



Your Student Guide
to Studying and
Living in Victoria.

Welcome to Victoria, Canada!





You've chosen an excellent location for your study experience, and Excel Career College is thrilled to be part of your journey.

ABOUT VICTORIA

Victoria is a charming and vibrant city located on Vancouver Island, known for its rich history, stunning architecture, and picturesque landscapes. As the capital of British Columbia, Victoria offers a unique blend of old-world charm and modern conveniences, making it an ideal place to live for students.

From exploring the beautiful parks and beaches, to strolling along the Inner Harbour or vibrant Government Street,

there's something for everyone. Victoria's thriving arts scene, local markets, and diverse dining options ensure that your time here will be filled with memorable experiences.

With its safe, welcoming atmosphere and world-class services, Victoria offers an ideal setting for both learning and personal growth.

Enjoy your time with us as you learn, grow, and take your career to the next level at Excel Career College!



Your Student Guide to Studying and Living in Victoria

We hope you enjoy the city and your study experience. However, we understand that adjusting to a new life here can be challenging. To help you settle in smoothly, we've put together this brief guide filled with tips and recommendations.

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1. GET YOUR BCID

The BCID (British Columbia Identification Card) is an official photo ID for residents. It can be used as identification across Canada.

HOW TO APPLY:

1. Book an appointment
2. Bring requested documentation
3. Pay the fee for your BCID

WHERE TO APPLY:

- ICBC driver licensing office
- Service BC centers

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Passport
- Study/Work Permit
- Proof of address (you can obtain this from your landlord, or accommodation provider).

WHY IT'S IMPORTANT:

Having a BCID makes everyday tasks like opening a bank account or accessing services much easier.

BOOK AN APPOINTMENT:



Scan or Click
the QR code to visit:
www.icbc.com

Cost: \$35 CAD



2. APPLY FOR YOUR SIN (SOCIAL INSURANCE NUMBER)

The Social Insurance Number (SIN) is a confidential 9-digit number required to work, file taxes, or access government benefits in Canada. It's essential to protect your SIN to avoid identity theft or misuse.

WHAT YOU NEED:

- Primary Document: Study Permit or Work Permit
- Secondary Document: Passport

HOW TO APPLY:



In Person

- Visit the nearest Service Canada Centre with your original documents.
- Complete the SIN application (available at the office).
- Your SIN will be issued on the spot in a paper format.



Online

- Visit the official Service Canada website.
- Submit scanned copies of your documents.
- Your SIN will be mailed to you.
- Processing time: **10 business days.**



By Mail

- Download and complete the SIN application form.
- Mail your original documents.
- Your documents will be returned by registered mail.
- Processing time: **20 business days.**

COST: Free



3. OPENING A BANK ACCOUNT

Opening a bank account in Canada is straightforward and essential for managing your finances. Most banks offer student accounts with lower fees and additional perks. To get started, you will need to book an appointment with your chosen bank.

DOCUMENTS REQUIRED:

To open a bank account, you will need:

- **Two valid pieces of ID, such as:** Passport, Study Permit or Work Permit
- **Driver's License**
- **Proof of Address:** (you can obtain this from your school, landlord, or accommodation provider).

HOW TO GET STARTED?

- **Schedule an Appointment:** Contact your chosen bank to book a meeting in person or online.
- **Bring Your Documents:** Ensure all IDs and proof of address are up-to-date.
- **Select the Right Account:** Banks offer various options, including student accounts and savings plans.
- **Activate Online Banking:** Set up access to your account through online or mobile banking for easy management.

TOP BANKS IN CANADA:

BMO  Bank of Montreal

CIBC 

 **Canada Trust**

 **RBC Royal Bank**

 **Scotiabank**



4. GET YOUR MSP BC MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN

WHAT IS MSP?

The Medical Services Plan (MSP) provides essential healthcare coverage for residents of British Columbia, including international students and workers with valid permits. Once approved, you'll receive a Personal Health Number (PHN), granting access to medical services.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- BC residents (citizens, permanent residents).
- International students and workers with valid study or work permits.
- Note: Visitors and tourists are not eligible.

COST OF MSP

- Monthly premiums depend on your income.
- Individuals with low income may qualify for reduced or waived fees.

HOW TO APPLY:



Online

Complete and submit the application form through the official BC government website.



By Mail

Download and fill out the physical form, then mail it to the designated address.

Important: Coverage starts 3 months after arrival in Canada.



studyinsured™

We've got you covered!

