep)-overview/)
CPA preparatory courses Overview: <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/cpa-preparatory-courses-overview/>
CPA Practical Experience Requirements Overview: <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/experience/>
CPA Glossary of commonly used terms for getting started: <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/cpa-glossary/>
 - 4) Does CPABC use international education agents?

No, CPABC does not use any international educational agents. If you have questions about becoming a CPA in British Columbia, please consult the remainder of this document or [Contact Us](#).

- 5) How do I know that CPA BC and CPA Western School of Business are reputable?

The Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) is responsible for the training and governing and is the regulatory body for over 40,000 CPA members and 6,000 CPA candidates in BC. CPABC receives its authority from the provincial government under the [CPABC Act](#). The CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) in Western Canada (which services Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Yukon, Northwest Territories, and Nunavut students) receives its authority from the Western CPA provincial regulators (inclusive of CPABC) and is responsible for delivering the education and examination components of the CPA program of studies, while the CPA provincial bodies remain responsible for administering the practical experience requirements for their province. Please refer to <https://www.bccpa.ca/about-cpabc/> and <https://www.cpaweb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/>.

- 6) Both the Chartered Professional Accountants of British Columbia (CPABC) and the CPA Western School of Business (CPAWSB) are recognized and listed as Designated Learning Institutions (DLI) on the Government of Canada (IRCC) DLI list. As per the IRCC, a DLI is a school approved by a provincial or territorial government to host international students

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit/prepare/designated-learning-institutions-list.html>.

- 7) What are the entrance requirements to enroll in the CPA Professional Education Program?

A person is required to meet one of the three admission pathways to satisfy the entrance requirements into the CPA Professional Education Program. Please see the eligibility criteria for each of the three pathways below:

1. Degree holder www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/admissions/
2. Internationally Designated Accountant www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/admissions/internationally-designated-accountants/
3. Mature Entrants www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/admissions/mature-entrants/

- 8) Do I need to reside in Canada to get the CPA designation?

Yes, learners are required to be registered in the province or territory in which they permanently live and work. To enroll with the CPA Western School of Business and study within the CPA programs, you must live in Western Canada

(British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Yukon, Northwest Territories, or Nunavut) <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/admission-requirements/residency-study-permits-and-language-advisory/>

9) Do I need to hold a study permit to start the program?

Prior to admission, all applicants must provide documentation that shows they are eligible to study in Canada at a Designated Learning Institute (DLI) based on IRCC current policies. Once deemed eligible to study within our program of studies, CPAWSB can provide you with an Appendix to support your study permit application. Provincial Attestation Letters (PAL) may be required. Should IRCC request one from you, please contact cpaapplication@cpawsb.ca to determine eligibility and the availability of a PAL to support your application.

10) How much does it cost to live in BC?

a) Living costs

Living costs vary depending on whether you choose to live in a large city or small town in BC and which region of the province you wish to live in. To help determine your living costs in British Columbia, consult [Cost of Living in BC](#) and select your intended city of residence. For costs of living outside of British Columbia, consult [Canada.ca](#)

b) Housing costs

The Government of Canada (IRCC) website explains what to consider when looking for a place to live and the type of housing options available in Canada: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada/housing/overview.html>

The Welcome BC website explains types of housing, renting, where to look for housing as a temporary resident in BC and how to prepare to find a home. <https://www.welcomebc.ca/start-your-life-in-b-c/find-a-place-to-live>

11) Will I be able to find suitable accommodations once I arrive in Canada? Does CPA provide accommodations?

CPA does not provide accommodations for learners. Applicants are required to obtain their own suitable accommodations while they attend their studies. For more information regarding housing, refer to the 'Finding a place to live' section in The BC Newcomers' Guide: <https://www.welcomebc.ca/start-your-life-in-b-c/newcomers-guides>.

12) What are the steps to apply for the CPA Professional Education Program (PEP)?

1. Enrol with the CPA Western School of Business

- a. Determine your applicant type: <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/apply-for-admission-to-cpawsb/>

Bookmark your applicant type landing page and follow the steps outlined on the page. Generally, the steps are:

- i. Create a profile at <https://my.cpawsb.ca/>
- ii. Request a transcript assessment
- iii. Once the assessment shows the result of PEP Eligible or PEP Conditional Core 1- Submit a CPA PEP admission application and pay fees.

2. Once your CPA PEP admission application is approved, you will be able to register for your first PEP module from your profile within the My CPA portal.

13) How much can I expect to pay to complete the CPA designation?

The CPA Professional Education Program costs approximately \$14,000 for both domestic students and international students residing in BC.

<https://www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/about-the-program/>. See <https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/certification-program-overview/program-cost-and-expenses/> for an overview of the Program costs and fees and a breakdown of the \$14,000 cost.

14) What are your refund policies?

The initial registration fee and annual student dues are non-refundable. Module fees are subject to a penalty based on the date of withdrawal; see <https://www.cpawsb.ca/current-learners/cpa-pep/fees/> for a breakdown of penalties and timelines.

