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How to Study Free in Canada?

You can study in Canada at little or no cost by getting a **fully funded scholarship, tuition fee waiver, or graduate assistantship**. While these options can cover your tuition fees, you may still need to manage some living expenses depending on the funding you receive.

Some of the most popular fully funded scholarship opportunities include the **University of Toronto Lester B. Pearson International Scholarship, UBC International Scholars Program, Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships (Vanier CGS), and Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)**. These scholarships provide financial support to help cover tuition fees, living expenses, and other study-related costs for eligible international students.

If you're wondering how to study free in Canada, this guide covers key funding options, scholarships, and tips to improve your chances of securing financial support. Whether you're exploring how to study in Canada from India for free or seeking opportunities as an international student, it will help you plan your study journey.

Ways to Study for Free in Canada

Studying in Canada for free is not about finding tuition-free universities. Instead, it involves securing enough financial support to cover your tuition fees and, in many cases, your living expenses as well. Here are the most effective ways to make this possible.

Apply for Fully Funded Scholarships

Scholarships like IDRC Research Awards, Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS) are the some of the best options for students who want to minimize their education expenses in Canada. They are offered by the Canadian government, universities, private organizations, and charitable foundations to attract talented students from around the world.

Unlike partial scholarships that only reduce tuition fees, fully funded scholarships can cover multiple expenses, including:

- Full tuition fees
- Monthly living expenses
- Accommodation support
- Economy-class airfare
- Health insurance
- Books and study materials
- Research grants (for graduate students)
- Conference and academic travel funding (in selected programs)

The following are major types of scholarships available.

Check out: [Fully Funded Scholarships in Canada](#)

Government Scholarships

The Canadian government supports international students through several prestigious scholarship programs, particularly for Master's, PhD, and postdoctoral studies. These scholarships are highly competitive and are awarded based on academic record, research potential, and leadership skills.

Government-funded scholarships often provide financial support, allowing students to focus entirely on their education and research.

Examples:

- Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships
- IDRC Research Awards
- Quebec Merit Scholarship

University Scholarships

Most leading Canadian universities automatically consider eligible international students for entrance scholarships. Many institutions also offer dedicated awards based on academic achievement, leadership, extracurricular involvement, or financial need.

Some universities provide renewable scholarships, meaning students continue receiving financial support throughout their degree as long as they maintain the required academic performance.

Examples:

- University of Toronto Lester B. Pearson International Scholarship
- UBC International Scholars Program
- Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)

Private Scholarships

Several companies, charitable trusts, and private foundations support international education through scholarship programs. These scholarships often recognize achievements in academics, innovation, entrepreneurship, social work, sports, or community service.

Although private scholarships may not always cover all expenses individually, combining multiple awards can lower your overall study costs.

Examples:

- Aga Khan Foundation International Scholarship Programme
- Pierre Elliott Trudeau Foundation Scholarship

- Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program

Choose Universities Offering High Scholarships

Understanding how to study in Canada for free for international students starts with selecting universities that offer generous scholarship opportunities. Depending on the [universities in Canada](#), you may receive funding that covers tuition fees and even living expenses.

Some of the top Canadian universities known for offering scholarships to international students include:

- University of Toronto
- University of British Columbia (UBC)
- McGill University
- University of Alberta
- University of Waterloo
- York University

These universities offer a wide range of funding opportunities, including:

- Entrance scholarships
- Excellence scholarships
- Faculty-specific scholarships
- International student scholarships
- Graduate funding packages
- Renewable scholarships
- Research scholarships

While some scholarships are awarded automatically based on your admission application, others require a separate application along with supporting documents such as SOP, LORs, essays, or portfolios. For help with these documents, explore our [Statement of Purpose Format](#) and [Letter of Recommendation Format](#) guides.

If you're researching how to study in Canada from India for free, applying to universities with strong scholarship programs can significantly lower your education costs.

Apply for Graduate Assistantships

These are among the most effective ways for Masters and PhD students to study with minimal expenses. In addition to gaining valuable academic experience, students receive financial support while contributing to teaching or research activities.

Assistantships are commonly available at research-based universities.

Teaching Assistantships (TA)

They help professors with academic responsibilities such as:

- Conducting tutorials
- Supervising laboratory sessions
- Grading assignments
- Assisting during examinations
- Holding office hours for students

In return, students receive a monthly stipend and, in many cases, partial or full tuition support.

Research Assistantships (RA)

They work on faculty-led research projects aligned with their academic interests.

Their responsibilities may include:

- Conducting literature reviews
- Collecting research data
- Performing laboratory experiments
- Statistical analysis
- Writing research reports
- Assisting with publications

RA positions are particularly common in STEM, engineering, healthcare, computer science, business, and social science programs.