Excel Career College has partnered with **Studyinsured**, an experienced firm that offers private insurance to make sure you stay protected while you settle in—no need to worry about health coverage during your first few months here.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

- New international students who've been in Canada for less than 3 months.
- Students without the BC Medical Services Plan (MSP)



Scan or Click
the QR code to visit:
[www.studyinsured.com
/excelcareercollege](http://www.studyinsured.com/excelcareercollege)

5. FIND A CELL PHONE PLAN

In Canada, cell phone plans can be customized based on your needs. Key factors to consider when choosing a plan include:

- Minutes
- Text Messaging
- Data

It's important to compare offers from multiple providers to find the best price and features for your usage.

PREPAID PLANS VS. CONTRACTS

Prepaid Plans:

- Best for unlocked phones.
- Allows you to purchase minutes and data without long-term commitments.

Contracts:

- Lower upfront cost for a new phone.
- Requires monthly payments for a fixed period (usually 2–3 years).
- Early cancellation fees may apply if you terminate the contract.

TOP CELL PHONE PROVIDERS IN CANADA



6. TRANSPORTATION: PUBLIC TRANSIT

Victoria's public transit system is managed by BC Transit which operates a network of buses that serve Victoria and nearby communities like Saanich, Squimalt, Langford, Oak bay, among others.

UMO CARD

The Umo Card is a re-loadable card that makes paying for transit easy.

- Load money onto your card for single trips or monthly passes.
- Tap your Umo Card on buses.

HOW TO USE UMO



Online

Visit the official website to order or load an Umo card: ca.umopass.com



Retailers

Many local convenience stores, including London Drugs and Shoppers Drug Mart locations, sell Umo Cards. Find other locations at the BC Transit website.



Umo App

Download the Umo App to buy a pass or load cash, register your card to claim your balance in case you lose the card.



By Phone:

Call Customer Service at: 877-380-8181 to order or reload an Umo Card.

CASH

You can pay for transit with cash, but be sure to have the exact amount ready, as the bus cannot provide change.

Tip: Each bus ticket costs \$2.50 CAD for a single ride. If you plan to take more than one bus in a day, it's better to purchase a DayPass, which costs \$5 CAD and allows unlimited travel for the day.

*If you're using an Umo card, it automatically switches to the DayPass fare once you scan your card twice in a single day.





BUS

Victoria has an extensive bus network with:

- **Regular buses** providing continuous service throughout the day.
- **Express buses** with fewer stops for faster travel to the Ferry Station and other further communities like Sidney.

Bus fares remain the same within each zone, and schedules can be checked on the BC Transit website.

FERRY

Victoria is located on Vancouver Island, so you'll need to take a ferry to get there. BC Ferries operates regular ferry services between the mainland and Victoria. The main ferry terminal is **Swartz Bay**, you can easily reach the terminal by taking a direct bus from downtown Victoria.

You can buy your tickets directly at the front desk at the ferry terminal or buy them online in advance at: www.bcferrries.com

Additionally, there are smaller ferry routes that connect Victoria to nearby islands like Galiano, Salt Spring, and Pender Islands, among others.

ALTERNATIVE TRAVEL OPTIONS

Downtown Victoria Bike Valet:

If you have your own bike, this service is a great option for you. Victoria City provides a convenient and secure parking option for people riding and rolling.

Located just 3 blocks away from our campus at downtown Victoria, the free bike valet accommodates all active transportation devices including adaptive bikes, cargo bikes, bike trailers, jogging strollers and other personal mobility devices.

Car share:

- Evo Car
- Modo

Taxis and ride share:

- Yellowcab
- Victoria Taxi
- Bluebird Cabs
- Uptown Taxi
- Uber
- Lyft



7. TAX & TAP IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

TAXES

In British Columbia, two taxes apply to most purchases:

- Goods and Services Tax (GST): 5%
- Provincial Sales Tax (PST): 7%

When shopping or dining, the prices listed often do not include taxes. The final price you pay will include both taxes, so expect the total to be higher than what's displayed.

TAP PAYMENTS

Most businesses in Canada accept debit and credit cards with tap payment technology, making transactions quick and easy.

- **How It Works:** Simply tap your card or phone (if enabled with Apple Pay or Google Pay) on the payment terminal.
- **Benefits:** No need to enter a PIN for purchases under a certain limit (usually \$250).

Tap payments are fast, secure, and widely accepted across British Columbia.