15) Who should I contact with questions about admissions?

The CPAWSB Admission Advising team can be reached at admissionadvising@cpawsb.ca or by calling 1.866.420.2350 ext. 6001.

16) Who should I contact with questions about immigration documentation?

You may contact any of the following:

[Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada \(IRCC\)](#) to find the answers to your questions by utilizing the [IRCC Help Centre](#) tool, contacting the [IRCC Client Support Centre](#) or [submit an IRCC web form](#) if you have already submitted a permit application or have an existing IRCC profile.

It is also highly recommended that a **regulated immigration professional** be consulted before applying for temporary residency. Consult a Regulated Canadian Immigration Consultant (RCIC) or a Regulated International Student Immigration Advisor (RISIA) registered with the [College of Immigration and Citizenship Consultants \(CICC\)](#). You can perform an 'Advanced RCIC Search' to find registered professionals in your area [country, province/region, city].

In addition, international students enrolled in the CPA program in BC may contact the BC Recruitment Team at recruitment@bccpa.ca for study permit and work permit queries pertaining to their enrolment in the CPA program in BC.

2. Before you Arrive in BC/Yukon (Canada)

a. Settling in Canada.

Before you arrive in Canada, there are many things you can do to prepare yourself in advance, such as deciding where to live and work in Canada. CPAWSB does not have a formal campus or place of residence for students studying in the program; therefore, students must look for housing and accommodations on their own. We have provided links to some helpful resources about settling in Canada, finding housing, understanding living expenses and knowing your rights as a tenant.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/settle-canada.html> and where to study in Canada
<https://www.educanada.ca/index.aspx?lang=eng>;
<https://www.educanada.ca/study-plan-etudes/index.aspx?lang=eng>.

b. How do I immigrate to BC so that I can start my studies?

Refer to the IRCC webpages to learn the eligibility and criteria for how to apply for a study permit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/study-canada/study-permit.html> and work permit: <https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/work-canada/permit/temporary/work-permit.html> for studies inside of Canada.

c. What are my rights as a tenant while I'm a resident of BC?

When looking for and settling in on a place to live, it's important to consider what type of living arrangement (on your own or with roommates), location and access to transportation, what utilities or amenities such as internet and laundry are included and how much they cost. When entering into a rental agreement, it's important to understand your rights and responsibilities as a tenant and how to resolve any issues if they come up

Helpful Links:

[WelcomeBC - Start Your New life in BC - WelcomeBC](#)

[Start a new tenancy - Province of British Columbia](#)

[Tenant rights - Province of British Columbia](#)

3. Settling in BC (Canada)

a. Will I need a Canadian bank account while I reside in BC?

A local bank account is important for being able to manage your money, pay bills, and use cheques or a debit card. Many banks offer free or discounted plans for students.

List of Banks*

**This list is provided for informational purposes only. We do not endorse any of these companies, nor do we take any responsibility for any interactions students may have with them.*

Vancity

Scotiabank

Coast Capital

Bank of Montreal (BMO)

Toronto Dominion (TD)

Tangerine

Royal Bank of Canada (RBC)

CIBC

HSBC

b. Do I need health insurance while I reside in BC?

Yes, if you have lived in British Columbia for over six months, you are eligible and legally obligated to apply for the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP). It is crucial to apply as soon as you arrive in BC. Once your application is processed and the coverage waiting period has ended, you will receive a BC Services Card. This card grants you access to medical services and can also serve as identification.

In addition, many employers in BC offer additional medical coverage that goes beyond the basic medical services covered by your BC Medical Services Plan. These additional medical insurance plans, sometimes referred to as “extended medical,” are voluntary, and employers are not required to provide additional coverage. Before accepting a job offer from an employer, be sure to ask if the employer provides additional insurance coverage and other employee benefits so you are fully aware of the extent of their additional coverage (if any).

At the time of admission with CPAWSB, you will be required to show proof that you hold this required health insurance.

c. What is it like to live in BC, Canada? How to get started?

The B.C. Newcomers' Guide <https://www.welcomebc.ca/start-your-life-in-b-c/newcomers-guides> is designed to help you settle into British Columbia quickly and easily. It provides valuable information on:

- finding a place to live
- driving in B.C.
- finding a doctor and other medical services
- getting your BC Services card
- registering your child in school
- working in B.C.
- opening a bank account
- getting help for those needing extra support

4. While you are studying

1) Where can I learn more about the academic policies I must adhere to when studying at the CPA Western School of Business?

While a learner at CPAWSB, you are subject to a variety of academic policies and agreements. Many of these policies, including Academic Integrity, Learner Conduct and CPA Profession Bylaws and Policies, can be found on our website at <https://www.cpawsb.ca/current-learners/learning-standards/>.

2) What kinds of educational support do you offer?

CPAWSB provides educational support to help develop learners' technical and enabling competencies. Available educational supports include academic advising, coaching, peer studying and tutoring. More information on the available support can be found on the CPAWSB website at <https://www.cpawsb.ca/current-learners/learner-support/>

3) How does the institution promote an inclusive and welcoming environment for diverse cultures?