Graduate Fellowships

These are awarded to outstanding research students based on academic excellence and research potential.

Unlike assistantships, fellowships generally do not require students to perform teaching or research duties. They provide financial assistance that may include:

- Monthly stipend
- Tuition waiver
- Research funding
- Travel grants
- Conference support

For many Masters and PhD students, combining fellowships with assistantships can cover a significant portion

of their total education expenses.

Top Fully Funded Scholarships to Study in Canada

Scholarships are one of the most effective ways to reduce or completely cover the cost of studying in Canada. Every year, the Canadian government, universities, and private organizations award to outstanding international students pursuing undergraduate, Master's, PhD, and postdoctoral programs.

Below are some of the best fully funded and highly funded scholarships available for international students planning to study in Canada.

Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships

This is one of Canada's most prestigious government-funded scholarships for doctoral students. It aims to attract exceptional researchers from around the world who demonstrate academic excellence, research potential, and leadership skills.

Coverage

- **CAD 50,000 (approximately INR 34.31 lakh)** per year
- Funding for up to **3 years**
- Can be used towards tuition fees, living expenses, research costs, and other educational expenses

Eligible Level

- Graduate (PhD)
- Students enrolled in a joint MA/PhD program

Eligibility

- Minimum **80%** academic average in the last two years of full-time study
- Strong leadership qualities and research potential

Best For

Students pursuing doctoral research in engineering, health sciences, natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities.

IDRC Research Awards

It provides students with an opportunity to gain paid research experience while contributing to projects that address global development challenges.

Coverage

- Paid research opportunity for **1 year**
- Salary ranging from **CAD 42,000 to CAD 45,000 (approximately INR 28.85 lakh to INR 30.92 lakh)**
- Hands-on experience with international development research projects

Eligible Level

- Undergraduate
- Graduate (Masters)

Eligibility

- Degree from a recognized university
- Strong academic background
- Interest in international development, public policy, sustainability, economics, health, or related fields

Best For

Students planning careers in research, international development, and global affairs

Quebec Merit Scholarship

This program supports outstanding international students pursuing higher education in Quebec. The scholarship is available across multiple academic levels, making it one of Canada's most comprehensive funding opportunities.

Coverage

- Tuition fee waiver
- **CAD 25,000 (approximately INR 17.18 lakh)** annual living stipend for PhD students for up to 3 years
- **CAD 35,000 (approximately INR 24.05 lakh)** for 1-year postdoctoral fellowships
- **CAD 3,000 (approximately INR 2.06 lakh)** per month for short-term research placements

Eligible Level

- Senior Undergraduate
- Masters
- PhD
- Postdoctoral

Eligibility

- Must meet the admission and scholarship requirements of participating Quebec institutions

Best For

Students interested in studying or conducting research at universities in Quebec.

University of Toronto Lester B. Pearson International Scholarship

This scholarship is one of Canada's most prestigious undergraduate scholarships. Awarded by the University of Toronto, it recognizes students with high academic achievement, leadership potential, and contributions to their school.

Coverage

- Full tuition fees
- Books and academic supplies
- Residence support
- Incidental fees
- Funding for up to four years

Eligible Level

- Undergraduate

Eligibility

- High academic record
- School nomination
- International student applying to the University of Toronto

Best For

Exceptional students seeking a fully funded undergraduate education at one of Canada's top-ranked universities.

Best Universities in Canada Offering Scholarships for International Students

If you're researching how to study free in Canada, choosing a university with strong scholarship opportunities can make a significant difference. Several top-ranked Canadian universities offer funding that covers anywhere from 50% of tuition fees to the full cost of education, with some scholarships also including living expenses and research support.

Below are some of the best universities in Canada offering scholarships with the level of education for international students.

Undergraduate Programs

The following table includes universities that provide scholarships to undergraduates.

University	Scholarship	Eligibility	Coverage
<u>University of Toronto</u>	Lester B. Pearson International Scholarship	Excellent academics, leadership, and school nomination	Full tuition, books, residence, and incidental expenses for 4 years
<u>University of British Columbia (UBC)</u>	UBC International Scholars Program	Strong academics, leadership, and financial need	Full tuition and living expenses based on financial need
<u>York University</u>	President's International Scholarship of Excellence (PISE)	Outstanding academics, leadership, and community involvement	Up to CAD 180,000 (approximately INR 1.24 crore) over 4 years

Graduate Programs (Masters & PhD)

Below table shows universities that provide scholarships to graduates.