8. GROCERY STORES IN VICTORIA, BC

Victoria has a variety of supermarkets offering everything from fresh produce to international groceries and household essentials. Whether you're shopping on a budget or looking for organic products, you'll find a store that meets your needs.

SUPERMARKETS IN THE AREA



9. HOUSING AND HOME-STAY IN VICTORIA

Finding housing in Victoria as a newcomer or international student can be easier with a clear plan. Follow these tips to secure the right place for your needs:

TIPS FOR FINDING HOUSING



Set Your Budget

Calculate your total monthly expenses, including rent, utilities, and any deposits, to ensure affordability.



Explore Neighborhoods

Popular areas in Victoria include Fernwood, Gordon Head, Oak Bay and Victoria West, which have great connectivity to downtown Victoria.



Consider Shared Living

Renting with a roommate can reduce costs and make living in prime locations like downtown Victoria and James Bay more affordable.



Use Online Tools

Platforms like Craigslist, Kijiji, and Facebook Marketplace are great resources for finding rentals within your budget.

RENTAL LISTINGS WEBSITES



10 - EMERGENCY NUMBERS IN VICTORIA

In case of an emergency, disaster, or accident, knowing the right numbers to call can make a big difference. Below are essential emergency and non-emergency contacts to help you stay safe.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL 911?

- Immediate assistance for **fire, police, or ambulance services**.
- There's an **immediate threat** to life or property (e.g., car accident, fire, gunshot, bomb threat).
- A **medical emergency** occurs (e.g., severe injury, sudden chest pain, breathing difficulties, head trauma).
- You witness a **serious crime** in progress or just after it occurs (e.g., robbery, break-in, assault, impaired driving).

WHAT INFORMATION IS REQUIRED WHEN CALLING 911?

Be prepared to provide:

- A description of the emergency
- Your location (address, building name, room number)
- Your phone number
- Do not hang up until instructed, as more details may be needed.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE AN EMERGENCY

- When in doubt, be cautious and act.
- If you're unsure, notify a supervisor, or a co-worker, or call 911 to confirm the situation.

STUDENT, STAFF, AND FACULTY IN CRISIS

For students, staff, or faculty experiencing an immediate crisis:

Medical Emergency	Call 911
Death	Contact Police at 911
Missing Person	Report to Police at 911



11 - NON-EMERGENCY NUMBERS AND SUPPORT RESOURCES

For situations that don't require immediate emergency assistance, several resources in British Columbia provide help with safety, crisis prevention, and support for those in need.



WHAT TO DO IN A CRISIS

1. Stay calm and assess the situation.
2. Contact the appropriate resource using the following numbers.
3. For life-threatening emergencies, call 911 immediately.

These non-emergency resources ensure you can access support when facing challenges, from mental health concerns to personal safety. Stay informed and reach out when you need help.



ESSENTIAL NON-EMERGENCY SERVICES

Access & Diversity	604-822-5844
Ambulance (E-Comm)	604-872-5151
AMS Safewalk (Accompaniment service)	604-822-5355
Fire Department (Fire Prevention)	311
Safety & Risk Services	604-822-2029
Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (SVPRO)	604-822-1588
Poison Control Centre	604-682-5050

CRISIS COUNSELLING AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Crisis Line	1-888-494-3888
Suicide Crisis	9-8-8
Mobile Crisis Response	250-818-2454
Emotional Distress (Crisis)	Contact Prevention Lines (above)

SEXUAL ASSAULT SUPPORT SERVICES

Immediate Reporting:	911
AMS Sexual Assault Centre (SASC)	604-827-5180
Sexual Violence Prevention & Response	604-822-1588
Sexual Assault Services at Vancouver General Hospital (VGH)	604-875-2881
Women Against Violence Against Women (WAVAW)	604-255-6228 604-255-6344
BC Society for Male Survivors of Sexual Abuse	604-682-6482



12 - MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health concerns, there are confidential and accessible resources available 24/7 across British Columbia.

MENTAL HEALTH EMERGENCIES

Crisis Centre BC: Offers 24/7 support for mental health crises, suicide prevention, self-harm, and violence concerns. All calls are anonymous and confidential.

Visit:

www.crisiscentre.bc.ca

Teletypewriters (TTY), Telecommunications Device for the Deaf	1-866-872-0113
BC-Wide	1-800-784-2433

Youth in BC: Anonymous, online support for youth in British Columbia.