At CPAWSB, we believe that true excellence in education comes from fostering an environment where everyone feels valued, heard and empowered. For a list of the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) resources available, please refer to this page: [CPAWSB Introduces Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion \(EDI\) Resources for Learners and Contractors](#). Learners can share their thoughts and feedback about EDI at CPAWSB by filling out the feedback form on the EDI webpage. Your feedback will help shape our ongoing efforts to enhance inclusivity.

4) What kinds of mental health support do you offer?

When taking on new responsibilities such as studying and working for the CPA program, there may be additional stress and challenges. To support your mental health and well-being, it's important to take care of your whole self and be comfortable with accessing additional support and resources to learn how to manage stress or other mental health challenges if that becomes necessary. To support CPABC members' well-being, CPABC has pulled together mental well-being resources, including counselling services, which can be found at <https://www.bccpa.ca/member-services/resources-tools/mental-wellness/>.

5) What type of employment services and resources are available to me as a student?

- a) Employment is a requirement of the CPA program to fulfill the experiential component of the certification program of studies. Students enrolled in the CPA program are expected to secure their own employment. However, CPABC offers various resources, including the [CPABC Careers website](#), Career Counselling, [the Career Connect e-newsletter](#), and networking and career fairs. These resources help students connect with employers, CPAs, and fellow students in BC for networking and interview opportunities [Prospective Students; Upcoming Events; https://www.bccpa.ca/chapter-events/#](#); <https://careers.bccpa.ca> and <https://www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/events/#sort=date&asc=true>. It is important to note that this experiential requirement, means that students in the program will eventually require a work permit if they do not already have one secured.

6) What are my employment rights while I reside in BC?

Part of attaining the CPA designation is gaining applied work experience. When you are looking for work and once you start working, it's important to understand your employment rights. The province of British Columbia sets employment standards for payment, compensation and working conditions in most workplaces. Refer to the links below for employment standards and WorkBC's helpful resources that support workers.

[Workplace Rights | WorkBC](#)

[Employment standards - Province of British Columbia](#)

7) What is the complaint, harassment and dispute resolution process?

We're committed to maintaining a respectful, inclusive, and supportive learning environment. If something isn't right—whether it's a concern about a person, process, or experience, we want to hear from you. Please review our student complaint process here: [Student Complaint Process](#)

8) Does CPAWSB have a Crisis Management Policy?

Yes, this policy and the designated staff responsible can be found on our website at <https://www.cpawsb.ca/CPAWSB/media/Files/Critical-Incident-and-Crisis-Management-Policy-V2-for-comments.docx>

5. After you graduate:

a. What are my career prospects if I do decide to pursue the CPA designation?

CPAs are involved in every industry and level of business, from public practice to government, retail to manufacturing. CPAs are advisors, business owners, executives and much more <https://www.cpacanada.ca/the-cpa-profession/cpas-and-what-we-do>. CPAs are in demand in BC to meet the needs of the provincial economy <https://www.bccpa.ca/news-events/cpabc-newsroom/2020/keeping-the-numbers-up/> and earn a median compensation of \$131,000 in BC <https://www.bccpa.ca/news-events/cpabc-newsroom/2024/january/the-earning-potential-of-bc-cpas/>. With 13,170 job opportunities for Financial Auditors and Accountants in BC projected from 2024-2034 https://www.workbc.ca/career-profiles/financial-auditors-and-accountants#career_overview learn more about why CPAs are in demand <https://www.cpacanada.ca/become-a-cpa/why-become-a-cpa>, career growth potential, and compensation in BC and across Canada <https://www.cpacanada.ca/the-cpa-profession/About-CPA-Canada/media-centre/2023/10/2023-Canadian-CPA-Profession-Compensation-Study-Results>.

b. Can I use my CPA designation in other Canadian provinces/territories?

Yes, the CPA profession is dedicated to supporting CPAs nationally and internationally. We collaborate closely with the provincial, territorial and Bermudian bodies to secure and promote the Canadian CPA as the pre-eminent, globally respected business and accounting designation.

c. Can I use my CPA designation in other countries?

The Canadian CPA Designation is highly respected and recognized worldwide. The ability to use your designation in another country depends on the specific regulations of that country's accounting profession. To learn

more about eligibility for Canadian CPAs applying for membership with an international accounting body, please refer to the following:

<https://www.cpacanada.ca/en/become-a-cpa/international-credential-recognition/international-recognition-agreements/canadian-cpas-seeking-international-designations>

FAQs

Please view our most Frequently Asked Questions about the CPA program here:

CPABC [https://www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/frequently-asked-questions-\(faqs\)/](https://www.bccpa.ca/become-a-cpa/frequently-asked-questions-(faqs)/)

CPAWSB <https://www.cpawsb.ca/current-learners/administration/faq/>

<https://www.cpawsb.ca/future-learners/admission-requirements/residency-study-permits-and-language-advisory/>