University	Scholarship	Eligibility	Coverage
<u>McGill University</u>	McCall MacBain Scholarship	High academic achievement and leadership	Full tuition, fees, and a CAD 2,000/month (approximately INR 1.37 lakh) living stipend
<u>University of Alberta</u>	Graduate Entrance Scholarship	Top Master's and PhD applicants	Full tuition support and multi-year stipend (for eligible students)
<u>University of Waterloo</u>	International Graduate Funding Packages	Strong academic and research profile	Graduate funding, assistantships, and CAD 9,600–22,800 (approximately INR 6.59–15.66 lakh) through Co-op work terms

How to Choose the Right University for Scholarships?

While university rankings are important, they shouldn't be the only factor when deciding where to apply. Consider the following before finalizing your shortlist:

- Compare scholarship coverage, including tuition fees, living expenses, and research funding.
- Check whether scholarships require a separate application or are awarded automatically.
- Review the academic eligibility criteria, minimum grades, and language requirements.
- Explore assistantship opportunities if you're applying for a Masters or PhD.

- Apply to multiple universities to maximize your chances of receiving financial aid.
- Keep track of scholarship deadlines, as many funding opportunities close months before admission deadlines.

Choosing a university that aligns with your academic goals and offers strong financial support can significantly reduce your overall study costs and improve your chances of pursuing higher education in Canada with minimal financial burden.

Common Mistakes That Reduce Scholarship Chances

Applying for scholarships in Canada can be highly competitive, and even deserving students may miss out due to simple mistakes.

For students researching how to study free in Canada, avoiding these common mistakes can improve scholarship success rates and reduce overall study costs.

- **Missing scholarship deadlines:** Many scholarships close months before university admission deadlines. Keep track of application timelines and submit your documents early.
- **Writing a weak Statement of Purpose (SOP):** A generic written SOP that doesn't clearly explain your academic goals, achievements, and career plans can weaken your application.
- **Submitting generic Letters of Recommendation (LORs):** Scholarship committees prefer detailed and personalized recommendations from professors or employers who know your academic or professional abilities well.
- **Applying late:** Waiting until the last minute may result in incomplete applications, missing documents, or technical issues during submission.
- **Applying to too few scholarships:** Don't rely on a single scholarship. Apply for multiple government, university, and private scholarships to improve your chances.
- **Having a weak academic profile:** Low grades, limited extracurricular activities, and a lack of leadership or research experience can reduce your chances of receiving merit-based scholarships.
- **Ignoring smaller scholarships:** Smaller awards may not cover all expenses individually, but combining several scholarships can significantly reduce your overall study costs.

Alternatives If You Don't Receive a Full Scholarship

Missing out on a fully funded scholarship doesn't mean you have to give up on studying in Canada. Many international students reduce their education costs by combining different funding options such as partial scholarships, bursaries, assistantships, education loans, and paid work opportunities.

Exploring these alternatives can make studying in Canada much more affordable.

Partial Scholarships

These cover a portion of your tuition fees instead of the entire cost of your education. They are offered by many Canadian universities based on academic merit, leadership, extracurricular achievements, or specific program requirements.

Examples:

- University of Calgary International Entrance Scholarship
- International Student Entrance Scholarships at the University of Waterloo
- Faculty-specific merit scholarships offered by Canadian universities

Bursaries

They are need-based financial awards that help students manage tuition fees or living expenses. Unlike loans, bursaries do not need to be repaid and are usually awarded based on a student's financial circumstances.

Examples:

- McGill University Bursaries
- York University Bursaries
- University of British Columbia (UBC) Bursary Program

Education Loans

Loans are a practical option for students who need additional financial support. Many banks and financial institutions offer study abroad loans that can cover tuition fees, accommodation, travel expenses, books, and other education-related costs.

Examples:

- SBI Global Ed-Vantage Scheme
- HDFC Credila Education Loan
- Avanse Education Loan
- ICICI Bank Education Loan

Co-op Programs

These programs combine classroom learning with paid work experience, allowing students to gain industry exposure while earning an income. The earnings from co-op placements can help cover living expenses during your studies.

Examples:

- University of Waterloo Co-op Program

- Simon Fraser University Co-op Program
- Toronto Metropolitan University Co-op Program

Affordable Canadian Universities

Choosing a university with lower tuition fees can significantly reduce your overall education costs. Combining affordable tuition with scholarships, bursaries, or part-time work can make studying in Canada more budget friendly.

Examples:

- Memorial University of Newfoundland
- University of Regina
- Brandon University
- University of Prince Edward Island

Conclusion

Canada continues to be a preferred destination for Indian students seeking worldclass higher education. While tuition is not waived at public universities, scholarships and assistantships can make study nearly tuition free. With globally ranked institutions, diverse programs, and strong funding opportunities, Canada balances affordability with academic excellence. Careful financial planning, strong academic performance, and timely scholarship applications are essential. Overall, Free Education in Canada through scholarships offers Indian students a practical and rewarding path to international success.

Have more questions? [Book a Free 1:1 Live Session with upGrad Experts Today!](#)

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