Visit:

www.youthinbc.com

Kids Help Phone: Provides help for concerns like bullying, health, suicide, or emotional issues. Support is available via phone, email, or chat for ages 5 to teenagers.

Visit:

www.kidshelpphone.ca

Inter-Cultural Association: Gender-based violence support and services, including any harmful acts directed at an individual based on their gender. It is rooted in gender inequality, abuse of power among others.

Phone: 250.388.4728 Ext. 2123

ONGOING MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Community-led Crisis Response Team (CLCR)

Emotional support for mental health crises with registered both individuals with lived experiences and mental health professionals, operating from 7:30 am to 12:30 am 7 days a week.

250-818-2454

Mood Disorders Association of BC

Support groups and resources for individuals and families managing mood disorders.

604-873-0103

Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA)

Focus on prevention, education, and rehabilitation for those recovering from mental illness. Services include peer support and youth programs.

Address: 612 View St #101, Victoria, BC

250-216-4228



REACH OUT FOR HELP

Whether you're facing a crisis, need someone to talk to, or are seeking long-term support, these services are available to help you navigate mental health challenges. Don't hesitate to reach out - **you're not alone.**



13. TOP PLACES TO VISIT IN VICTORIA AND NEARBY AREAS



Butchart Gardens

A must-see, these world-famous gardens feature stunning themed gardens, including the Sunken Garden and Japanese Garden. The gardens bloom year-round, offering different experiences in every season.



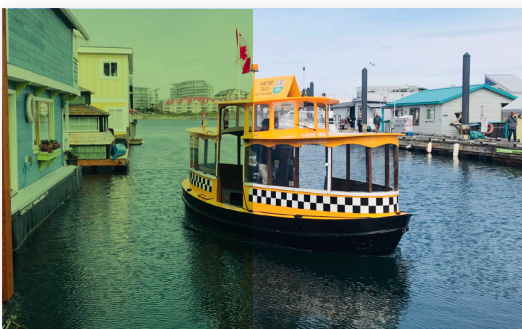
Royal BC Museum

A fantastic museum that showcases the history and culture of British Columbia. With exhibits on natural history, indigenous cultures, and the province's history, it's a great place for history buffs.



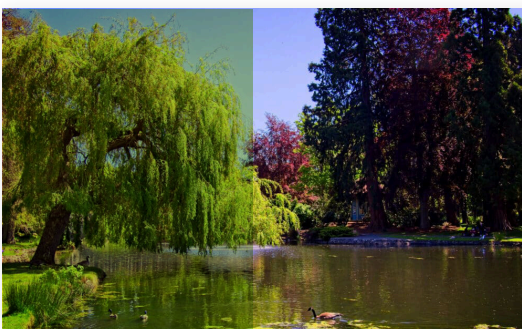
The BC Legislature Buildings

The beautifully architected provincial legislature offers guided tours where you can learn about the history of the province and its political system. It's especially beautiful when illuminated at night.



Victoria Harbour Ferry Tour

Hop on one of the cute, brightly colored harbor ferries and take a guided boat tour around Victoria's Inner Harbour. You'll get great views of the city, as well as a chance to see landmarks like Fisherman's Wharf.



Beacon Hill Park

This expansive park offers a serene escape in the heart of the city, perfect for a quick getaway with its gardens, ponds and walking trails. It's home to the famous Beacon Hill, providing a scenic viewpoint of Victoria's coastline.



Fisherman's Wharf

This bustling spot is home to floating homes, seafood eateries, and boutique shops. You can enjoy fresh seafood, watch seals play in the water, and stroll along the docks.



Craigdarroch Castle

A beautiful Victorian mansion offering a glimpse into the life of the wealthy elite during the 19th century. You can explore its stunning rooms and learn about its fascinating history.



Government Street in Downtown

Government Street is a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly street lined with shops, restaurants, and historic buildings. It's perfect for a walk, offering everything from local crafts to outdoor cafes and street performances.



Hatley Castle

Located at Royal Roads University, Hatley Castle is a stunning historic site with beautiful gardens, including Japanese, Italian, and Rose gardens. The castle, dating back to 1908, has appeared in films like X-Men. Visitors can tour the castle and explore its rich history and scenic surroundings.



Whale Watching

Victoria is one of the best places to go whale watching. You can take a tour to see orcas, humpback whales, and other marine wildlife.



LEARN. ADVANCE. EXCEL

CONTACT US

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